

“Stop US Nukes From Coming to Britain”

Making Britain a Target for Nuclear Retaliation. The UK government is allowing the deployment of the US new B61-12 guided nuclear bomb

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About £9 billion of this year’s massive expansion in military spending is earmarked for nuclear weapons — that’s on top of over £205bn already being shelled out on replacing Britain’s Trident nuclear weapons system.

And no doubt there’ll be plenty extra spent on increasing the nuclear arsenal, announced in 2021, in spite of it being a breach of international law.

So you’d think there was already enough nuclear weaponry in Britain. But no. We’re having US nuclear weapons foisted on us too, without any public or parliamentary discussion.

As Diane Abbott wrote in these pages last weekend, the United States Congress has been informed of this development, but no such information has been provided to the British Parliament.

Repeated questions put in the House of Commons usually result in the non-information that “the Ministry of Defence is unable to comment on US spending decisions and capabilities, which are a matter for the US government. It remains long-standing UK and Nato policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at a given location.”

Is this obfuscation, or can the US really put nuclear weapons here without our government’s say-so? Is this the much-vaunted “special relationship” — that the US can make us a nuclear target without our government even being allowed to comment?

One thing’s for certain: next year when the US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement comes up for renewal in Parliament, we can’t allow it to be the same old rubber stamp. It’s time to put paid to UK subordination to US nuclear, military and foreign policy.

But Lakenheath is our most immediate challenge. There's been clear evidence for over a year that the US is planning to return its nuclear weapons to the base in Suffolk — a base often dubbed USAF Lakenheath because it is, in fact, wholly run and controlled by the US.

It's time for our government to rethink its supine position, because even if it thinks that's OK, the majority of the population doesn't: 59 per cent of respondents to a recent Yougov poll opposed US nukes coming back to Britain, with only 23 per cent supporting.

CND has been active in protesting to stop the weapons coming here since the news first emerged last year. Despite the huge risks that are now facing all of us as a result of these weapons, getting widespread coverage of this issue has not been easy. The honourable exception has, of course, been the Morning Star.

But the tide has now turned. With the latest news from the Federation of American Scientists, we have managed to break through into the mainstream, with coverage on major national broadcasting and most national newspapers, not to mention a good range of local coverage.

The next step in our protests is coming up next weekend, with a " national day of action on Saturday September 23.

Events are happening across the country, and at Lakenheath itself, CND will visit to conduct a citizens' weapons inspection.

If the government refuses to confirm or deny the presence of nuclear weapons at the base, then citizens need to take matters into their own hands to ensure we have the information we need. And if we are going to be on the nuclear front line, then we certainly need to know that!

So far, the information we have is that US Air Force documents dated March this year strongly indicate that Washington is in the process of re-establishing its nuclear weapons presence in Britain, with the new B61-12 guided nuclear bomb.

Massive building works are under way at Lakenheath, including construction work on new facilities to house the anticipated influx of air crew. The work is expected to last from June 2024 to February 2026.

The new bomb will also be located in five other European countries and assigned to Nato. The presence of these US nuclear weapons in Europe has already been used by Putin to justify his recent movement of Russian nukes to Belarus. Their return to Britain has led to promises of Russian countermeasures.

It's clear that Lakenheath is once again a vital cog in Washington's overseas nuclear machine — despite refusals from the British government to acknowledge this reality.

The deployment of the new B61-12 to Europe undermines prospects for global peace and ensures Britain will be a target in a nuclear conflict between the US/Nato and Russia.

Everyone needs to know that this is not a local or regional problem confined to East Anglia. In the event of a war, certainly Lakenheath will be targeted. But so will Britain's other nuclear facilities, as well as major cities. The fact is, we are all at greater risk than ever if these weapons come back to Britain.

It's beyond irresponsible that the UK government is allowing this deployment. It's time for us to step up our mobilisation. Over the decades, from Lakenheath to Greenham Common, persistent popular protest has been vital in getting US nuclear weapons removed from Britain. Now we must stop them coming back.

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Featured image: DESTINATION SUFFOLK: B61-12 guided nuclear bomb first trial in December 2021
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