



Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases SPECIAL EDITION

SHORT BRIEFING ON THE AMERICAN BASE AT NSA/NRO MENWITH HILL AND INFORMATION ON US BASES

Dear friends

We thought it might be helpful to produce this Special Edition by CAAB with brief and basic information about Menwith Hill specifically, US bases generally and the work of CAAB. The information we give (which is just a taste!) is all credibly researched and confirmed. Information is gathered by CAAB from a number of sources: regular Parliamentary Questions, asking questions, monitoring Planning offices, articles, research, 'moles', academics, media, friends of CAAB etc, etc. If anyone would like the references please let us know. We have deliberately adopted the American spelling of some words.

For more detailed information and analysis we recommend *Lifting the Lid on Menwith Hill – the Strategic Roles and Economic Impact of the US Spy Base in Yorkshire* by Dr Steve Schofield (March 2012).

BRIEF HISTORY OF MENWITH HILL

Menwith Hill is a US base on 545 acres of land in beautiful Nidderdale (one of the Yorkshire Dales) near Harrogate North Yorkshire HG3 2RF UK. The base is in an area of outstanding natural beauty (but officially left out in the early 1990s despite some of us trying to include it). The land was compulsorily purchased by the MOD (War Office) in 1954 and access and right to use the

land was given in 1955. These decisions were made by a few people, behind closed doors and never debated in Parliament. Construction started in 1956.

Local people opposed the development of the base since first hearing about the proposed plans and the pending arrival of the US Visiting Forces (USVF).

The base published a booklet in 2010 to 'celebrate' 50 years since the base first became 'operational' on 15 September 1960 (...of the US Visiting Forces and their Agencies in occupation and control of the base!).

The 421st Air Base Group is located at Menwith Hill and is a component of the 501st Combat Support Wing which has its headquarters at USAF Alconbury, near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

WHAT IS IN THIS SPECIAL EDITION:

- Brief history and information of Menwith Hill
- How many people work at Menwith Hill?
- What does Menwith Hill do?
- Who is in charge of Menwith Hill?
- The role and presence of the Ministry of Defence Police
- US Bases
- Some useful websites
- Who and what is CAAB?
- Who said what about CAAB?
- Contact details for CAAB



The base is run by the National Security Agency of America. In 2004 the base was taken over by the US Air Force. “We received word from Gen. Hayden at the NSA that MHS needed to follow the “one base - one boss philosophy” said Colonel

Roberts (US Commander at the time).

The National Reconnaissance Office is also present at Menwith Hill (Google what they do). It is part of a global network of Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) bases. Menwith Hill is a key regional center for the NSA monitoring and intercepting the world’s communications. Gleaned and encrypted information is relayed to NSA HQ at Fort Meade in Maryland USA.

The land is in possession of the UK Secretary of State for Defence. The majority of the buildings and facilities at Menwith Hill (as with all US bases) are owned, and the construction paid for by the US. To date there are 33 radomes (white covered satellite dishes - looking like giant ‘golf balls’).

The base has grown and grown over the years. A significant development and major expansion of sophisticated operational facilities, known as Project Phoenix (costing £52 million) was completed in 2012.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK AT MENWITH HILL?

Hansard: The following personnel were employed at RAF Menwith Hill: (asked by Colin Challen for CAAB – answered by Bob Ainsworth 3 March 2009). *This information to be updated.*

Employer	Number
US Service Personnel	540
US Civilians and Contractors	892
RAF Personnel	4
UK Army Personnel	0
UK Naval Personnel	8
UK Contractors	76 ¹
UK Civilians (Excl MDPGA)	325
US Military Chaplains	2
UK Military Chaplains	0

¹ The number of UK contractors’ personnel working at RAF Menwith Hill may vary on a day-to-day basis.

I am withholding the number of GCHQ employees in accordance with Government practice not to reveal numbers of personnel working in intelligence at specific locations. I am also withholding the numbers for both the Ministry of Defence Police, and the Ministry of Defence Guard Agency for the purpose of the proper enforcement of law, and in the interests of national defence. [9 Mar 2009: Column 177W]

There were about 2200 people (two thirds US/one third UK employees) working at Menwith Hill until February 2014, when it was announced that 500 US military and civilian jobs were to be cut by 2016.

The US Elementary and High schools on base are due to close by 2016.

WHAT DOES MENWITH HILL DO?

Menwith Hill is the largest intelligence-gathering, interception and surveillance base outside the US. It has many roles which are generally for US interests only (diplomatic, military and economic) – being the hub of the ECHELON system. However, in May 2013 an unknown and very important whistle blower called Edward Snowden disclosed thousands of top secret documents which revealed the extent of the intelligence gathering and surveillance on us all by the NSA/CIA (with the help of GCHQ). Menwith Hill is mentioned several times in the documents.

The base is unaccountable, secretive and out of control of the UK government. Ostensibly the Intelligence Security Committee (ISC) keeps an eye on Menwith Hill. However the ISC are not told everything and have restricted access to the Operations Area. The Home Affairs Select Committee said of the oversight by the ISC in their report on the security services in the UK: “We believe that the current oversight is not fit for purpose for several reasons”. The US authorities decide how much to reveal. MPs can visit but this is usually on a social basis. They are not party to the inner workings of Menwith Hill. Access has been denied to some MPs.

In 1997 CAAB was the first campaign to discover and reveal that Menwith Hill (and later RAF Fylingdales in North Yorkshire) was to be crucially connected to the US Missile Defense system. Two radomes were eventually built as part of the Space Based Infra Red System. Missile Defense is an offensive weapons system in space. It is about US domination of space – for US military and economic interests only. Read the story of the legal action brought by CAAB: www.caab.org.uk

WHO IS IN CHARGE OF MENWITH HILL?

- Although all US bases are referred to as ‘RAF’

this is far from the truth. US bases are occupied and controlled by the US authorities.

- The US Commander is Christopher Gilmore (Colonel) until August 2014 when the new US Commander is due to arrive.
- Menwith Hill became an 'RAF' base in 1995 – ostensibly in line with other 'RAF' bases and to coincide with the repealed Military Land byelaws. CAAB was involved in successfully overturning the first set of byelaws. The second set of MLBs are also invalid however some notices continue to be displayed.
- Geoff Dickson, who arrived last year, is the RAF Commander and RAF Liaison Officer (RAFLO) and a reservist who commands the RAF/MOD employees but not the Ministry of Defence Police. The person in full control of Menwith Hill is the US Commander.
- There are no leases on US bases. However there was a 'security of tenure agreement' at Menwith Hill – renewed every 21 years. CAAB has some interesting historical 'secret' letters and documents which give the history of the renewal each year (sometimes given by a secretary). These were disclosed in a High Court case involving CAAB in 1993.

THE ROLE AND PRESENCE OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE POLICE (MDP)

The MDP is a British police force working on UK bases and some US bases. The force is very different to the Home Office police force. One difference being that unlike the Home Officer police force, the MDP are not accountable to an elected body. On US bases security is overseen by the US personnel. The MDP are paid for and under the operational control of the US authorities when working on US bases ("he/she who pays the piper calls the tune"). On some US bases (known as 'RAF') there are no MDP present. All officers are trained to carry guns. There is no recruitment now and the MDP are to be drastically cut. Elizabeth Dicher is the senior officer (Superintendent MDP) at present.

US BASES

There are approximately 6,000 bases in the US and nearly 1,000 worldwide – and growing. The US government/military perceive threats to come from the Middle East and the South Pacific area of the world (China, North Korea, Iran). Apparently not even the Pentagon knows how many US bases there are!

There are about 12 US bases in England where the US authorities are in control and occupation (eg.

USAF Lakenheath, Mildenhall, JAIC Molesworth, NSA Menwith Hill). USAF Croughton and Barford St John are to be extensively developed to become a massive intelligence hub (as big as NSA/NRO Menwith Hill) by the year 2017. The US authorities are present on some RAF bases, eg. the US Defence Intelligence and Security Centre at Chicksands and the HQ of the Intelligence Corps (handed back to the MOD by the US authorities in 1995). The American people are unaware of the extent of the US military empire and how much the bases cost. The 'host' nation bears the cost of the environmental damage left by the US Visiting Forces and their Agencies.

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES:

Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases – CAAB: Contains comprehensive information (articles, videos, news items, opinions, etc.) around issues of US bases and the presence of the US Visiting Forces here and worldwide: www.caab.org.uk

The Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy: Independent, not-for-profit research and advocacy organisation working on disarmament, arms control: www.acronym.org.uk

Global Security: Reliable news and security information – directed by John Pike: www.globalsecurity.org

Secret Bases:

www.secret-bases.co.uk/secret4.htm (contains comprehensive information on US bases and UK bases – not always referenced)

Global Network Against Weapons and Power in Space: Comprehensive website containing, among other things, information about space technology/Missile Defence: www.space4peace.org

Union of Concerned Scientists: Based in the US – leading science-based non-profit organisation working for a healthy environment and a safer world: www.ucsusa.org

YCND: Useful information on a range of issues to do with nuclear disarmament/ power, etc: www.ycnd.org.uk

Drone Wars UK: Comprehensive information and analysis by Chris Cole (founder) and others on US/UK Drones: www.dronewarsuk.wordpress.com

SPECIAL EDITION

FINALLY ... SO WHO and WHAT IS CAAB?

We are a small group of people with many supporters. We are grounded in non-violent ways of working. We rely entirely on voluntary contributions. CAAB evolved in 1992 out of the long campaign of protest at Menwith Hill – protest which has been going on since the 1950s. We aim to bring public scrutiny and awareness as to the presence, roles and functions of the US Visiting Forces here and world wide. We work in many different ways. What we have achieved and how we work can be found on either the CAAB leaflet and/or the website.

Hon. Treasurers: Judith Rushby & Martin Schweiger
Monitor of Planning Offices at Menwith Hill and Fylingdales: Steve Hill
Mailing List Organiser: Melanie Ndzinga
Webmaster & Designer of Flyers: Ray Middleton
CAAB Graphic Designer: Paul Wood
Official CAAB Photographer: Steve Schofield
(www.sdschofield.wordpress.com)
Monitor of Planning Applications: Steve Hill
Twitter Page Manager: Ian Bell
CAAB Merchandise: Christine Dean
CAAB Merchandise Designer: Sarah McEvoy
Co-ordinator: Lindis Percy



WHO SAID WHAT ABOUT CAAB – (adjournment debate on the US Missile Defence system in the House of Lords by Sue Miller [Baroness Miller of Chilthorne -10 Jan 2008: Column 969]

... Before I close, I also want to pay tribute to the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases. It operates in Yorkshire near Menwith Hill. It has been the eyes and ears of the public for what is happening there; it first revealed in 1997 that Menwith Hill was to be designated as the European ground relay station. It has continued to raise this issue ever since. Its members have suffered an awful lot of personal aggravation, and I ask the Minister to look into some of the history of this. They have been arrested but not charged, and charged but the charges have been dropped; they would have welcomed those charges being pursued so that they could have had their day in court. In one case, violence was used against a member, and no satisfactory explanation has ever been given for that. However, it has been incredibly important that people on the ground have been there to see what is happening with planning permissions and some of the issues raised by the noble Lord, Lord Judd.

I wish them well in their campaign. They regularly campaign on Tuesdays outside Menwith Hill to draw attention to the unaccountability of this American base on British soil ...

Please come to the weekly demonstration on Tuesday evening (6.00–8.00pm) – we are now into the fourteenth year (and it's time they went!) – join in the campaign.

Also CAAB organizes each year:

- 4 July - the annual **Independence FROM America** demonstration outside the main entrance to Menwith Hill
- First week in October – **KEEP SPACE FOR PEACE** – a call for an international week of protest by the Global Network Against Weapons and Power in Space – GN www.space4peace.org

**A message from CAAB
to the US Visiting
Forces and their
Agencies:
GO BACK TO
YOUR BORDERS
PLEASE!**

Thank you EVERYONE who has supported and continues to support the work of CAAB over the years.

Meeting for Worship:

Continue outside various US bases – contact CAAB for details

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