

US-NATO Encirclement of Russia – a threat to Peace

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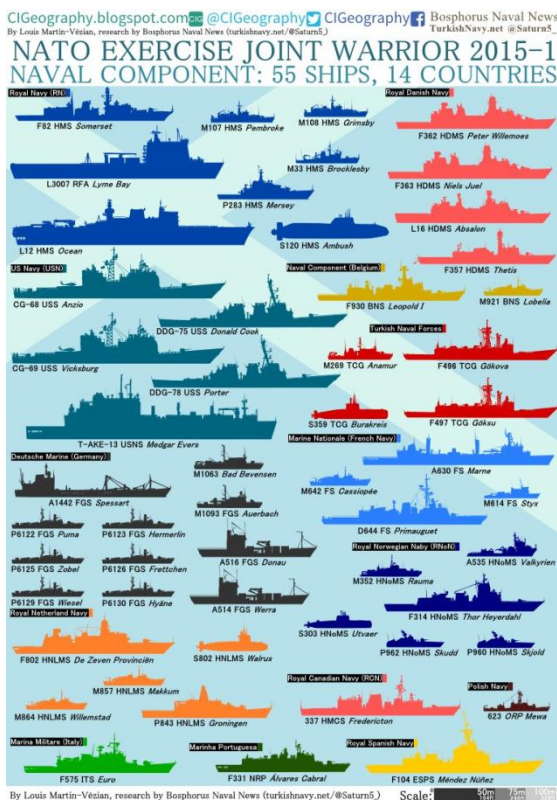
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First, I want to thank the organisers and especially Agneta who suggested the idea of a ‘*Nordic Peace Zone*’ in which NATO, is not allowed to deploy troops or weapons or install weapon components (such as radars). This is a really good idea! Actually, we need a ‘*European Peace Zone*’ too because at time of writing we are receiving news of NATO’s most recent massive military exercise in Europe, aimed against Russia – ‘*Operation Atlantic Resolve*’. 3,500 US troops and 2,500 tanks and other military vehicles are arriving in Germany from the US and being joined by a further 1,600 vehicles from storage facilities in the Netherlands. These military units will soon be moved out across Eastern Europe for exercises with NATO allies in the Baltic region, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Germany.



It’s not as if this is a one-off - the US and NATO carry out many military operations and exercises in the same arena where millions were killed in two horrific world wars. Since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the US has established military bases in many ex-Soviet Union countries - Estonia,

Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Hungary - and frequent war training activities are carried out in these countries. These exercises are not reported by western media which instead reports continuously of the 'Russian threat'.



For example - my country, the UK, holds a major international military exercise called 'Joint Warrior' twice a year (in April and October) predominantly in North West Scotland. Organised by the Ministry of Defence it is Europe's largest military exercise involving up to 14,000 military personnel from British armed forces and around 14 other allied countries. Some 55 naval vessels, 75 aircraft and numerous ground based units participate in a typical exercise. Operations include airborne assaults, amphibious landings and training in counter-insurgency and interstate war.

During the 2 weeks of these exercises increased military activity also occurs at the nuclear weapons base at Faslane on the Clyde and last year *Unmanned Warrior 2016* included what the Royal Navy described as its first 'robot wars' - involving aerial and underwater drones.

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NATO and Europe

And then there's NATO. In 2014 the NATO Summit in Wales agreed a *Readiness Action Plan* (RAP) to "respond swiftly and firmly to security challenges from the east and the south". A core feature of RAP is the 5000-strong *Very High Readiness Joint Task Force* (VJTF) created within the *NATO Response Force* (NRF). At Warsaw in July 2016, Heads of State and Government welcomed its implementation and introduced new work on NATO's deterrence and defence posture. As a consequence, *NATO Force Integration Units* (NFIUs) have been established in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia and a Headquarters for a Multinational Corps Northeast has been created in Szczecin, Poland and another for a Multinational Division Southeast in Bucharest, Romania.

Just a few weeks before the 2016 Summit in Warsaw one of the largest NATO exercises since the end of the Cold War took place in western Poland – *Anakonda 2016*. Around 30,000 troops, and numerous vehicles, aircraft and ships from more than 20 countries were involved in a show of force against Russia. The ten-day exercise came at the same time as a sharp deterioration in relations between Russia and NATO and Moscow criticized the exercises and commented that

“the war games ... do not contribute to the atmosphere of trust and safety on the continent.”



The Warsaw Summit also increased the possibility of NATO taking collective military action by recognising cyberspace as *“an operational domain, alongside air, land and sea”*. Thus, cyber attacks can potentially trigger an Article 5 military response (an attack on one country is an attack on all). This is particularly worrying because of the difficulty in determining the source of cyber attacks and technical evidence of them is rarely shared or clarified.

To resource all these actions and more, NATO expects its members to increase their spending on defence by 3% - totalling an additional \$8 billion. According to SIPRI, US military spending is already 34% of the world’s total and all NATO countries together add up to more than half - whereas Russia spends 4% of the world’s total. Who then is the most dangerous? However, it shows that the demonisation of Putin and Russia is good business for the western military industrial complex.

NATO will also continue to help further militarise the EU – which has been developing its own military since the Lisbon Treaty of 2009. The Secretary General signed a Joint Declaration with the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission to take the partnership between NATO and the European Union *“to a higher level”*.



Anti-NATO Protest at Warsaw Summit, 2016

NATO is therefore set to continue to promote military intervention and posturing as the way to resolve problems. This can only provoke military responses from others and worsen the situations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine. We should have learned from the Chilcot Enquiry about the UK's role in the Iraq War that the reasons given for war must always be challenged – and it is up to us to continually make that challenge.

The next NATO Summit is due to be held at the opening of the new NATO Headquarters in Brussels in 2017. The exact dates are not yet known but an international response, challenging NATO and militarism, is being planned. More information, when available, will be published on the No to War, No to NATO website: <http://www.no-to-nato.org>.



NATO and Scandinavia

NATO is of course also very active within Scandinavia. In 2013 the Global Network annual meeting was held in Kiruna in the north of Sweden to draw attention to the growing concerns about how the 'High North' has become one of the largest training places for NATO war exercises and advanced weapons testing. These threatening exercises are undoubtedly to show Russia what NATO and the US are prepared to do to ensure access to new sea routes and new resources that become available in the Arctic as the ice cap recedes due to climate change.

Kiruna station is extensively used by the *European Space Agency* (ESA) and routine operations are fully automated and controlled from the *ESTRACK Control Centre* (ECC) at the *ESA European Space Operations Centre* (ESOC) in Darmstadt, Germany. The GPS Tracking and the Data Analysis Facility from the *Galileo Experimental Sensor Station* (GESS) at Kiruna Station both deliver continuous measurements to ESOC's Navigation Facility. Many of these operations, supported or provided by Swedish companies and the Swedish government, help to support the hegemonic interests of the US and NATO.

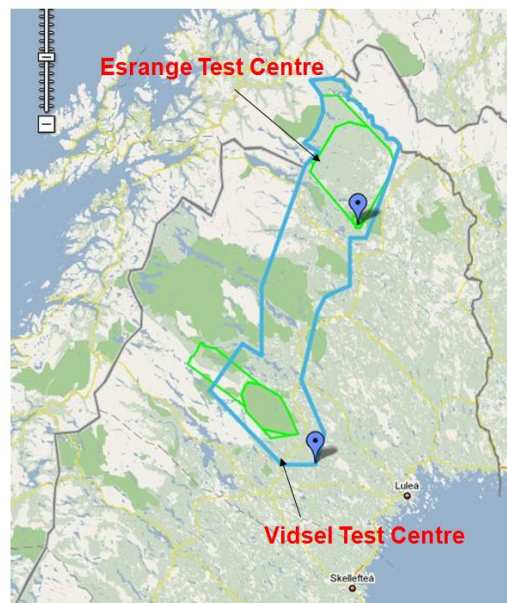


Kiruna Satellite Receiving Station

While in Kiruna we also visited the Esrange Space Centre, part of the *North European Aerospace Test Range* (NEAT) which covers a huge 24,000 square kilometres in northern Sweden. NEAT is Europe's largest overland test range for aerospace systems and also includes the Vidsel Test Range. The 216 mile long testing area makes it possible to test drones and missiles such as the AMRAAM (Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile).



AMRAAM



The militarisation of large areas in this region is also endangering the traditional reindeer herding lifestyle of indigenous Sámi people and by allowing these military operations the Swedish government is ignoring the indigenous declaration that they have signed.

In central Norway last February and March NATO held its annual 2 weeks of high intensity operations, entitled 'Exercise Cold Response 2016'. It included land, sea and air mobilisations, with military contributions from 12 NATO members and 2 partner nations. 15,000 troops took part from (among others) Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Latvia, Poland, Germany, France, Britain, Canada, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands. The increasing frequency of exercises such as this has led to the US establishing storage depots for tanks and amphibious assault vehicles in Norway.



Operation Cold Response 2016

Scandinavian countries are slowly but surely remilitarising. Last July the Swedish government signed a host nation support agreement allowing NATO to operate more easily on Swedish territory for exercises or in the event of war. Then, on 30th September, Sweden announced that it will join NATO's Strategic Communications Centre based in Latvia. Just a few days before this Sweden had announced it was remilitarising the Island of Gotland, located halfway between Sweden and Latvia in the middle of the Baltic Sea, re-establishing a permanent garrison there in April. There are also calls for NATO to militarise the Åland Islands, a group of Finnish islands which have been demilitarized since the 1856 Treaty of Paris marked the end of the Crimean War. Also, an unofficial agreement between Denmark and the Soviet Union that Bornholm Island (briefly occupied by the Soviet Union at the end of World War II but returned it to Denmark in 1946) would not be used by NATO is also being questioned.



War fighting is not just about tanks

Military operations and war fighting are not just about weapons systems. One of the most important resources the military requires is information and control - especially when the operations are spread over a wide geographical area. Information about targets, troop movements, the weather, etc. and control of distributed military components, ships, tanks, personnel, drones, etc. Military operations are informed by and controlled through satellite systems that provide space power - technologies for surveillance, communication, global positioning, targeting, guidance and remote drone operations. Space systems enable (in theory) centralised command and control of all branches of the military, allowing them to operate with precision and in a coordinated way. Global surveillance and power projection also provides opportunities for the military to locate, monitor, track and target any groups or individuals they may take an interest in.

In 2015 the GN visited Sicily to support the protest against the U.S. Navy's Mobile User Objective System (MUOS) - a narrowband tactical satellite communications system designed to significantly improve ground communications for US forces on the move. Its job is to provide the military with faster data transfer and broadband connection - via satellite systems similar to those used in smart phones. In 2013 Lockheed Martin demonstrated that it was possible through MUOS to extend Arctic communications almost to the North Pole. This is probably the most northerly successful call to a geosynchronous satellite and makes the system so important to the current military emphasis on the Arctic and the far North.



The U.S. Navy's Mobile User Objective System

The Arctic region also hosts other important ground based stations used by military satellites (their high latitude location means that they can download information for all 14 daily passes of polar orbiting satellites). At the GN conference in Kiruna in 2013 Bard Wormdal showed how the satellite receiving station established by the US and Norway on the Island of Svalbard is being used for military purposes –thereby violating the Treaty of Svalbard of 1920 between Russia and Norway, which strictly forbids military operations of any kind from being carried out from the island. The US military encircles the globe, in space and on the Earth, through satellite and computer network systems.

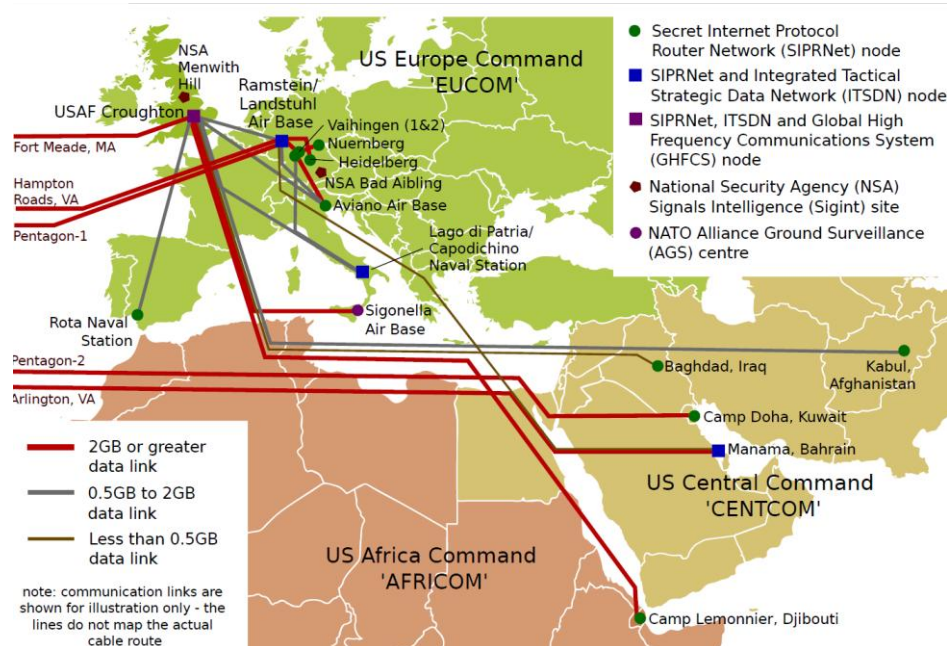
The Global Network “Keep Space for Peace Week” last year focused on the “Chokehold on Russia and China – Why is the US provoking global war?” and it included a number of European and Scandinavian events in Britain, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Norway. One of the activities was a conference was held in Vadsø in the northern tip of Norway, home of a large US Space Communications-Intelligence Station near the Russian within easy reach of Russia. The conference was called ‘Military Intelligence as a democratic blind zone’ and explored, among other things, the gathering and sharing of *SIGNals INTelligence* (SIGINT) and *COMmunications INTelligence* (COMINT) and the cooperation between Norway and the NSA from 1952 onwards.





Protest at a) 'RAF' Fylingdales; b) 'RAF' Menwith Hill and c) 'RAF' Croughton US Military Bases during 'Keep Space for Peace Week' 2016

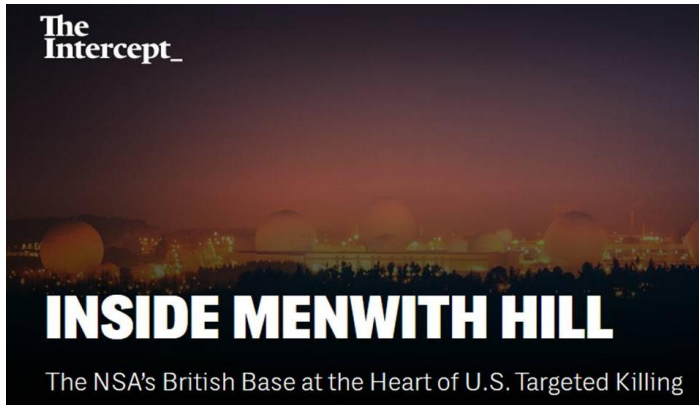
In the south of England, Oxfordshire Peace Group organised a rally at the US facility at RAF Croughton which is a relay centre for the CIA agent and was named in leaked documents as playing a key support role in embassy-based spying. Data from the global network of US embassy spy posts (such as those implicated in the eavesdropping on Angela Merkel's mobile phone) are funnelled back to Washington through this facility.



USAF Croughton at the heart of the US Europe Command (EUCOM) communications system

A secure fibre-optic link was made between the base and the US air base at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti in 2013 to co-ordinate drone strikes over Yemen. The following year the US announced it would spend £200m on a project to upgrade the base and further concentrate US intelligence activity to provide "world-class combat support" for activities including "global strike operations".

In North Yorkshire, two actions were held – one organised by the *Campaign for Accountability for American Bases* (CAAB) at Menwith Hill and the other by Yorkshire CND at Fylingdales. As a BMEWS station, Fylingdales could be the trigger that initiates the firing of UK and US nuclear weapons in response to a real missile attack or a mistaken false alarm. However, as part of the US missile defence system, it is also a component of the US nuclear strike force.



Menwith Hill is a huge US National Security Agency and National Reconnaissance Office base with surveillance, drone operation, missile defence and military intelligence functions. Fylingdales is a US/UK *Ballistic Missile Early Warning System* (BMEWS) and US Space Surveillance and Missile Defence radar facility. In September last year, the online investigative

journal *The Intercept* revealed that NSA documents provided by Edward Snowden showed that intelligence gathered through satellite technology at the Menwith Hill NSA spy base help the US with targeted killings. Advanced surveillance programmes at Menwith Hill have located '*suspected terrorists accessing the internet in remote parts of the world*' and '*provided support for conventional British and American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.*'

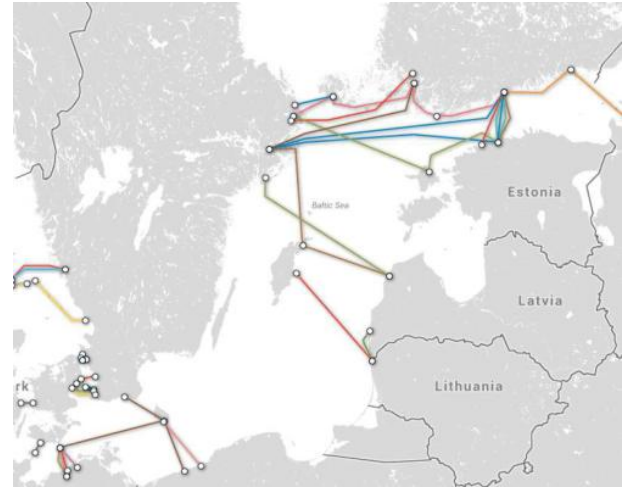
There is clear evidence that the UK and US governments work together to aid Saudi Arabia's serious breaches of international law by targeting civilians in Yemen. Britain's new Foreign Minister, Boris Johnson, is sweeping aside the evidence and silencing the media in a cynical move to maintain lucrative UK arms sales. The UK government has misled parliament by denying its role in these illegal operations. In his book, *Web of Deceit*, historian Mark Curtis lays out "*Britain's real role in the world*" and concludes that, for several centuries, the primary function of the British state is to aid British companies in getting their hands on other countries' resources. This means initiating war, military interventions, threats, bullying, and other aggressive actions, usually in support of the US and/or Nato.

This global imperialism is dressed up in propaganda as "*countering terrorism*", "*improving world security*", "*working with our allies*" and similar pieties propagated by the 'mainstream' media. In this way, Britain is partly responsible for appalling acts of violence, while proclaiming its supposed desire for 'peace' and 'security'. The siting of these critical installations on British soil underlines the close integration of British and American intelligence activities and is an example of how the 800 or so foreign military bases spread around the world are utilised to further the empirical reach of the US.

The British Government seems prepared to go to any lengths to collect as much data as possible. In November last year a new law came into force - the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. It is widely known as a “*snooper’s charter*” and extends the reach of state surveillance in Britain. Jim Killock, executive director of the Open Rights Group called it “one of the most extreme surveillance laws ever passed in a democracy. The new surveillance law provides the security services and police with new powers to hack into computers and phones and to collect communications data in bulk. The measure has been described as “*a death sentence for investigative journalism*” in the UK and privacy campaigners claim that it would provide an international standard to authoritarian regimes around the world to justify their own intrusive surveillance powers. The Act may be challenged in the European Court of Justice which has ruled that the “*General and indiscriminate retention of emails and electronic communications by governments is illegal*”.



Sweden is also keen on information gathering and has listening posts at Lerikil, south of Gothenburg and the island of Lovön, near Stockholm. Duncan Campbell (a British investigative journalist who helped to expose the activities at Menwith Hill) has named Sweden as a key partner of the US and Britain in COMINT. Sweden controls the cables through the Eastern Sea. Sweden has a third party agreement in surveillance with Five Eyes: The US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada intelligence gathering and sharing agreement formed in 1949.



(Left) National Defence Radio Establishment (Försvarets radioanstalt, FRA), Lerik, Sweden
(Right) Baltic Area Submarine Cable Networks

Signals are also intercepted from a ship operated by the Swedish Navy and two Gulfstream IV aircraft operated by the Swedish Air Force. In 2013, documents provided by Edward Snowden revealed that Sweden had provided the NSA with a "unique collection on high-priority Russian targets such as leadership, internal politics, and energy."

NATO and US Missile Defence in Europe

Russia is also being intimidated by the installation of US and NATO missile defence systems in Europe. When President Obama was elected to office in 2008 he shifted the emphasis of US missile defence from defending the homeland against ICBMs to defending military operations against regional battleground threats. This transition was to be carried out through his so-called 'European Phased Adaptive Approach' (EPAA) involving the expansion of the ship-based Aegis systems and developing a land-based missile launcher (Aegis Ashore). Months before Obama was elected President the Aegis system demonstrated its use as an anti-satellite weapon when it destroyed a US satellite said to have gone out of control in an operation called 'Burnt Frost'.



Aegis ship-based missile defense system



Protest at Bath Iron Works, Maine, USA

As a mobile system it can be readily positioned around the globe and, as of March 2016, there are 33 Aegis BMD capable ships in the US Navy (5 cruisers and 28 destroyers). Of these, 17 are assigned to the Pacific Fleet and 16 to the Atlantic Fleet with 4 deployed in the Mediterranean. The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and US Navy are working together to increase this to 43 by 2019 and the US Navy's shipbuilding plan projects a total of between 80 and 97 by the end of 2043. The Aegis ships are built at Bath Iron Works in Maine, also the home of our co-ordinator Bruce Gagnon.

The 'Aegis Ashore' system is composed of a vertical launcher and support facility, similar to that being used on ships and, in addition to the Aegis systems, the US army has developed its own land-based mobile Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to be deployed against short and intermediate range missiles.



The Aegis Ashore System

NATO soon took a keen interest and its 2008 Summit in Bucharest agreed to integrate components of the EPAA into systems that it was developing for theatre missile defence. This soon developed further and in Lisbon in 2010 NATO decided to expand the combined programme to cover European populations and territory with a command centre at Ramstein Air Base in Germany.



NATO Ballistic Missile Defence Configuration

In 2011 an agreement was made with Turkey to host a forward based X-band radar system at Kürecik which was then established the following year.



Three of the NATO BMD bases in Europe – Deveselu in Romania (top), Ramstein in Germany (centre) and Kürecik in Turkey (below)



The US also confirmed agreements to base 24 Aegis Ashore interceptors at the Redzikowo military base in Poland by 2018 and the hosting of US Aegis missile defense ships in Rota, southern Spain. In addition, the Netherlands decided to adapt 4 air-defence frigates for NATO's BMD capability. From 2018 all four Royal Netherlands Navy Air Defense and Command Frigates (ADCF) will be fitted with SMART-L radars to enable them to detect and track ballistic targets outside the earth's atmosphere for other NATO missile defense components.



SMART-L BMD Radar

In 2012 NATO announced that a BMD command and control centre had been set up at Ramstein and the US established the Aegis Ashore Naval Support Facility in Deveselu, Romania in 2014 which was activated in 2016 and the NATO BMD system was declared operational.

Russia has always been particularly concerned about these activities and claims that the activation violates the 1987 INF treaty – a claim that has been dismissed by the US. There has also been heavy criticism about the viability of the system in reports by the US Defense Advisory Board in 2011 and the Government Accountability Office and the US National Academy of Sciences in 2012. The US has ignored all criticism and a 1990 agreement with Russia not to push NATO further east after the reunification of Germany, and placed missiles in former Warsaw Pact countries.



US and NATO Missile Defense as seen by Russia

Russia is understandably uneasy about the destabilising nature of these moves and the build up of NATO troops on its doorstep. President Putin believes that the purpose of missile defence is to downgrade the Russian nuclear deterrent by disabling its ability to retaliate to a US nuclear first strike on Russian missile silos. A response from the few remaining missiles not destroyed in a first strike could be readily 'mopped up' by even a limited missile defence system. Russia is particularly concerned about the stationing of missile defence systems along its borders and has repeatedly asked for legally binding assurances that NATO missile interceptors would not be used against Moscow's strategic missiles. However, Washington is unwilling to do this.

Russia has therefore reacted by threatening to deploy short range Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, close to the Polish border, as a counter measure and this is being used to justify the increase in military activity by the US and NATO both sides and a serious escalation around the conflict in Ukraine.



The stationing of Russian Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad

Opposition to missile defence systems in Europe is therefore increasingly important, as moves to install them are ratcheting up confrontation with Russia, blocking moves towards nuclear disarmament and generating a new arms race which can lead to disastrous consequences.

Conclusion

The western governments and media continue to claim that the increase in US and NATO military activities and the establishment of bases along eastern European and Scandinavian borders is *"in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine and Kaliningrad"*. However, Russia sees NATO and the

US pushing military bases and escalating aggressive military exercises ever closer to its borders. NATO has 3.5 million troops stationed in over a hundred bases in a ring around Russia, while Russia has some 900,000 armed troops - but the western media conveniently overlooks these figures.

Is it a coincidence that troops in *Operation Atlantic Resolve* are due to arrive at the Russian borders around January 20th? The President-elect continues to express a desire to work with, not against, Russia. This may not be the most favoured path for some arms manufacturers and their friends. The twin challenges of war and climate change threaten our very existence and to ensure our survival we must adopt ways of working globally which involve developing mutual trust and cooperative work. To address these challenges and the rapidly changing security context will require a significant international dialogue which is absent at this time. An extremely important first step is to reverse the current dependence on military aggression and intervention to address international problems - including the demonisation and scapegoating of others. All foreign military bases should be closed and states should stop threatening to use weapons of mass destruction and cancel their nuclear weapons programmes.

On issues of human rights, security, the use of outer space and the environment, NGOs and activists continue to act as the conscience of the world but it will require much more international co-operation and some courageous and inspirational world leaders to ensure that we survive the next 50 years or so.

