

OVER-ARMED AND OVER HERE



Camera Press

*After our government, the British people are the last to know the truth about the number of US bases in the UK, says Duncan Campbell in the first of three extracts from his new book.**

BRITISH GOVERNMENT officials and ministers have shown indifference and complacency in monitoring and regulating the US presence in Britain. Since the US Air Force returned in 1948 (having left soon after the end of World War Two) there has been a *de facto* policy of 'open house'. In paying close attention to the development of US bases in Britain over the last few years, I have frequently found Ministry of Defence representatives unaware of what US forces were planning or the significance of their installations — sometimes even apparently unaware of the existence of some US military facilities in the United Kingdom.

One of the ironies of US military relations with her allies is that far greater amounts of information are publicly available in Washington than are ever vouchsafed to residents around US overseas bases — or, so it often seems, to host governments. For much of the long period of entrenchment since US bases blossomed all over Britain in 1950, there has been little public information and less debate about the scale of these US deployments. But the 1980 revival of peace and disarmament movements, the upsurge in concern over the dangers of the nuclear arms race and the rebirth of CND has made the issue quite central in public opinion.

The record of the British government in providing information about the current military situation has been disturbingly poor. When questioned about US bases and facilities in Britain, the Ministry of Defence has provided inconsistent and uneven answers. In 1980, Labour MP Bob Cryer had to ask virtually the same question three times in order to obtain an allegedly complete list of US bases. The 'total' list Cryer obtained from the Defence Ministry at first contained just 12 bases; a second answer added 39 more; and a further 3 contained in the final answer brought the total to 54.

In October that year, working almost entirely from published American sources, I compiled and published a list of approximately 103 US military bases and facilities in Britain. But in subsequent private briefings for other journalists, Ministry officials ridiculed the suggestion that there were as many as 100 US bases and facilities. They seized upon mention in the article of one facility in Edgware Road, London — claimed to be a petrol pump used by US official cars, but identified in the *New Statesman* report as a 'fuel supply facility' — to discount the entire report as ill-founded, and avoid debate on their earlier omissions and errors.

This theme was highlighted in May 1983 during a House of Lords debate in which Labour peer Lord Jenkins challenged that the government had been 'reluctant to reveal the

growth of American nuclear and other bases'. Lord Belstead, Defence Minister of State replied that:

I sometimes wonder whether he [Lord Jenkins of Putney] and those who think like him have first thought up the number of 100 or more and then tried to justify it. I hope that what I have said will rectify the false allegations that have been made.

In the light of this ill-tempered attack, it is intriguing to discover who it was that first suggested that there were more than 100 US military bases and facilities in Britain. The figure came from the Ministry of Defence itself. In a 1977 parliamentary answer, Dr John Gilbert — Lord Belstead's predecessor in the Callaghan government — told the House of Commons that:

Accommodation is available to the United States forces at many of more than 100 locations where they have defence facilities, and at over 30 other locations throughout the United Kingdom.

By 1980, evidently, the Ministry had forgotten its own tally of more than 100 US 'defence facilities' in Britain, and some 30 additional sites used only for housing. But this figure corresponded exactly with the *New Statesman* account published in 1980.

Pressed by defence correspondents and parliamentary critics to give a more substantive account of US bases in Britain than merely sniping at the *New Statesman* list, the Ministry produced its own list to defence correspondents in April 1983. The new list enumerated 75 bases. 73 of these had been in existence at the time the Ministry had given Bob Cryer MP a

* *The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier*, published by Michael Joseph on 16 April, £12.95 and £6.95



Stars and stripes fly on a Poseidon nuclear missile submarine at Holy Loch (left); at Welford, Berkshire (above), USAF high explosive bombs are stored in the open

'total' list of only 54. 19 had been forgotten or ignored.

When it was pointed out to the Ministry of Defence that their 1983 list *still* omitted more than 20 military facilities and 30 housing sites (which were purported to be included), a spokesman replied that the government was not 'prepared to discuss the list or questions about specific bases in detail'. So had it been correct for them to describe the 75-base list, when they issued it, as 'definitive'? 'It is both correct and incorrect,' the spokesman replied. There are now no fewer than 135 US military bases and facilities in Britain, ranging from tiny and almost inconsequential offices to gigantic airbases. Including housing sites, there are 165 US facilities in Britain.

The issue of British government supervision of and control over US bases and personnel on British territory is most critical on the question of the control of nuclear weapons. British control is, for practical purposes, non-existent. We clearly do not have the right to veto US operations, whatever ministers have sometimes claimed in the past. We may have a good chance of being consulted if time and circumstance permit. If hostilities commenced, as most people fear will happen by the end of the century, it is unlikely that the time available *would* permit consultation before annihilation. A 1952 statement, never superseded, defines the question as: 'a matter for joint decision . . . in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time'.

This commentary has neither the force of a treaty nor any detailed protocol on interpretation and implementation accompanying it, as is customary in many military agreements. It is no more than a communiqué, which was quite as far as the US government has been prepared to go on the issue. It stands alone — bald, banal, and quite unconvincing. If a US President is confronting the issue of having to launch strategic nuclear weapons, possibly involving some tens of thousands of

warheads from thousands of US delivery systems, are the 'circumstances prevailing at the time' likely to permit a polite call to the British Prime Minister to consult over whether the few hundred weapons based in Britain should be released?

American war preparation alerts, both intentional and accidental, and similar unilateral actions by US commanders, have occurred sufficiently often to create a substantial impression that, in a real crisis, there would be little likelihood of US forces being responsive to substantive British disagreement over policy.

IT IS THE ISSUE of control and accountability, far above irritation over the presence of foreign military forces not subject to British law, that lends substance to popular fears about Britain being the 'unsinkable aircraft carrier'. The comparisons which may be drawn between the status of US forces in the UK, and some other American bilateral agreements, are not reassuring for Britons. In the most recent treaties with Spain, for example, the US has undertaken to hold neither nuclear weapons nor their components in Spanish bases, and in Turkey, current agreements provide for extensive bilateral control over US activities. One NATO ally — France, under de Gaulle — first banned US nuclear weapons from its soil when the US was not prepared to agree to a genuine 'joint decision' over the use of nuclear weapons on French territory, then, in 1966, left the NATO military structure and required the removal of all US bases and facilities. Most came to Britain.

Fully one fifth of the US Air Force abroad is in the United Kingdom — and the numbers here are rising. We are, in the 1980s, in the middle of a USAF military build-up of personnel and equipment which — although it falls well short of the huge peak in the 1950s — is substantial. Numbers will rise even more

Looking out for

Mobil

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US military bases and facilities in Britain

TOTAL: 135 US military bases and facilities in Britain installed or planned (1984); made up of 25 major US bases or military headquarters, 35 minor or reserve bases, and 75 facilities used by US forces.

Major US bases include 3 headquarters, 11 airbases (one, Mildenhall, also a headquarters), 1 naval base, 2 communications centres, 5 intelligence centres, and 4 stores and depots.

Minor or reserve US bases include 4 administrative centres and 1 barracks, 14 minor or reserve airbases, 5 communications centres, 12 stores or depots, and 1 transportation terminal.

US facilities include the use of 3 airbases, 2 intelligence centres, 23 communications stations, 1 navigation station, 5 stores, 7 transportation terminals, 13 fuel supply points, 10 aircraft weapons ranges, and at least 14 contingency military hospitals.

There are 5 confirmed **US nuclear weapons stores** in the United Kingdom (Lakenheath, Upper Heyford, Holy Loch [afloat in the submarine tender], Machrihanish and St Mawgan). Two further bases (Woodbridge and Alconbury) have storage facilities which appear to be suitable for peacetime nuclear weapons storage.

Including 30 detached US Air Force housing annexes, 165 sites listed here are currently used, or planned to be used, by US military forces in the United Kingdom.

This table is a complete list of all known or planned US military bases and facilities in Britain, with brief descriptions.

Headquarters, administration and command and control centres

Mildenhall	US European Command airborne command and control squadron; USAF headquarters;
High Wycombe	US European Command war headquarters;
Grosvenor Square, London	US Naval Headquarters Europe, Fleet Ocean Surveillance Information Center;
Eastcote/Lime Grove, Ruislip	US Navy administrative offices;
Northwood	US Navy element attached to NATO headquarters;
West Ruislip	US Navy stores;
Ruislip — Blenheim Crescent	US Air Force headquarters offices;
London	US Air Force Europe administrative offices;
St Johns Wood, London	Marine Barracks.

Airbases

Alconbury, Bentwaters, Fairford, Greenham Common, Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Upper Heyford, Woodbridge	Main operating bases;
Sculthorpe, Wethersfield	Standby operating bases;
Molesworth	Second main operating base for cruise missiles;
Abingdon, Bedford, Benson, Boscombe Down, Coltishall, Cranwell, Finningley, Leeming, Odiham, Waddington, Wittering	Colocated operating bases (COBs);
Marham, Upper Heyford, Fairford, Brize Norton	Forward operating bases (FOBs);
Prestwick	USAF Military Airlift Command staging facility;
Northolt	RAF base jointly used by US headquarters staff;
Machrihanish	Used by US Navy;
Stornoway	To be used by US Navy anti-submarine warfare aircraft.

Naval base

Holy Loch	Poseidon submarine base; Submarine Squadron 14.
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Intelligence centres

Menwith Hill	Major US National Security Agency signals intelligence (Sigint) station and satellite terminal;
Chicksands	USAF Electronic Security Command;
Edzell	US Naval Security Group Sigint station, coordinates ocean surveillance in north Atlantic;
Brawdy	US Naval facility (NAVFAC), underwater Sound Surveillance System for plotting submarine movements;
Fylingdales	Radar station operated jointly by USAF and RAF;
London	Special US Liaison Office, Grosvenor Square;
Cheltenham	Liaison office (SUSLO) and US detachments at GCHQ;
Morwenstow	US detachment from National Security Agency stationed at GCHQ satellite interception terminal.

Communications centres

Croughton	Defence Satellite Communications System terminal and radio station;
Barford St John	Transmitter annex;
Thurso — West Murkle	US Naval Radio Station receivers;
Fors	US Naval Radio Stations;
Oakhanger	USAF Satellite Control Facility;
Hillingdon (Uxbridge), Martlesham Heath	AUTOVON (Automatic Voice Network) switching centres;
Mormond Hill	Long-range communications centre;
St Mawgan, Wincombe	Radio stations;
Great Bromley, Barkway, Chelveston, Daventry, Christmas Common, Golden Pot, Bovingdon, Botley Hill Farm, Coldblow Lane, Dunkirk, Swingate (Dover), Latheron, Aberdeen, Inverbervie, Kinnaber, Craigowl Hill, East Lomond, Kirk O'Shotts, Sergeantlaw, Brownarrick Hill	Communications relay stations;
Scatsta, Sullom Voe	US Coastguard navigation station.

Stores and depots

Burtonwood	US Army equipment depot (2 million square feet);
Caerwent	US Army munitions depot;
Bramley	US Army ammunition depot;
Welford	US Air Force central munitions depot;
Bicester	US Air Force depot;
Chilwell	US Army vehicle depot;
Glen Douglas	US Navy ammunition depot;
Broughton Moor	US Navy ammunition depot;
Hythe	US Army Marine Fleet HQ;
Marchwood	US Army Marine Fleet Store;
Poole	US Army Marine Fleet Store;
St Mawgan	US Naval Aviation Weapons Facility (nuclear weapons store);
Machrihanish	US Naval Aviation Weapons Facility (nuclear weapons store);
Kemble	Joint USAF/RAF maintenance depot;
Filton	Depot maintenance of F-111 aircraft;
Dunstable	US Navy Exchange;
Upwood, Ridgewell, Watton, Framlingham, Feltwell	USAF storage depots.

Wartime hospitals

Little Risington, Bicester, Bordon, Feltwell, Kemble, Newton, Nocton Hall, Upwood, Waterbeach, Bulford, Colerne, Cosford, Tidworth, Locking

Transportation terminals

Liverpool, Felixstowe, Greenock, Barry, Grangemouth, Southampton, London, Fairlie

Defense fuel support points

Loch Ewe, Loch Striven, Faslane, Machrihanish, Rosyth, Roaneth, Campbeltown, South Shields, North Killingholme, Immingham, Stanlow, Purfleet, West Thurrock

Sandy Quality Assurance Resident fuel supplies.

Air to ground bombing and electronic warfare ranges

Spadesadam, Joint USAF/RAF electronic warfare range;

Rosehearty, Air to ground bombing ranges

Cape Wrath, Tain, Jurby, Cowden, Donna Nook, Holbeach, Wainfleet, Theddlethorpe.

Housing Annexes

Rosehearty, Monkton, Dunoon, West Raynham, Thetford, Tuddenham, Bircham Newton, Brandon, Bury St Edmunds, Freckenham, Isleham, Grundisburgh, Haverhill, Ipswich, Kesgrave, Melton, Newmarket, Red Lodge, Shepherds Grove, Trimley St Martin, Stilton, Brampton, Wantage, Ardley, Gaydon, Bishops Green, Blackbushe, St Columb, Carpenders Park, West Drayton.

during the deployment of the two new Tactical (cruise) Missile Squadrons, at Greenham Common and Molesworth. This huge war-making capacity quite evidently creates serious military risks for Britain. Does it provide commensurate security?

Put in simple terms, the damage that the United Kingdom may suffer in war arises in significant measure from the presence of US bases here — a feature that the British government has recognised in its own assessments of the likely pattern of nuclear warfare, such as that carried out for the 1980 civil defence exercise 'Square Leg'. US nuclear bases — especially the airbases in East Anglia and central England — are among the country's prime targets. The justification for retaining the bases lies in the policy of deterrence.

It is not only in time of war that nuclear weapons have been dangerous. From both British and American governments there has been intentional dishonesty about accidental hazards to the population. The only serious nuclear weapons accident in Britain, of which details are now publicly known, was at

Lakenheath in 1956 — and that was covered up for 23 years. In 1981, a determined attempt to cover up another mishap was mounted at the nuclear submarine base in the Holy Loch. During the 1950s and early 1960s, US bombers carried war-ready bombs aloft on 'alert' flights over Britain, a policy which may not have caused harm in Britain, but which led to two catastrophic accidents — when bombed-up B-52s crashed in Spain and Greenland.

Underlying my investigation is the obvious premise that matters should not remain as they are at present. Whether the bases eventually stay or go, only the most pusillanimous of public officials could accept the inadequacies of the present relationship as they affect British political control of the use of foreign military bases, the legal status of 'visiting' military forces, or the lack of information provided in Britain about the development and use of US bases and facilities. □

Next week: How the Americans set up a secret nuclear base network.

GREENHAM COMMON

Utterly roofless resolve

Lynne Jones explains why last week's 'eviction' didn't work

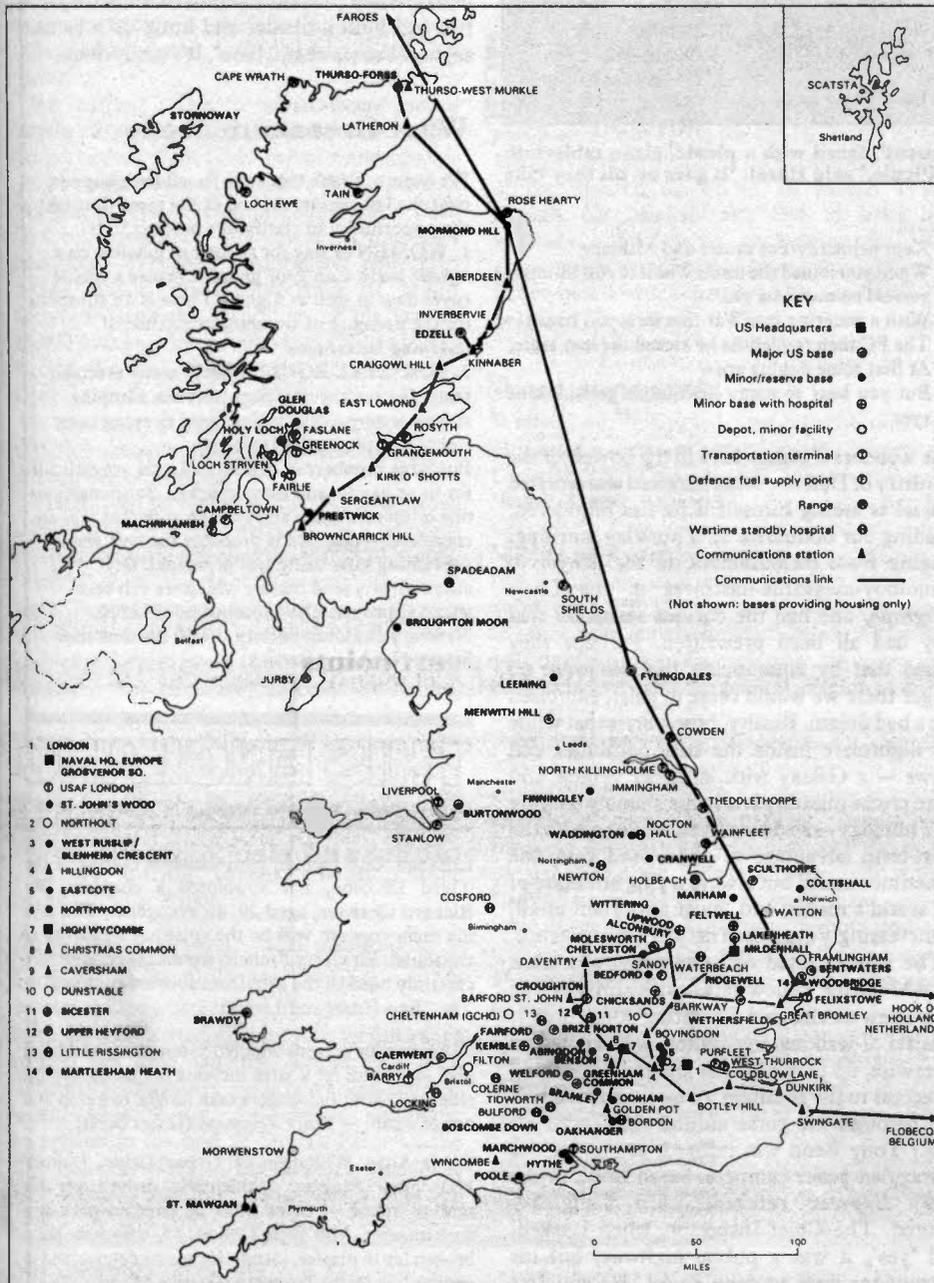
Tuesday

Dear newly formed fire brigade — we appreciate the urgency of your task. Consider the following: do not extinguish fires where food is cooking/ kettles are boiling. Ensure fire is put out incompetently on a cold evening. Under no circumstances spray women until you have issued them with full waterproofs (if not readily available get some from USAF when they refill extinguishers). After supper be ready for washing up duty when dishes are placed in firepit. Love Greenham Women. (New notice by fireplace at Yellow gate, Greenham Common)

LAST NIGHT after most of the visitors had gone and the temperature had dropped, they started putting the fires out again. At first it was at ten-minute intervals, but after two or three goes they began to lose their tempers. One exasperated officer could not even wait for us to relight it. He walked up and turned the high powered extinguisher (supplied by USAF on the base) full on to Beatrice's back, as she sat consuming the last of her supper in front of the steaming coals.

This is just one form of the continual harassment we have had to deal with since Wednesday, when I woke to find that a small army of police had cordoned us off, while a nervous group of bailiffs advanced gingerly towards our benders. Since 'evicting' us, the police have had to face the fact that not only are there more of us, but we are dispersed over a wider area. Their irritation has increased. On Friday the women in the clearing had their tents taken down at 4am in the pouring rain. Parking anywhere in the vicinity of Yellow gate is forbidden; so belongings have to be shifted by hand each time the bailiffs appear. All this of course is legal, but it's interesting to note that the police and bailiffs have started 'helping' each other with their duties. Last Wednesday bailiffs, with numbers pasted on their chests were to be seen pushing women around, while the police have on occasion shifted belongings.

The media attention has as usual brought the nastier creatures out of the woodwork: from small boys who throw water-filled balloons to larger ones who slash tyres and break windows. Yesterday we found that they had wrecked Claire's lovingly tended garden, which the bailiffs had left untouched. The small green spikes had been broken and stamped on. What sort of people need to vent their feelings on daffodils? We asked Anthony Mayer, founder of RAGE (Ratepayers Against Greenham



Map reproduced from The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier