

# MENWITH HILL - JULY 4th DEMONSTRATION DEMANDS INDEPENDENCE FROM AMERICA



On a showery July 4th, Genny and Gay from Wrexham, Angus from Newtown and Rachel from Llanidloes made the 200+ mile round trip to North Yorkshire. We were taking part in a demonstration at Menwith Hill USAF base, organised by the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) on the theme Independence from America.



*Brenda of Fairford Peacewatch (right) with banner*

Many people are not aware that this beautiful piece of North Yorkshire was handed over to the Americans after the Second World War and has been occupied by them ever since. Menwith Hill is the largest electronic monitoring station in the world. It intercepts the world's communications for US intelligence, employing US civilians and servicemen who work around the clock analysing communications mainly from Europe, Russia and the Middle East. All telecommunications traffic to and from Europe and passing through Britain can be intercepted at the base, including private telephone calls, faxes, emails (yes, maybe yours). Much of the information is collected, processed and relayed back to the United States automatically and without any accountability to the UK, which is of concern to British businesses as well as individuals. A great deal of this data comes from spy satellites and the base has a number of large white "golfballs" or "radomes" containing satellite receiving dishes. There are no missiles at Menwith Hill but the base plays a crucial communications role in any conflict involving the US and, as such, is also a prime target for attack.

The three guest speakers at the demo, John Sloboda of Iraq Body Count, Mobeen Azhar of Leeds Stop the War Coalition and Jean Lambert, Green MEP, all spoke about US/UK-led wars and the occupation of Iraq, the roles of USAF Menwith Hill and the need for Independence FROM America. They made it clear that we were protesting against US Foreign Policy, not the American people. See page 5 opposite for an extract from John Sloboda's speech.

After the speakers and a lively drumming workshop, Lindis Percy of CAAB took everyone on a guided tour around the perimeter fence of the base. As the tour

proceeded, Lindis gave background information about the base and described the latest developments, which are linked with America's "Star Wars" programme. Menwith Hill's ongoing expansion means it is now able to transmit and receive communications and photographic images from space. This will help US Space Command in its mission to see and hear everything on the planet and enable laser weapons to be able to reach anywhere on the earth within a target of about six feet. The latest newsletter of the *Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space* explains succinctly the outcome of these developments: "Space technology now coordinates all U.S. warfare around the world. Thus, whoever controls space controls the planet. Space technology becomes the military arm of corporate globalization. Military space technology allows the U.S. to essentially dictate terms to any country that might consider standing up to corporate rule."

Throughout the day, the several hundred demonstrators were vastly and unnecessarily over-policed, with officers in vans, on horseback, on bicycles and on quad-bikes. The police cyclists (whose bikes and cycling gear looked brand new) and the quad-bikers appeared to be having fun, in stark contrast to the officers on foot, some of whom quickly resorted to violence when a number of demonstrators decided to exercise their right to walk along a public footpath beside the perimeter fence. The disproportionate policing of this event took many police officers away from their normal duties in towns throughout North Yorkshire. Luckily there were antidotes to the humourless policing, namely the lively rhythms of Sheffield Samba Band and CIRCA, the Leeds-based Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, pictured here helping the police out with crowd control, security, or something.



*CIRCA lends a hand*

It is important that we keep protesting at bases like Menwith Hill for as long as Britain continues to allow the US free rein to spy and warmonger from them. The U.S. is a rogue state guilty of all the crimes it uses as excuses to invade other countries or undermine their regimes.

**INDEPENDENCE FROM AMERICA FOR EVERYONE!**

## JOHN SLOBODA'S SPEECH

The Iraq Body Count project, for which I work, has devoted itself to documenting one dire consequence of the Bush-Blair assault on Iraq. Day by day we record the mounting toll of media-reported Iraqi deaths: non-combatants, many women and children, who have been victims of the invasion, the occupation, and the insurgency that followed. Our death totals will shortly pass 14,000. And that could still be an underestimate.

On March 19th 2003, the day before the invasion, Tony Blair said, on the floor of the House of Commons. '[Saddam Hussein] will be responsible for many, many more deaths even in one year than we will be in any conflict'. Was he right? Amnesty International publishes an annual human rights monitoring report. From these reports we learn that executions by the Iraqi regime numbered at most 'hundreds' each year since 2000. So we have killed vastly more than would have been killed by Saddam, under any projection. As Human Rights Watch has concluded, *"the invasion of Iraq failed to meet the test of a humanitarian intervention."*

Britain and the USA were lone partners in the UN-authorized "Coalition Provisional Authority"... There was no British zone and American Zone as far as legal responsibility was concerned. Everything that has happened (or failed to happen) in Iraq was fully the responsibility of both governments. This includes Abu Ghraib and Fallujah. All American crimes in Iraq are British crimes too.

We will be asking the new Iraqi government whether it plans to do what the USA and the UK so pointedly failed to do: establish a comprehensive record that respects and honours the Iraqi dead. When Iraqis start this necessary task, we will if asked turn over all our data to them. In the meantime, our work continues. Innocents die daily, and there is no sign of this ending. Indeed, the month on month trend for deaths during 2004 has been upwards. It is hard to see how there will be an end to the killing until the total withdrawal of British and American troops and their replacement by a UN-controlled multinational force. We continue to call for this. Iraq needs Independence from America, as much as we do.

But the Independence we seek is not just about legality, it is not about outdated notions of state sovereignty... What we need is a much deeper and more profound independence. We need independence from greed and profligate consumption. We need independence from economic and environmental exploitation. We need independence from racism. We need independence from the structural violence that consigns half the world's people to abject poverty. And that independence can only be achieved when we face up to the full realisation of the interdependence we all have on this fragile planet.

Getting US bases off our soil will solve little if it is not accompanied by much more fundamental changes in the way we live and use the earth's resources... We cannot allow sane and thoughtful lifestyles to continue to be branded "fringe" or "alternative". They must now become a mainstream option for the future of the world. Live simply to end wars!"

[www.iraqbodycount.net](http://www.iraqbodycount.net) [www.caab.org.uk](http://www.caab.org.uk)

## HANDOVER? WHAT HANDOVER?



Members of Wrexham Peace & Justice Forum were out in the town centre of Wrexham on Monday 28th June, the day of the so-called "Handover of Sovereignty". We were joined by members of Oswestry Coalition for Peace for a morning of leafleting and talking with passers-by about the situation in Iraq and what the "handover" really means. See front cover for photo.

We gave out hundreds of copies of two different leaflets. The first was a short biography of the new US Ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte. Negroponte oversaw the use of chemical weapons against the people of Vietnam in the 1960s. In the 1980s, he organised illegal aid to the Contras in Nicaragua and covered up the murder of 32 nuns in El Salvador. In the 1990s, he was the US Ambassador to Mexico where he shepherded the North American Free Trade Agreement. This agreement caused 1 million Mexican farmers to lose their lands and livelihoods. The second leaflet examined the dismal facts about the so-called "handover of power"; copies of this were distributed in the July-August issue of WPJN.

On Tuesday 29th June we hung banners over the A483 by-pass, drawing attention to the fact that the US-led occupation of Iraq has not ended, (an occupation for which Britain is jointly responsible), and demanding that Iraq should be given back to the Iraqi people.

Since the official "handover", the situation in Iraq has deteriorated still further. In August there has been heavy fighting and loss of life in Najaf, Kut, Amara, Basra and Sadr City, a suburb of Baghdad, as US, UK and Iraqi forces have tried to break the so-called Mahdi Army of Moqtadr al Sadr. Al Sadr has repeatedly called for a truce, as he wishes to join the political process. These calls have been rejected by the US and the puppet Iraqi government, who fear the political strength of the Shia majority. It is not Sadr's guns but the votes of his followers that pose a threat to US domination.



Top and above: WPJF banners over A483 by-pass