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TIME FOR FIVE EYES TO BECOME FOUR EYES

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TIME FOR FIVE EYES TO BECOME FOUR EYES

By Murray Horton

Five Eyes started off as a top-secret post-World War 2 signals intelligence sharing network between the relevant spy agencies of the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand i.e., the white English-speaking victors of that war. It started to register on the consciousness of the New Zealand public with the 1970s' creation of the NZ Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB), seemingly out of legislative thin air.

The GCSB is NZ's Five Eyes member agency, being very much the junior partner in the spies' pecking order, with the US National Security Agency (NSA) at the top. The GCSB got a couple of bases in NZ – firstly Tangimoana and then, in the late 1980s, Waihopai. Which is where the Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) came in, and the rest is history.

The existence of any such network was denied by all concerned for decades. Eventually it was discovered that it had a name – the UKUSA Agreement (which remained secret). Its mandate evolved from SIGINT (signals intelligence) to ELINT (electronic intelligence. By contrast, the NZ Security Intelligence Service [SIS] engages in HUMINT or human intelligence). It was only in this century that the existence of what is now called Five Eyes was publicly acknowledged – the GCSB Website plainly states: "New Zealand is a member of the UKUSA Agreement, a multilateral agreement for SIGINT cooperation. This international partnership is also referred to as the 'Five-Eyes'".

So, the secrecy about its existence is gone but there is no official explanation from any member country as to what it does. For that, we are beholden to investigative journalists like NZ's very own Nicky Hager and insider whistle blowers like American Edward Snowden. The purpose of this article is not to go over, yet again, what the Waihopai spybase, the GCSB and Five Eyes actually do. That has been ABC's bread and butter for more than 30 years and *Peace Researcher* readers will be very familiar with all the various manifestations of NZ's membership in this international spying alliance.

Five Eyes has enjoyed bipartisan support from Labour and National governments, although the odd politician has expressed the slightest twinge of unease about it. "(Former Prime Minister) Helen Clark said she believed the Five Eyes alliance was a net benefit for New Zealand, but it was vital that the country maintained its independence within the network. 'I think you're as independent as you want to be. I consider we were independent in my time'" (1999-08). 'I sense there's been a bit of slippage since then, frankly'".

"Clark said 'sources in officialdom' had told her New Zealand had 'got a lot closer back in' and that could threaten the country's independent foreign policy, which went right back to the nuclear-free stance of the mid-1980s" (*RNZ*, 10/6/20, "NZ's Independence From Five Eyes Has Slipped – Helen Clark")¹. I can't let this bullshit about "an independent foreign policy" go unchallenged – membership of Five Eyes, in itself, renders that a nonsense.

"International Priorities" Meant No Spying On Real Terrorists

And I will make the point that, even within its core business of intelligence gathering and sharing, Five Eyes is of little or no discernible use to NZ. "International priorities dictated a gaping hole in the collection of far-Right intelligence reports, according to the lead communications spy agency. The Royal Commission of Inquiry (into the 2019 Christchurch mosques' massacre) heard that the Government Security Communications Bureau got 7,526 intelligence reports about terrorism and violent fanaticism in a three-month period in late 2018-19".

"But not a single one was about Rightwing extremism. This 'was not the result of the GCSB's own intelligence collection settings', the Bureau's Director-General Andrew Hampton told RNZ in a statement. These partners had their own legal mandates, which might also influence what intelligence they collected, Hampton said" (*Stuff*, 22/12/20, "Spy Partners' Focus Dictated Lack Of Far Right Intelligence, GCSB Boss Says")². That says it all, really.

Weaponising "The Club"

The focus of this article is on the very recent phenomenon of the overt politicisation of Five Eyes, indeed its weaponisation. Obviously, it always has been political but within the covert world of spying. Very recently, however, Five Eyes has been put forward by its bigger members as being something akin to a political bloc and one with a single political focus – to confront China, which is being portrayed as the challenger to, and potential successor of, the US empire and its global dominance.

There has always been a narrative from New Zealand politicians and their media and academic mouthpieces that NZ's Five Eyes membership is of great importance to this country and that "we" (never defined) get much more out of it than "we" put in. "Prime Minister John Key says New Zealand's likely military contribution to the fight against Islamic State 'is the price of the club' that New Zealand belongs to with the likes of the United States, Australia, Britain and Canada in the intelligence alliance known as Five Eyes".

"Even if the contribution is small - of course it will be proportional - there has to be some contribution," he

said. 'It is the price of the club'" (*NZ Herald*, 20/1/15, Audrey Young)³. It should be noted that, in 2021, the now former Prime Minister, Sir John Key, does not consider a fight with China to be the "price of the club". "Sir John Key says our Government is entitled to take an independent stance on China. Sir John told Mike Hosking our Government should be able to take a different position on China than other members of Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance".

"That's what it is, an intelligence sharing, not a platform for peddling views on any or all other issues. I think it should be kept for security'" (*Newstalk ZB, Mike Hosking Breakfast*, 3/5/21)⁴. It is intriguing how the National Party, which Key headed for more than a decade, sucked up to China. Presumably because it saw China supplanting the US and wanting to stay in the good books of NZ's biggest trading partner, after faithfully serving the US empire for countless decades.

But Key and NZ's Tories are out of step with their ideological bedfellows in the other Five Eyes countries. The US, under both Trump and Biden, is pushing a policy of confronting China. Australia has taken it several steps further by outright provoking China, with various Ministers and senior officials beating the war drums (presumably relying on the US to do any actual fighting if push comes to shove). It has paid a heavy price in terms of its trade relations with China, which is Australia's biggest trading partner.

New Zealand is doing its little bit to give the fingers to China. For example, late in 2021 the Navy will join a British naval flotilla which will tour east Asia, "including passing through the contested South China

Sea". Proving that the NZ military still stands to attention when its old imperial master snaps its fingers. But New Zealand is very wary about going down the same anti-China path as its Five Eyes big brothers. The Government "temporarily" banned China's Huawei from involvement in Spark's 5G rollout but has not followed the total ban on Huawei imposed by the other Eyes.

The overt politicisation of Five Eyes is showing itself in ways such as commercial decisions made by individual New Zealand companies. "A decision by one of Waikato's largest and longest established family companies not to base its manufacturing in China helped it score security contracts in 'Five Eyes' countries...".

"Speaking at a recent tech forum in Hamilton, Kahl Betham, newly-appointed Chief Executive of the Gallagher Group, said the company is entrusted to protect military sites offshore and 'all the power and gas in Europe'... 'We actually deliberately decided to invest in automation, which is peopleless, so that we can bring home some commodity-based manufacturing from China that was previously unaffordable', Betham said". 'In fact, the only reason we're in the US Government right now, and Five Eyes countries, is because we didn't go and manufacture in China like everybody else did. Even our American competitors went there".

"So, just think about that, New Zealand is an advantage. Waikato is an advantage' he said. 'So, the people who are responsible for Australia, New Zealand, UK, US and Canada's intelligence and military have stated that we are the world's best offering by buying it from us'" (*Stuff*, 12/4/21, Aaron Leaman)⁵. Note that



this wasn't a high-minded corporate decision made because of moral objections to, say, China's human rights record. Nope, it was naked geopolitics based on choosing sides: Five Eyes good, China bad.

A Dollar Each Way

In recent years, NZ has expressed disquiet about the expanding political remit of Five Eyes. For example, into areas such as immigration and online child exploitation. But, most specifically, into becoming a bloc focused on criticising and confronting China, on subjects like Hong Kong, and its human rights record.

Gerry Brownlee, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the previous National government, described this expanded remit as "an interesting trend" and went on to say: "It seems to me we should be continuing with that policy where we are talking about those issues rather than lining up with others who are a little more strident and, if I can also say, a lot less dependent on China than New Zealand is".

"It is a little concerning because, given our location and given our broad international friendships, we should be much more independent in our thinking" (*NZ Herald*, "Keeping An Eye On 'The Club'", Audrey Young, 30/11/20). When we have very senior faithful servants of the US empire such as Key and Brownlee criticising an expanded role for Five Eyes, talking about an independent thinking, and, ever so mildly, criticising the other Eyes ("a little more strident"), you can see just how much out of step the other Eyes are with NZ.

Things really kicked off in February 2021 when Nanaia Mahuta, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, made her first major policy speech, which was neatly summarised in the media headline "China For Trade, US For Defence And Pacific At The Centre" (*Stuff*, 4/2/21, Thomas Manch)⁶.

This was an openly stated version of the old saying "to have a dollar each way". Mahuta followed this up with her first speech about China, in April 2021. In this one she likened China to a dragon and New Zealand to a taniwha. She called for NZ to lessen its reliance on China as an export destination and to diversify its trade relationships. So far, so good, as far as the ideologues were concerned.

But she also "noted New Zealand's discomfort with the 'expanding remit' of the Five Eyes partnership... For decades the alliance was kept mostly hidden but in recent years several statements have been issued by the grouping – some not including New Zealand – criticising China over human rights and democracy issues ...' We are uncomfortable with expanding the remit of the Five Eyes', Mahuta said to reporters. 'New Zealand has been very clear, certainly in this term and since we've held the portfolio, not to invoke the Five Eyes as the first point of contact of messaging out on a range of issues that really exist out of the remit of the Five Eyes'".

Letting The Side Down

That led to the Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, being asked by Australian media "if this risked sending a signal to China that New Zealand was not 'one' with its Five Eyes partners on issues of democracy and human rights. Ardern rejected this, saying instead that New Zealand just believed that the Five Eyes group was not the best platform to deliver those messages" (*Stuff*, 20/4/21, Henry Cooke)⁷.

Whereupon, Ardern was labelled "the West's woke weak link" by the Defence Editor of the UK *Telegraph*. "Ardern can expect her country's isolation to deepen further as New Zealand faces the very real prospect of expulsion from the alliance over its pro-Beijing stance... New Zealand's reluctance to cooperate with other Five Eyes members raises serious questions about its continued membership of the alliance".

"By choosing Beijing at the expense of her Five Eyes allies, Ms Ardern risks eroding New Zealand's credibility on the global political map" (*Stuff*, 22/4/21)⁸. Jacinda should take being insulted by Tory rags like the *Telegraph* as a badge of honour.

This drive by the other four Eyes to turn it into an all-encompassing political bloc has manifested itself in various ways recently, as has New Zealand's reluctance to join in. "This same wariness was noticeable last year (2020) when Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg asked the finance ministers of the Five Eyes countries to coordinate on Covid-19 economic policies to 'ensure global financial stability'. Frydenberg explicitly used the term 'Five Eyes'".

"At the time, Finance Minister Grant Robertson's office was reluctant to comment on the move. In a later Official Information Act response, Robertson told *Stuff* the meetings were for 'economic leaders to discuss the impacts and response to Covid-19, and my participation was on that basis. The Five Eyes is an intelligence grouping that is separate from these meetings,' Robertson emphasised" (*Stuff*, 23/4/21, Thomas Manch)⁹.

Spies' Relationship Unchanged

That same article opined that it was unlikely that NZ would leave Five Eyes, saying that NZ receives an "outsize benefit" from belonging. And there is no hint of any rupture in the intelligence relationship. When the trans-Tasman travel bubble opened in April 2021, the very first official Australian visitor to Wellington was their Minister of Foreign Affairs. "Governments, policies, and views of the world might change, but intelligence agencies and the relationships between spies have always remained".

"Illustrating this was the presence of New Zealand's chief spy, SIS Director-General Rebecca Kitteridge, at Thursday's meeting between Mahuta and her Australian counterpart Marise Payne. Upon entering the room, Kitteridge warmly embraced her Australian equivalent, Australian Secret Intelligence Service Director-General Paul Symon. The spooks were likely at the meeting for more than a catch-up" (*ibid.*).

(Actually, the presence of the ASIS boss at a trans-Tasman Ministerial meeting is noteworthy. It is Australia's foreign intelligence agency, its CIA – NZ has no equivalent agency. ASIS has a very murky history, with plenty of blood on its hands and a whole lot of scandals. For the current one, see¹⁰).

Gerald Hensley is one of NZ's most notorious Cold War dinosaurs from the 1980s and 90s, so it is entirely predictable that he would support Five Eyes' expanded remit and NZ getting involved with that (he was head of the Prime Minister's Department when the Waihopai spy base was approved by the Lange Labour government).

"There is no middle ground for an independent stance: we either condemn the grave abuses being committed by China or by staying silent we effectively side with China.



ASIS Director-General Paul Symon (third from left) with Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne (second from right), Wellington, April 2021.

There is a way out of this: to join with our four best friends, apparently now to be termed the Five Eyes, in their condemnations. We have of course been busy ruling this out, but we might now consider ruling it in" (*Stuff*, 28/4/21)¹¹.

Five Eyes Is Not An Alliance

Interestingly, pushback against NZ's involvement with an expanded Five Eyes came from Damien Grant, a regular Rightwing columnist for *Stuff* "who writes from a libertarian perspective". "We are not in an alliance with the United States ... We are, however, entangled with something called Five Eyes. Exactly what we are obligated to do under this agreement is unclear. This is reasonable; it is all secret-spy stuff after all. It is hard to conduct covert operations in daylight. However, what we do know is that Five Eyes exists for the collection and dissemination of intelligence".

"There is no obligation to defend other parties in the event of an attack. There are no joint military exercises. Whatever Five Eyes is, an alliance it is not. Maybe it should be and perhaps some would like this rather informal relationship enhanced in the years to come; but if Aotearoa is to enter into alliances, then this needs to be done openly, with public discussion and preferably the ratification of Parliament".

"Nonetheless, in recent years Five Eyes has been upgraded by stealth ... Five Eyes should not be used as a back-door means of creating an alliance without an informed public debate ... China is a malign actor on the world stage. However, if you want my opinion, and if you have

read this far then I assume that you do, China is less inclined to send troops and drones into places where they are unwanted than the Americans have been".

"We should never lose sight of the inherent evil of totalitarian regimes and never resile from our obligation to speak up for those who are unable to do so for themselves. Yet we must do this as a free, sovereign and unaligned power ourselves; not as a reluctant partner of an informal intelligence agreement masquerading as an alliance" (*Stuff*, 25/4/21)¹².

Let's Get Out While The Going's Good

ABC fully agrees that the time is long overdue to have a national and public discussion about New Zealand and Five Eyes. Let the other Eyes have their expanded remit if they wish – New Zealand should leave them to it and wave Five Eyes goodbye. Because it is the reason for the existence of both the GCSB and Waihopai. Five Eyes is what binds New Zealand into the American empire, specifically both its intelligence and military wings.

It is much more important than ANZUS ever was; it pre-dates ANZUS, it has carried on uninterrupted despite NZ being kicked out of ANZUS in the 1980s, it is, in reality, the secret ANZUS to which NZ has always belonged and in which we have been a willing accomplice. Getting NZ out of Five Eyes is absolutely central to achieving a genuinely independent foreign policy. I'll go further than that and say that getting NZ out of Five Eyes would be a major step to NZ being a truly independent nation. This is in addition to

closing the Waihopai and Tangimoana spy bases and abolishing the GCSB. Time for Five Eyes to become Four Eyes.

Weblinks:

- 1 <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/the-service/418642/nz-s-independence-from-five-eyes-has-slipped-helen-clark>
- 2 Phil Pennington, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300190188/spy-partners-focus-dictated-lack-of-far-right-intelligence-gcsb-boss-says>
- 3 <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/prime-minister-john-key-isis-fight-price-of-the-club/>
- 4 <https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/mike-hosking-breakfast/audio/sir-john-key-new-zealand-allowed-a-different-stance-on-china-to-five-eyes/>
- 5 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/124754364/waikato-firm-gallagher-scored-five-eyes-contracts-because-it-kept-manufacturing-out-of-china>
- 6 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/124154902/nanaia-mahuta-lays-out-vision-for-nz-foreign-policy-china-for-trade-us-for-defence-and-pacific-at-the-centre>
- 7 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300281578/jacinda-ardern-says-new-zealands-new-stance-on-five-eyes-isnt-a-backdown-to-china>
- 8 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/124914696/prime-minister-jacinda-ardern-labelled-the-wests-woke-weak-link-over-reluctance-to-join-five-eyes-china-stance>
- 9 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/124927523/the-five-eyes-bluster-will-blow-over-but-beneath-it-lies-a-greater-struggle-for-new-zealand>
- 10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia%E2%80%93East_Timor_spying_scandal
- 11 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/opinion/124955051/five-eyes-and-china-no-middle-ground-for-nz>
- 12 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/opinion/300284551/entangled-in-five-eyes-guarded-in-stealth-an-alliance-it-is-not> ■

ACTION NEEDED

The New Counter-Terrorism Bill Must Get Your Attention

By Warren Thomson

The Government's Counter-Terrorism Legislation Bill is now in front of Parliament's Justice Select Committee. This Bill is the Government's implementation of recommendation 18 of the Royal Commission Report on the Christchurch terror attack in March 2019. It needs serious attention from civil liberties advocates and widespread public response. How far will it extend the powers of the spooks, and how much will it further transgress on Kiwi civil liberties?

The new Bill will amend the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 and Terrorism Suppression (Control Orders) Act 2019. According to Justice Minister Kris Faafoi, the legislation will "update and improve New Zealand's counter-terrorism legislation and ensure that the right legislative tools are available to intervene early and prevent harm" (this quote from a Government media release has been edited for grammatical reasons).

In particular there is an emphasis on "a framework to allow early intervention, including against those who operate outside organised terrorist groups", clearly an expansion of current spy powers, and one which needs serious examination to see how far protest activities could be dragged into the net.

Features Of New Legislation

1. Creates a new offence to criminalise *planning or preparation* for a "terrorist act" which puts a heavy load on how "terrorist act" is interpreted. (Two years ago in the UK anti-fracking protestors were charged under terrorism

laws for blocking access to a mining site).

2. Attempts to clarify the definition of a "terrorist act"; past efforts to differentiate potential killers from peaceful protestors have been unsuccessful.
3. Expands the criminal offence of financing terrorism to include broader forms of material support. Will donations to people in Gaza count?
4. Creates a new offence to specifically criminalise terrorist weapons and combat training for terrorist purposes.

A *New Zealand Herald* report (13/4/21) succinctly raises some of the issues that need to be addressed, the first being that widening the definition of terrorism to include inducing fear would encapsulate incidents like the (questionable) one of sending a pig's head to a mosque. The proposed law changes evoking "terror in a civilian population" to just inducing "fear in a population".

Faafoi claimed the current law did not enable agencies to act against an individual planning an act of terrorism, but in fact the current law would not have restricted agencies from acting if they had uncovered Christchurch killer Brenton Tarrant's March 2019 plans before he enacted them. The Minister ducked this key point by saying he would not comment on "individual cases" (*NZ Herald*, *ibid*). The Prime Minister has already said the proposed changes would not necessarily have prevented the 15 March (2019) attacks.



In another critique, a *Guardian* article, commenting on the proposed NZ laws, comments: "The fiasco of the Operation 8 counter-terror operation in 2007 where teams of armed police, equipped with new anti-terrorism powers, stopped school buses, set up roadblocks, raided houses, arrested 18 people across the country, and detained many more in their homes for hours looms over new laws and how Police judge who or what poses a threat" (*Guardian*, 28/4/21. Quote has been slightly edited). *Peace Researcher (PR)* adds that this Urewera assault certainly induced "terror in a civilian population" (see Murray Horton's "A Bad Case Of 'Terrorism' Hysteria", in *PR 35, December 2007*, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr35.pdf>. Ed.).

The *Guardian* article notes that the new law would give the Police and Security Intelligence Service (SIS) warrantless powers of entry, search and surveillance when suspecting someone of planning an attack (*PR* emphasis). While *PR* is an advocate of abolishing the SIS and giving the Police domestic security duties, it is clear that the Police often get it badly wrong and need effective oversight. To extend Police powers of entry beyond current practice is not acceptable. In terms of the SIS, the warrant system is already too weak.

The Royal Commission (RC) in late 2020 described Police counter-terrorism intelligence capabilities as "degraded" and concluded that limited strategic focus on counter-terrorism from the intelligence system meant that staff were not collecting information that would help to build adequate summation of domestic

terrorism. It is likely that dissatisfaction with pay and high staff turnover continues. (A problem also for the SIS). The new legislation will do nothing to solve such problems.

The *Guardian* quoted University of Otago Law Professor Andrew Geddis as commenting in regard to the proposed legislation: "There is a genuine concern that the State can overreact and historically has overreacted to what it regards as being national security threats". The Bill now before Parliament needs urgent attention from activists and defenders of Kiwi civil liberties.

Christchurch Hui On Counter-Terrorism

The following is based on a Government media release (*LiveNewsPublisher Website*, 13/5/21). At the time of writing for this *PR* issue it was not clear who would attend this hui or how the attendees had been chosen. The Government is progressing another recommendation of the Royal Commission Of Inquiry Report Into The Terrorist Attack On Christchurch Masjidain by convening New Zealand's **first national hui** on countering terrorism and violent extremism. He Whenua Taurikura, meaning "a land or country at peace", was to meet in Christchurch on 15 and 16 June, and yearly after that, Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques, Andrew Little, says.

"The first annual He Whenua Taurikura hui will bring together communities, civil society, academia, private sector and Government to look at the security risks that New Zealand faces from terrorism and violent extremism. It will promote research on radicalisation; challenges from hate-motivated violent extremist ideologies; and promote discussion on what to prioritise to keep New Zealanders safe. The hui will also develop options for the National Centre of Excellence for preventing and countering violent extremism which the Government will establish later in 2021".

Analysis: The Royal Commission Report On The Christchurch Mass Shooting

The following is Anti-Bases Campaign's (ABC) appraisal of the Royal Commission Report (December 2020) on the Christchurch Mosque shootings. It is printed here for

background information, especially in relation to proposed new "security" legislation. It should be noted that as the Government's response to the Royal Commission Report proceeds, some aspects of this ABC's analysis may have less relevance.

Introduction

On 26 November, 2020, the Royal Commission Of Inquiry Into The Terrorist Attack On Christchurch Masjidain On 15 March 2019 presented its Report to the Governor-General. The Report has 44 recommendations, some of which involve significant reorganisation of the intelligence and security structure, and a number of others which could be of concern to those of us who have active concerns about "counter terrorism", democratic process and human rights issues. (It also contains several misspellings of the word "Government").

In recent years both National and Labour governments have expedited security legislation, in some cases using "safe hands" reviews to ensure results which meant agency powers were extended without significantly improving oversight; and, in some cases, pushing laws through quickly and preventing full consideration of the implications of those laws. (The Royal Commission Report explicitly raises questions about several aspects of the 2017 legislation). In no case was any consideration given to fundamental reform of the security agencies themselves. (The previous comments can be equally applied to the proposed counter-terrorism legislation described above).

The Royal Commission stated that: "Some recommendations should be able to be implemented relatively quickly", and a new intelligence coordinating body should have "functions to be established, in legislation as soon as practicable, but without delaying its establishment". Some recommendations were proposed (in November 2020) to be adopted within six months.

Any Government quick fix could well mean more money for the spooks and less privacy rights for the rest of us. "The taxpayer is quite likely to be facing a hefty price tag for bringing the new agency's counter-terrorism role up to parity with its counter-espionage efforts. There is also the very real prospect that the

Christchurch failures will see a significant increase in the powers of the new agency, with a corresponding loss in civil liberties. The public will pay more, and be less free" (Gordon Campbell, *Scoop*, 11/12/20, <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL2012/S00053/on-the-royal-commissions-report-into-the-christchurch-mosque-shootings.htm>).

The Cabinet has already given its agreement to all RC recommendations. Legislative and/or administrative changes could be made very quickly. This means that for any effective critique of proposed changes in structures and legislation, those of us outside the Establishment will have to prepare quickly, in time for an uphill battle to:

- (1) get all views presented with a full public submissions programme,
- (2) have creative and well-researched proposals for radical restructuring of the whole intelligence/security agency system, and
- (3) get discussion on: [a] withdrawing from Five Eyes and [b] abolishing, or at least reforming the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) and SIS, onto the agenda (a very tough proposition, since neither of the main political Parties want to know).

What follows is a summary of significant RC recommendations, then some further comments relating to the spy agencies, their operations, and their oversight.

RC Recommendations

The Royal Commission Report consists of six parts: Introduction, Improving Counter-Terrorism (R1-18), Firearms Licensing, Supporting Victim Recovery, Improving Social Cohesion, and Recommendations Implementation (R43-44). The most significant points for ABC supporters are recommendations 1-18; a summary and comments on these follows. Not all recommendations are listed.

R1: A Minister responsible for counter-terrorism (CT) to coordinate action and receive regular reports on CT.

R2: Establishment of a new "well-resourced" security agency:

- With a Chief Executive Officer to advise the PM and chair the new organisation
- Will develop CT strategy
- Will advise the Minister
- Must have “engagement with the community, local government, and private sector”
- Ensure human rights
- “Leverage” the emergency management structures of local authorities

This would be a major change in the current intelligence/security structure. And we can envisage this and other recommendations resulting in a major bun fight between interested groups. Does “well-resourced” mean being given more money?

R3: Investigate an alternative to the current voluntary Security and Intelligence Board to recommend strategy to Cabinet re “violent extremism”. This would be an ‘interdepartmental executive board’ responsible for coordinating intelligence and security issues.

R4: The new agency (R2 above) should have a “public facing policy” and collaborate with local and private sector groups.

The RC Report is strong on CT groups/community interaction, but how and who is not so clear.

R5: The intelligence agencies – GCSB and SIS – should be “subject to performance audit” by the Auditor-General.

This would be a significant new step in oversight of the spies, although strictly in financial/business performance terms.

R6: Strengthen the role of Parliament’s Intelligence and Security Committee.

- it should “access sensitive information”
- consider priorities of the security/intelligence agencies

Another potentially significant change in oversight; one that we should totally support. But likely to be watered down or lost in transit. (Would the Parliamentary Committee get Select Committee status, be able to subpoena witnesses, access classified data?).

R7: The new agency (R2 above) should establish an advisory group on CT as soon as practicable. This Advisory Group on Counter-Terrorism would “test ideas and provide advice to the new national intelligence and security agency”.

R9: The new agency should

- improve intelligence sharing
- implement the 2018 Review of NZ Security Classification System report.

This Review slipped in under the radar; it does recommend such moves as eliminating any indefinite classification of documents, and regarding classification as enabling rather than restricting.

R12: There should be a simple and known system for the public to report any terrorism concerns.

R14: Specific academic NZ research on CT should be publicly funded.

Another possibly useful concept, depending on who gets the funding.

R15: There should be public education on threats and responses.

R16: There should be an annual hui to share understanding on CT issues.

Who would attend?

R17: Legislate for (new) Minister of National Security and Intelligence

- To publish CT priorities and refer these to the Parliamentary Committee
- To publish an annual “threatscape” report
- Both of the above to be considered by the Parliamentary Committee.

R18: Review all legislation related to CT, especially the need for precursor offence legislation and urgently review Section 19 of the Intelligence and Security Act on “target discovery”.

RC Criticisms Of The 2017 Act (Emphasis Added)

The RC Report raises a number of issues in regard to the (hastily passed) 2017 Intelligence and Security Act (as it affects the counter-terrorism effort).

curity Act (as it affects the counter-terrorism effort).

- “There are a number of issues with the Intelligence and Security Act, some of which limit the activities of the intelligence and security agencies. These should be prioritised in the scheduled legislative review. There should be a particular focus on whether any associated limits on the intelligence and security agencies are justified in light of their objective to contribute to the protection of New Zealand’s national security” (*i.e., potentially the spies may be given greater powers*).
- “For the most part, the issues we have identified with the Intelligence and Security Act (Part 8, Chapter 14) can be resolved during the scheduled legislative review. The exception is section 19 of the Intelligence and Security Act, which we consider **requires urgent legislative attention** for reasons explained in chapter 14 of Part 8. (The possible effect of section 19 in limiting target discovery in respect of Rightwing extremism)”.

Other Royal Commission Criticisms

1. A lack of congruence between the Act and the structure and operation of the New Zealand intelligence community (*i.e., the Act does not fit the purpose*).
2. The application of the necessary and proportionate test to actions that do not require authorisation (*i.e., there needs to be more consideration of actions*).
3. Direct access agreements having not been put in place as contemplated by Parliament.
4. Specificity requirements for warrants (*i.e., there are problems with warrant requests*).
5. Type 2 warrants and the incidental collection of information about New Zealand citizens and permanent residents (*i.e., there are problems with collection of collateral data*).
6. Absence of a legal requirement to enable activity authorised by a warrant.
7. Searches of existing holdings (*i.e., who gets to see the classified data?*)
8. Accessing existing holdings of partner agencies (*i.e., who gets to see the classified data?*)

9. The possible effect of section 19 in limiting target discovery in respect of Rightwing extremism (i.e., *problems acting before something happens*)
10. The operation of section 103.
11. The definition of “employee”.

RC General Comments And Criticisms Of The Spies And Structures

- **COORDINATION:** The Report suggests a lack of coordination between agencies. “The new national intelligence and security agency (Recommendation 2) will lead the coordination of individual agency action plans to ensure they are cohesive and that there are no gaps in public sector agency efforts. Public sector agencies have not been fully using legislation to share information as systematically and widely as they might. *This is particularly the case for the intelligence and security agencies*”.
- **INFORMATION SHARING:** “Information sharing between public sector agencies is critical to the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism effort (Part 8, Chapter 9). A shift in public sector agencies’ approach to highly classified information, in particular ensuring that information is classified correctly and seeing the need-to-know principle as enabling rather than restricting, will allow more information to be shared easily between public sector agencies”.

“We are not the first to form this view. In a 2018 *Review of the New Zealand Security Classification System*, the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Se-

curity made a number of recommendations to improve the classification system. **These recommendations have not been implemented**, but remain relevant today”.

- **OVERSIGHT:** The Report makes strong and positive comments on oversight of the spies. Improved oversight of the counter-terrorism effort “will lead to better performance outcomes. Those who provide that oversight by monitoring and scrutinising the public sector agencies involved in the counter-terrorism effort *need access to relevant information*”.

Importantly, “the Intelligence and Security Committee is currently unable to inquire into the activity of an intelligence and security agency or into any matter that is operationally sensitive. That means that its role is far more limited than that of its counterpart Parliamentary committee in the United Kingdom”.

- **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** The Report criticises the lack of community involvement in CT procedures. The RC Report says that, in early 2020, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet released a *Countering Terrorism And Violent Extremism National Strategy Overview*.

The RC Report attacks this overview – “It is not the strategy we envisage” – primarily because “it was produced without any substantive involvement by communities, civil society, local government and the private sector”. *The theme of public input is a constant in the RC Report. It is hard to be optimistic about this theme*

being seriously translated into the security/intelligence sector.

- The Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee should receive public submissions on the annual statement on extremism.
- The Chief Executive of the national security and intelligence agency is to ensure the Advisory Group on Counter-Terrorism includes representative membership from communities, civil society, local government and the private sector. The make-up of the Advisory Group on Counter-Terrorism should include a gender balance, ethnic and religious diversity, a range of ages (youth, adults and elders) and geographical spread.
- **TERRORISM SUPPRESSION ACT:** “What has also been missing to date is a holistic assessment of the nature of the risk associated with the pre-criminal space in which potential terrorists operate. New Zealand does not have precursor terrorism offences, which means that it is not an offence to be planning or preparing a terrorist attack (Part 8, Chapter 13)”.

“An informed debate is necessary about whether the Terrorism Suppression Act strikes the appropriate balance between providing the counter-terrorism agencies with the means to disrupt planning and preparation for terrorist attacks; and the risk of over-criminalisation. To enable such a debate, the Terrorism Suppression Act should be reviewed as soon as possible to ensure it is fit for purpose, with a particular focus on the lack of precursor terrorism offences”.

- “At present, little is known about the extreme Rightwing environment in New Zealand... The New Zealand Security Intelligence Service is currently unsighted to any individuals or groups who espouse an extreme Rightwing ideology and promote the use of violence to achieve their objectives”.
- The RC comments on how few experienced personnel were working on CT work and problems of high turnover in the SIS. Similar shortcomings and thinly



SIS Director-General Rebecca Kitteridge with GCSB Director-General Andrew Hampton

spread resources were identified by the Commission at the GCSB, and within the Police counter-terrorism unit. In line with this general orientation, many of the priority areas of SIS work – e.g., diplomacy, trade security – are demanded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Counter espionage, diplomatic and trade security interests that MFAT will want the [new agency] to pursue and protect).

- The new national intelligence and security agency (Recommendation 2) should be the fund holder for the contestable research grants.

Further Comments And Criticisms Of The NZ Intelligence Organisations

Gordon Campbell (Scoop)

“Crucially, one of the Report’s major findings was that the SIS had misidentified Islamic terrorism as being the main threat to the public, and therefore misallocated its resources into surveillance of the local Islamic community. The SIS and other agencies (the GCSB, Police and Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet) had programmed themselves to look in the wrong direction for the wrong kind of threat, with the

wrong analytical tools. If the outcome wasn’t so tragic, the organisation described in the Report would be comically unfit for the counter-terrorism role it purported to play”.

Paul Buchanan (Commentator On Intelligence Issues)

Failures “systemic”. Mosques’ attack was an intelligence “fiasco”. SIS (humint – human intelligence) GCSB (elint – electronic intelligence) and Police areas are “okay” but analysis and coordination missing. The main NZ body is the National Assessments Bureau (NAB) which too much follows directives of PM. “If we continue to have intelligence leaders who only cater to leaders of the day, nothing will change”.

The NAB is supposed to do analysis and coordinate intelligence community. It has about 30 staff. In 2018 only one of these staff was concerned with anti-terrorism, and he/she “had an anti-Muslim bias”. The current Security and Intelligence Coordinating Committee was “completely useless” and should be eliminated (the RC agrees). SIS knew the IP (Internet Protocol) addresses killer used and that he was buying parts for weapons but could not identify him.

SIS has very limited online capability. Rebecca Kitteridge bought in as a reformer Director-General of SIS, but is classic case of capture by the organisation. She is not interested in reform. Also, our current Inspector-General of Intelligence (the watchdog) is a “complacent” individual. Former IG Gwyn did a superb job but was “bumped up” to Supreme Court judge to get rid of her. She got “too close to the bone” especially with the SIS, and “they took her out of that job” (video interview).

Keith Locke (Former MP And Commentator On Intelligence Issues)

“The Report said that in the last quarter of 2018 our Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) received 7,526 reports from its international partners on terrorism and violent extremism, none of which related to Rightwing extremism. Because the Americans and other agencies didn’t seem to think Rightwing extremism was important, the GCSB in its true follow-the-leader fashion apparently didn’t think it to be important either and wasn’t looking for a man of the type that was convicted for the Christchurch terrorist attack”. ■

ROCKET LAB Campaign Against It Blasts Off

By Murray Horton

In *Peace Researcher* 60 (November 2020)¹ I wrote the article “Rocket Lab Drags NZ Into US Militarisation Of Space”, which updated the increasingly troubling story of this NZ subsidiary of a US private company which is launching satellites for US military and spy agencies from its NZ launch site (Mahia Peninsula). I drew heavily on the long running excellent work on Rocket Lab by NZ investigative journalist Ollie Neas.

Helping US War Fighting Capabilities

Things haven’t got any better since

2020. Late that year it emerged that Rocket Lab was looking forward to getting ever further enmeshed in the US military’s war fighting capabilities in 2021. It would be launching a “Gunsmoke-J cubesat technology demonstration mission” for the US Army’s Space and Missile Defense Command in the first quarter of the year”.

“The US company responsible for the actual deployment of the satellite from Rocket Lab’s rocket says it will have huge impact on milestone developments in war fighter capabilities on the battlefield and beyond” (*Satellite Today*, 22/10/20)².

Ollie Neas told me in an e-mail: “It appears this satellite has a more explicit warfighting focus than previous ‘R&D’ (research and development) payloads”. This piece of information about Rocket Lab showed the benefit of Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) ringing the alarm bell about it - we were tipped off by one of our

members.

The fawning NZ media coverage of Rocket Lab went into overdrive in early 2021 when it was announced that the company will be publicly listing on the Nasdaq Stock Market in New York, with a stated value of \$US4.1 billion. Certainly, as far as the two major NZ TV networks are concerned, their Rocket Lab coverage is very much one where they have stars in their eyes (pardon the pun).

Ollie Neas Shines A Light On Rocket Lab

But something changed in 2021. Namely, that there is starting to be some organised opposition to Rocket Lab, starting small, as these things always do but exhibiting both great enthusiasm and creativity. ABC will modestly claim a small part in this. The indefatigable Dennis Small has been writing about Rocket Lab for several years now.

That, combined with Ollie Neas’ ex-



"Of course, ... we said right from the beginning if it's involved in the military, we don't want anything to do with it. The military can be quite a tempting cherry because a lot of money gets poured into it. We're about science, we're not about killing people'
- Peter Beck, Metro, 2008.

"You also have to remember that intelligence keeps us safe. Unfortunately, there's a lot of bad actors in the world. I am a New Zealander, but you also have to understand that national security is a global thing. It's not a singular country's responsibility. New Zealand is part of the Five Eyes... it's all very well to criticise national security until the very day that you need it"
- Peter Beck, Press, 28/7/20, "Rocket Lab Defends Spy Role"

Ron Currie RC.

cellent work in much bigger outlets than *Peace Researcher*, piqued our interest and we started looking at what could be done about it. ABC is a Christchurch-based group, so there is no possibility of us organising any activities at either Rocket Lab's Mahia launch site or Auckland assembly plant and headquarters. They are both simply too far away (the Waihopai spy base in Marlborough is the limit of our range). So, all we could do was to publicise the case against Rocket Lab and urge others closer to the scene to take up the cause.

As part of our regular Waihopai spy base protest, in January 2021, ABC hosted a well-attended Blenheim public meeting. One of the speakers was Ollie Neas, on Rocket Lab. We had invited Ollie to speak at our Blenheim meeting as part of our January 2020 Waihopai protest but he told us that he'd moved overseas. So, we thought, that was that. However, halfway through that most memorable of years, I spotted a reference to him being back in the country and guessed, correctly, that he had joined the hordes of Kiwi refugees driven to come home by the pandemic. He was delighted to accept our second time lucky invitation to speak in Blenheim.

People found what he had to say both enthralling and highly alarming.

As the audience was comprised of activists from all over the country, there was a determination expressed to spread the word and do something about Rocket Lab. As outlined below, a campaign against Rocket Lab has now started. Whether ABC can claim any credit for that is a moot point but we're happy to have played our part.

As for Ollie Neas, he went on to write a lengthy feature article about Rocket Lab in the March 2021 *North & South* ("Mahia, We Have A Problem")³. It is undoubtedly the longest and most informative article on Rocket Lab to have appeared in the mainstream media so far and attracted quite a lot of attention from other media outlets. Excellent.

Birth Of Rocket Lab Monitor

The news got better. Auckland peace activists decided to take an active interest in Rocket Lab. Followed shortly thereafter, in February 2021, by the birth of a campaign in the Mahia area i.e., near Rocket Lab's launch site. Rocket Lab Monitor was set up by local Maori women. They have an extremely informative Website⁴ and can be contacted at rocketlabmonitor@gmail.com.

The Website states: "Rocket Lab Monitor is led by people directly connected to Mahia because we live at Mahia and/or whakapapa to

Rongomaiwahine. We invite others to join and support all efforts to better understand the activities of Rocket Lab and ensure only peaceful activities take place at Mahia... Rocket Lab Monitor is a group of volunteers focusing on information collection and education – making sure information shared is factual as something for concerned locals and others to join and build awareness not only of Rocket Lab activities but New Zealand government policy and decision-making on launches".

This opposition first manifested itself in advance of Rocket Lab's March 2021 launch of the

Gunsmoke-J payload (see above). A range of people and organisations (including ABC) wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister calling for the immediate suspension of military payloads. This promptly got major coverage in the *Gisborne Herald*, the newspaper of the nearest city to the launch site.

And led to Sonya Smith, the Wairoa woman fronting Rocket Lab Monitor, to be visited by the cops "to talk about the group". That's a pretty heavy-handed reaction to a group which had done no more than set up a Website and a Facebook page. Rocket Lab Monitor was undaunted and held a peace march hiko in Opoutama, Mahia.

Public Relations Blunders

Rocket Lab realised it had to mount some sort of public relations defence. So, it invited a Gisborne activist involved in the campaign to tour its launch site (he didn't take it up). They also issued an invitation to Green MP Teanau Tuiono, who had been outspoken in opposition to Rocket Lab (Teanau had spoken at ABC's Waihopai spy base protest and Blenheim public meeting, back in January). He didn't take it up, either. Instead, he and Gisborne-based Green MP, Elizabeth Kerekere (in their capacity as members of the Greens' Maori Caucus) met with shareholders in the Maori land

being used for the launch site.

Teanau posted, on the Green Party site (29/3/21)⁵: “Shareholders we have spoken to have not seen the contract with Rocket Lab, which shows the lack of consultation done with tangata whenua. It is a perception of segregation when there are two gates, one for Māori and one for Rocket Lab when accessing the whenua”.

“Rocket Lab accesses the whenua through an electric gate which needs a password to get through, while Māori are required to enter through a standard farm gate over bumpy, gravel road before meeting the nicely sealed Rocket Lab road. This is an example of how easy it can be to tokenise partnerships with tangata whenua”.

Rocket Lab made further public relations blunders, putting out a press release saying it had given local Maori \$1,000 for food and essential supplies during 2020’s national lockdown. Former Chief Executive of Rongomaiwahine Iwi Trust Mo Rongo said, on Facebook: “I thought at the time the offer to be inappropriate, as we as an iwi can more than adequately take care of our own community, and secondly that sometime in the future Rocket Lab’s kind gesture would be used as some form of American corporate grandstanding, which unfortunately has come to fruition”.

“Mr Rongo resigned from the trust in September (2020) following five years as Chairman and one year as Chief Executive. ‘(During that time) I was vehemently opposed to taking funds from Rocket Lab or other corporates that may lead to us or our beneficiaries being beholden to that entity. We’ve been here 1,000 years and we’ll be here 1,000 years after they’re gone. We’ll be fine” (*Gisborne Herald*, 29/3/21)⁶. Rocket Lab Monitor went onto the front foot, erecting a number of billboards around the Mahia district, with slogans such as “No military payloads. Haere atu (go away) Rocket Lab”.

Mainstream Media Gets A Little Bit Critical

And the *Gisborne Herald* was showing commendable initiative in pursuing the Rocket Lab story. It used the Official Information Act to ask the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE, which has to approve Rocket Lab’s payloads)

for details of those payloads. The documents arrived with all payload details heavily redacted. The paper ran a photo of the blacked out documents (24/4/21)⁷.

Even the fawning TV coverage of Rocket Lab started to acknowledge that there might be another side to the story. TVNZ’s Q & A travelled to Mahia to talk to Sonya Smith and other Rocket Lab Monitor activists. The visit coincided with a small protest against a May 2021 Rocket Lab launch (which failed, embarrassingly for the company, with the loss of two commercial satellites). The Q & A clip screened on 23/5/21⁸.

Space For Peace Campaign

And organised opposition is no longer just in Mahia. Led by Auckland peace activists, a national campaign is developing, called Space For Peace (with the slogan: “Aotearoa is NOT a space militarisation launch-pad”). Planned activities range from information Webinars to protests in Auckland, which is where Rocket Lab has its corporate HQ and rocket assembly plant. You can contact the campaign at spaceforpeace@protonmail.com.

Finally, the people of New Zealand are starting to see the ugly reality behind the glossy facade of Rocket Lab. Starting with Mahia, opposition is manifesting itself around the country. Anti-Bases Campaign is proud to play our part in that opposition. The reason is in our name – Rocket Lab is an American company operating a privately-owned base in NZ for the use and benefit of the US military and spy agencies.

That wasn’t the company’s reason for existence when it started off as a small New Zealand outfit in the first decade of this century but it is now. If it’s not prepared to demilitarise its operations, then it must be closed in NZ and relocate its US military/intelligence business to the US, where it already has another launch site. Haere atu, Rocket Lab!

Weblinks:

- [1 http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR60.pdf](http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR60.pdf)
- [2 https://www.satellitetoday.com/launch/2020/10/22/us-army-selects-trisept-to-integrate-and-deploy-gunsmoke-j-cubesat/](https://www.satellitetoday.com/launch/2020/10/22/us-army-selects-trisept-to-integrate-and-deploy-gunsmoke-j-cubesat/)
- [3 https://northandsouth.co.nz/2021/03/14/rocket-lab-military/](https://northandsouth.co.nz/2021/03/14/rocket-lab-military/)
- [4 https://rocketlabmonitor.com/](https://rocketlabmonitor.com/)
- [5 https://www.greens.org.nz/rocketlab_failing_to_properly_consult_with_hap_greens_meet_with_ng_uri_o_rongomaiwahine](https://www.greens.org.nz/rocketlab_failing_to_properly_consult_with_hap_greens_meet_with_ng_uri_o_rongomaiwahine)
- [6 http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/local-news/20210329/rocket-lab-sorry-for-mix-up/](http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/local-news/20210329/rocket-lab-sorry-for-mix-up/)
- [7 http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/local-news/20210424/payload-details-redacted/](http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/local-news/20210424/payload-details-redacted/)
- [8 https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/q-and-a/clips/i-feel-betrayed-some-m-hia-locals-unhappy-with-rocket-lab](https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/q-and-a/clips/i-feel-betrayed-some-m-hia-locals-unhappy-with-rocket-lab) ■



Mahia district billboard (kati = shut or close)

WAIHOPAI SPY BASE PROTEST 2021

By Murray Horton

The Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) held our regular protest at the Waihopai spy base in January 2021. Our press release spelled out why we were there. “Now that the Donald Trump three-ring circus has finally left town, it is a good time to reassess New Zealand’s intelligence and military relationship with the US. Only the emperor has changed, the empire remains unchanged. All the more reason to be shot of it”.

“This ‘transformative’ Government has continued NZ’s membership of the Five Eyes spy alliance, which is the reason for Waihopai’s existence. This despite Jacinda having said: ‘New Zealand has, and always has had, an independent foreign policy’. The evidence shows 100% the opposite and nowhere more glaringly than at Waihopai. The fact is that NZ is the most loyal, albeit junior, satellite of the US Empire”.

“Anti-Bases Campaign invited Andrew Little, the Minister in charge of the NZ Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB, which operates Waihopai) to speak to us at the spy base gate and explain the Government’s position. We received no reply beyond a formal acknowledgement. Attempts to invite a speaker from the Labour Party led to us being told we had to ask the

Minister to speak on this topic. So, neither Little nor the Government are prepared to front up”.

“New Zealanders are told that Waihopai/the GCSB/Five Eyes are vital to protect our national security. 2020/21 has seen the biggest threat to NZ’s national security since WW2, namely the virus. What have Waihopai/the GCSB/Five Eyes done to prevent or protect us from it? A big fat zero. The hundreds of millions of dollars and State resources squandered on Waihopai and the GCSB every year would be better spent on public health, on protecting New Zealanders from real threats, not imaginary ones dictated by our Big Brothers in Five Eyes”.

Doesn’t Protect NZ From Terrorists Or Viruses

“In fact, not only is Waihopai doing nothing to protect us from coronavirus, it is itself literally part of the computer virus of electronic spying. New Zealanders need to be sanitised against it. New Zealanders are told that Waihopai defends NZ from terrorists. No, it doesn’t. The Royal Commission report into the March 15th, 2019 Christchurch mosques’ massacre was damning in its conclusions about NZ’s intelligence agencies”.

“The GCSB electronic spy agency totally missed the worst act of terrorism on NZ soil, one committed by a foreign terrorist with an extensive electronic presence. That is because Waihopai and the GCSB define ‘terrorists’ as per the instructions of their Five Eyes Big Brother, the US National Security Agency (NSA). They turned a blind eye to the real terrorists already here. Just

as US intelligence missed the threat posed by their own domestic terrorists who stormed the Capitol this month” (January 2021).

“Which begs the question – if this spy base can’t even protect us from viruses and terrorists, what useful purpose does it serve? Certainly nothing for the NZ people. For more than 30 years Waihopai has been NZ’s most significant contribution to Washington’s global effort to manipulate world business and diplomacy. And for more than 30 years the Anti-Bases Campaign has protested at Waihopai, calling for its closure.”

“Waihopai does not operate in the national interest of New Zealand. In all but name it is a foreign spy base on NZ soil, paid for with hundreds of millions of our tax dollars; it spies on Kiwis and foreigners; it is NZ’s key contribution to America’s global spying & war machine. It does not protect us from threats to our national security, such as viruses and terrorists. Waihopai must be closed” (ABC press release, 22/1/21, “Waihopai Does Not Protect NZ From Threats To National Security, Such As Viruses And Terrorists”).

Logistically, we did things differently in 2021. For decades ABC has taken responsibility for organising a three-day camp, which has served as a gathering place for those participating in the protest. It was very enjoyable, but an awful lot of work, particularly for those in charge of feeding everyone. We also used to hire a van and shuttle-type trailer, taking responsibility for transporting people between Christchurch and Marlborough and back, plus transport around Marlborough on the



Marlborough Express, 31/1/21

weekend of the protest.

Quite often the people doing all that driving were also heavily involved in the running of the camp and the feeding of the campers. We also used to charge a registration fee, which meant that ABC took responsibility for paying the overnight camping fees for all those who camped with us. We also stopped doing that in 2021.

The numbers camping has dropped sharply in recent years, with people now preferring to make their own accommodation arrangements. That might have something to do with the “mature” demographic of those attending, plus the fact that our campsite gets decidedly cold once the Sun has dropped below the ridge-line and stays that way until it climbs back above it the next morning. This is regardless of how hot the place gets in the day time (and it can get very, very hot. Just days before our arrival this time, temperatures in Marlborough and Canterbury were in the high 30s. But on the actual weekend, it was unseasonably cool).

In 2021 we dropped virtually all of that. The ABC Committee did camp in our usual spot - and we were virtually the only people to do so. Everyone else stayed elsewhere. We did not hire a 12-seater van and trailer, but a basic four-seater campervan, for transporting the Committee only (it was my first ever trip in a campervan and I can't say that I'd unreservedly recommend it).

Green MP Star Speaker

There was a good turnout at the protest at the spy base outer gate on the Saturday morning. People had come from all over the country, from Auckland in the north to Haast in the south west. Plus, a good contingent of Marlborough locals. I filled my usual role as MC on behalf of ABC, plus I was one of the speakers. My speech is basically covered in the ABC press release and the *Marlborough Express* report (see above and below, respectively).

The star speaker was undoubtedly newly elected Green MP Teanau Tuiono, not only making his first attendance at a Waihopai protest, but also seeing the place in person for the first time. See the *Marlborough Express* report (below) for the flavour of what he said. I can't remember any previous Green MPs

who have spoken at Waihopai using phrases like “American imperialism”.

Teanau's very active participation at Waihopai marked a welcome return by the Green Party. ABC has had a close working relationship with the Greens since they first entered Parliament, in 1996. Green Co-Leaders to have spoken at our Waihopai spy base protests are: the late Rod Donald, the late Jeanette Fitzsimons, Russel Norman, Metiria Turei and Marama Davidson (James Shaw is the only Greens Co-Leader not to have come to Waihopai).

Past or present Green MPs to have done likewise include Keith Locke, Steffan Browning and Golriz Gharahman (who spoke at the 2018 protest and was scheduled to do so again in 2020 but had to pull out at very short notice because of health issues. Golriz sent her speech to be read out at the protest). That was the first Waihopai protest since 1996 not to feature a current Green MP in person i.e., since the Party first entered Parliament.

It is significant that, in 2018, 19, 20 and 21, we've had an MP and/or a Co-Leader of the Greens speaking (in person or via proxy) at an ABC protest that is against a policy of the Government of which the Greens are part. On the other hand, Labour

is committed to: keeping Waihopai; keeping NZ's membership of the Five Eyes spy alliance; and staying an active and loyal junior satellite of the US Empire. I refer you to my lead article in *Peace Researcher* 60, (November 2020, “A Deafening Silence On Foreign Policy, Defence And Intelligence”)¹.

It is worth repeating that ABC invited Andrew Little, Minister in charge of the GCSB, to speak to us at Waihopai 2021 and defend the Government's position. We got no response beyond a formal acknowledgement. We contacted the Labour Party to invite a Party speaker but were told that we would have to invite a Minister. Which we did and got nowhere.

There were other noteworthy features about the protest. Ian Dalziel, who has provided unique cover graphics for *Peace Researcher* for years, has also provided big posters for years for the protests (along with various other props). The 2021 theme was that Waihopai is the real virus (see *Marlborough Express* report below for details). These were nailed to the spy base's outer fence. They're too good to be left behind to be thrown away by the cops, so we always bring them back with us for potential future use.

And a Waihopai spy base protest



Inside Waihopai's outer fence. From left: Warren Thomson, former Green MP Steffan Browning, Paul Elwell-Sutton & Green MP Teanau Tuiono. Photo by Dot Lovell-Smith

would not be complete without ABC founder, Committee member and veteran activist, “Waihopai Warren” Thomson, climbing the outer fence and banging a placard into the ground. In 2021 he was joined by several other people, including Green MP Teanau Tuiono. Good on him (from memory, Steffan Browning was the only other Green MP to have hopped the spy base fence at a previous protest. Steffan, who has now been a former Green MP for several years, also joined them this time). I did not personally witness it, as I was busy being interviewed by the *Marlborough Express* reporter (see below), with my back to the base.

Media Coverage

“It might have been their first ‘post-Trump’ protest, but the message remained the same. About 40 people from around New Zealand descended on the Waihopai Valley Spy Base on Saturday for their annual demonstration. Protest organiser Murray Horton summed up their point of view in 2021; the United States had changed the emperor, but not the empire”.

“Joe Biden is still very much part of the American Establishment. He supported war in Iraq, he was Vice-President for Barack Obama when they raised the number of air strikes by drones in the covert war on terror”, Horton said. Horton said New Zealand needed to break the remaining military and intelligence ties with the US. ‘We were kicked out of the ANZUS Treaty (the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty) in 1986, we now need to break the invisible ties to be fully independent’, Horton said”.

“Green Party list MP Teanau Tuiono attended the protest for the first time on Saturday. Tuiono spoke at the gates to the Government Communications Security Bureau facility in rural Marlborough, with its famous white orbs, calling for it to be dismantled. ‘There are better things to spend money on. In the Royal Commission report on the terrorism attack in Christchurch in 2018 there are some recommendations about education and supporting community, we should put money there’, Tuiono said”.

“Tuiono said the GCSB failed to pick up the Christchurch terrorist because they took instruction from Five Eyes, the intelligence alliance

comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. ‘The bigger eye is America so when America has an enemy, we have an enemy. This spy base is part of the American empire and it is an extension of American imperialism. What we had with Trump was a very incompetent and incoherent version of it. With Biden, we will just go back to what it was, and we have to remember that under Obama there were wars and many people killed ... This will continue’, Tuiono said”.

“Protester Pam Hughes had been coming to the annual demonstration for eight years and would keep coming for her children and grandchildren. ‘Joe Biden is a bit of a hawk, not that you would call Trump a dove but it could easily be worse now. If Americans were true friends, they would not be here. They would recognise the danger that they put [us in] by even being here. It is a threat for us,’ Hughes said”.

“Next to her, Robyn Dann agreed there was no hope with the new American President as he had been pro-war in the past. Dann said both the spy base and Covid-19 were a virus. ‘Both of them have to go. Only the method would be different. But this place kills more people than Covid-19 as long as we consent because it is our part in their wars’, Dann said. Protest signs on the border fence depicted the base’s white orbs as virus particles. Signs said, ‘NZ’s most dangerous virus is spelt GCSB not Covid’, ‘Eliminate the Waihopai Virus’, ‘Healthcare not Warfare’, ‘Waihopai and Covid they both kill people”.

“‘The money wasted on the Government Communications Security Bureau, which is hundreds of millions of dollars per year, would be better spent on public health or on preparing New Zealand for real threats’, Horton said. Horton had been protesting the base since 1988, and he wouldn’t stop. ‘I am always surprised to see the number of people who turn up”.

“‘But we had a terrorist attack two years ago and those agencies failed to pick it up or do anything to protect the country and people realise that. So, we keep going because if we did not raise the subject and talk about it, there would be silence,’ Horton said” (*Stuff*, 31/1/21, “‘The Waihopai Virus’: Covid Plays Heavily On The

Minds Of Spy Base Protesters”, Morgane Solignac)².

Excellent Blenheim Public Meeting

The protest at the spy base gate was far from the end of the activities. We headed into Blenheim for a public meeting which attracted noticeably more people than the protest, with a good number of them being locals. The venue was packed and the interest and energy level were both high. That is not surprising, as the calibre of the speakers was very high. There were three: Ollie Neas, Nicky Hager and Teanau Tuiono.

Ollie is an investigative journalist, who spoke about Rocket Lab, the US company that operates an NZ launch pad for US military and spy agency satellites, effectively a US base on NZ soil. This is a subject that *Peace Researcher* has devoted detailed attention to over the past couple of years and it is a subject on which Ollie is an expert. Most recently he wrote a lengthy feature article about Rocket Lab in the March 2021 *North & South* (“Mahia, We Have A Problem”)³.

Nicky Hager requires no introduction to ABC members. He literally wrote the book (“Secret Power”, 1996) on Waihopai, the GCSB and Five Eyes. His topic was “What Is Five Eyes Today? An Update”. Green MP Teanau Tuiono’s session was a more freewheeling discussion on ideas of how to get Waihopai/Five Eyes/defence and foreign policy back to the political agenda (since January 2021 there has been noticeably more political discussion about Five Eyes. But not from any progressive point of view – it’s all been about whether NZ is “doing its bit” in the strident opinion of the other four “eyes” who want Five Eyes to become a full-blown political bloc directed against China).

In the view of those who attended, the afternoon session was extremely valuable. It was particularly good to see so many locals turn out, because Blenheim is a conservative town – at the 2020 Labour landslide election, that electorate stayed National – with both an Air Force base (Woodbourne) and the spy base.

It is definitely a vast improvement from when ABC first started holding Waihopai protests there decades ago. Any problems we had with the

Blenheim meeting were ones of success i.e., too many people and too few of us to handle it. We had asked people to register for a simple lunch which ABC provided and we were swamped by numbers, including plenty who hadn't told us they were coming.

I must single out ABC's Lynda Boyd, who not only did all the driving of our rental campervan, but prepared the food not only for those of us camping but also for the masses at the Blenheim meeting. Plus facilitated the Blenheim meeting. It was a truly herculean task and it's no wonder she was buggered as the weekend wore on. In Blenheim, she was ably assisted by fellow Committee

members, Dot Lovell-Smith and Robyn Dann.

ABC has been protesting at Waihopai for more than 30 years. So, this campaign is definitely a marathon, not a sprint. But we haven't run out of puff yet. We'll keep going and invite others to join us (as they've done for decades). This affects all New Zealanders, because it's being done in our name and with our money. With every passing year, the threats and scandals involving Five Eyes, the GCSB and Waihopai grow bigger and worse. Time to say: "Enough is enough! Close Waihopai now!"

Weblinks:

- 1 <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR60.pdf>
- 2 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300218086/the-waihopai-virus-covid-plays-heavily-on-the-minds-of-spy-base-protesters>
- 3 <https://northandsouth.co.nz/2021/03/14/rocket-lab-military/> ■

SPOOKY BITS

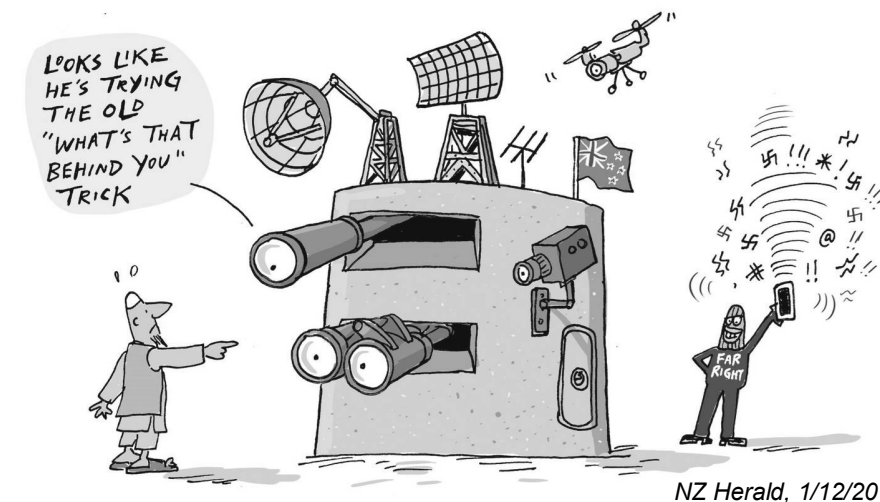
By Warren Thomson

NZ/AOTEAROA

Spook Budgets' Small Increase

In the latest Government Budget, for 2021-22, the spies' budgets have had small increases; \$321 million will be spent on the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) and the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) over the next year. The trend for expansionary annual budgets over the last ten years has ended; the longer-term budgets for 2023 and 2024, at the moment, project a drop in expenditure. Whether this will in fact be the case we have to wait and see. For 2021-22, the Government has given the GCSB \$213 million and the SIS \$108 million.

Budgets announced in 2020 and 2021 included significant boosts for staffing and developments, some related to the Christchurch massacre fallout. (In 2020 GCSB employees numbered around 490 and SIS about 365). Expenditure is predicted to fall when these projects are completed. Such a retrenchment is long overdue; the spook budgets have increased hugely year after year, with no apparent concomitant increase in security. Note that the GCSB budget five years



NZ Herald, 1/12/20

ago was \$114 million and the SIS got \$57 million.●

SIS Gives Itself A Pass

In March 2021, a partially redacted SIS review into its decision-making prior to the 2019 Christchurch mosques attack, called the "Arotake Review", was made public; it represents the agency's own earlier attempt to evaluate the failure to identify the threat posed by the Australian national who committed the terror attack. It found the SIS systems were "broadly effective" to meet national security demands. However, it lists five areas that could improve, including more resources to identify emerging threats, and sharpening up strategic intelligence analysis (NZ Herald, 22/3/21).

An "external and experienced intelligence expert in counter-terrorism from one of our Five Eyes part-

ners" [Peace Researcher [PR] emphasis; read "one of our mates") conducted a search into NZSIS data and found that no information was held about the terrorist that could have sparked an investigation; i.e., they were not to blame for overlooking the threat of the killer. (The obvious question about the lack of data is "why not?").

Media reports say a possible lead received by the SIS was an alert to a New Zealand-based Internet Protocol (IP) address accessing files related to guerrilla warfare tactics, and some Rightwing extremists. But attempts to identify the user behind this IP address were unsuccessful. (Why?) The review said the agency's actions in regard to this lead were "reasonable and appropriate" (Stuff, 22/3/21).

However, the damning Report issued by the Royal Commission of

Inquiry in December 2020 found “a systemic failure to recognise that there was a threat of extreme Right-wing domestic terrorism”. The SIS’s own review found “a small number of areas” that posed “serious resourcing questions”. Findings into how the SIS allocates its resources and “staffing pressure points” were largely redacted. We note that the SIS had been provided extra funding in 2014 to pursue terrorist threats and in 2016 another \$176 million was provided to help it cope with “financial pressures”.

SIS Director-General Rebecca Kitteridge said that their review “... was completed by June 2019 and included a number of recommendations that were accepted at the time and have already resulted in meaningful changes” (*Stuff*, *ibid.*). Another point to be noted is that access to two information datasets held by the Police was granted by the Intelligence and Security Act in 2017, but after nearly two years since the law was enacted, the data had still not been readily available to the SIS. It is not made clear who or what caused this breakdown in cooperation.●

SIS Catches A Spy

The SIS says it has uncovered a New Zealander covertly gathering information for a foreign intelligence agency. The person has been using both “overt and covert” methods to collect information about people in New Zealand who a foreign state believes are dissidents (*Stuff*, 27/3/21). This information is being reported to the foreign state’s embassy in New Zealand, and the SIS is considering its legal options to “mitigate the threat posed by this individual” [*ibid.*].

The *Stuff* story reports the country behind this spying attempt has not been publicly named, but goes on to cite China expert Professor Anne-Marie Brady as saying the spy will be working for China, as “foreign interference” in New Zealand almost always means the activities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Professor David Capie, the Director of Victoria University’s Centre of Strategic Studies, was more circumspect about the likely identity of the spying foreign state, but said there was only a “short list of countries” it could be. He said the release of this information could be the spooks saying: “We know what you’re doing” (*Stuff*, *ibid.*). The SIS made the spy

case public in its 2019/20 *Annual Review*, which reported a number of “case studies” with a little more detail than the spies have revealed in the past.●

SIS Doing More Spying

The SIS is monitoring more New Zealanders following the 2019 Christchurch mosques shootings, but just how many more is not known. The Minister responsible for the SIS and the GCSB, Andrew Little, said he has approved “a number of warrants” since the March 15 attacks that claimed the lives of 51 people. Typically, there would be between 30 and 40 people under surveillance and since March 15, that had increased, he said. “I don’t want to quantify it too specifically but definitely, there will be more.” (*Stuff*, 27/3/21).

The agencies’ Inspector-General, Brendon Horsley, stated in his latest *Report* that the SIS and the GCSB have been granted a greater number of warrants for discovery activity, more than 70 in 2019/20. Horsley, who, it has been suggested, is much more amenable to the spooks than his immediate predecessors, identified three “irregular warrants” which fell short of legal standards, including one that was sought quickly at the time of the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown (*Dominion Post*, 19/2/21). Warrants continue to be a weak point in the agencies’ oversight arrangements.

SIS boss Kitteridge recently told the Intelligence and Security Committee (which is a Committee of Government, not a Parliamentary Select Committee) that targeting changes made since 2016 enable agents to focus much more on identifying “previously unknown, new and emerging national security threats”. In 2021 the counterterrorism team has been putting half its effort into white identity-motivated violent extremism and the other half into faith-motivated extremism (*RNZ*, 26/4/21).●

Little Vs The Media

Little, who spends a lot of time defending the spies and their activities (especially the Five Eyes arrangements), has been getting grumpy with journalists trying to do their job as the Fourth Estate. When reporters were questioning the lack of detail Kitteridge had provided about the SIS terror watchlist Little said that putting more information into

the public domain about threats and intelligence required a “maturity of discussion”.

“With all due respect (sic) to some of the organisations you guys represent, the public debate, as expressed in some of our media outlets actually isn’t... very well informed about a very difficult function of Government” he said. “It would help if you don’t lurch within a month from a ‘Why haven’t you seen everything that’s going on?’ to ‘Why are you spying on everyone?’” (*Stuff* 25/3/21). It would help much more if the Government was willing to share more information with the public, listened to a much broader set of opinions about the operations of these agencies, and held the spooks more transparently to account.

“There has been little informed public debate about the counter-terrorism effort beyond that stimulated by identification of errors or embarrassment for the intelligence and security agencies or New Zealand Police or controversies involving proposed legislative changes,” the Mosques Attack Royal Commission said in its 2020 Report. At the time of writing, Little’s mob have organised a series of hui around the country to get feedback on the Government’s anti-terrorism organisation. But the procedure seems to be managed in a way that allows the patina of public input over the practice of professional deadendism.●

More Spies Wanted

According to the GCSB Website (posted 20/10/20) around 170 positions will become available across the intelligence agencies in the current financial year, arising from new investment and “normal” staff turnover. In other words, even given the problems of low morale and high staff turnover, the agencies are getting bigger, continuing the extraordinary expansion of staff and budgets of the last ten years.

In an attempt to raise awareness of the intelligence agencies as a career option, and attract a more diverse range of people into the agencies, the spooks have produced a video starring actor Jonny Brugh (“What We Do In The Shadows”) as a bumbling 007 style agent who wants to be a spy. The video uses spy related gags with the aim of breaking down common stereotypes and misconceptions about working

for the spook agencies and the type of people who work for them.

“We’re trying to bust some myths and encourage a broad range of people to think about us as a career,” says NZSIS Director-General Rebecca Kitteridge. “We don’t employ James Bond to do this – we have all kinds of everyday people who do a beyond ordinary job”. GCSB Director-General Andrew Hampton says the intelligence agencies are looking for “a broad range of backgrounds and technical expertise” and his organisation needs people for cyber security work in the National Cyber Security Centre. The \$300,000 recruitment campaign includes a new Facebook page – the first time that Kiwi spooks have had a social media presence. ●

Help For Spooks’ Stale Pale Male Syndrome

“Diversity is vital to our mission – it brings diversity of thinking, experience and perspectives,” (Rebecca Kitteridge, SIS boss). And the Government is helping. “We propose a Graduate Programme to increase representation of ethnic communities within the Public Service and reduce the barriers they face in taking up these roles...” The programme is supposed to “... provide graduates with a meaningful first employment opportunity” and “... inject broader cultural competency into the public sector.”

The Graduate Programme runs for 18 months with two intakes of 15 persons annually, starting in July 2021. Initial intakes will have a focus on recruiting graduates into the *intelligence agencies*, Ministries of Justice, Social Development, and Education (*Cabinet Paper*, 8/12/20). In 2020 GCSB staff included about 7% Maori and 5.5% Asians. About 36% of all staff were female. Women made up “almost half” of SIS employees according to their Website. Maori represented 7% and 5% were Asian. ●

Cyberattacks And The GCSB

As this is being written, news media report a cyber attack that has seriously damaged the Waikato health system and has caused great difficulties for medical staff and administration. Cyber attacks – especially criminal attempts to extract a ransom – are becoming more common and more sophisticated. It is time the Government set up a civilian-based cyber security organisation



hiring young geeks to counter the threats and reduced the dependence on the GCSB and its hidden operations to ensure security.

In times of past crises, it has usually been the independent thinkers, not the Establishment, which have provided the answers. (Who staffed Bletchley Park, Britain’s code-cracker HQ, in World War 2?). While the GCSB can claim access to the vast resources of its big brothers, immediate community action is more pressing. As the Waikato health authorities have stated, security depends on their immediate local responses.

In 2020 the GCSB had to admit it had “no clues” who might be behind cyberattacks on the NZX, Radio NZ and Stuff, GCSB Minister Andrew Little stated (*Stuff*, 31/8/20). Media companies and banks were targeted by cyber criminals who disrupted operations, in some cases for several days. Little said the indications were that the hacking was criminal activity rather than the work of State operatives. *PR* notes that criminal activity is generally the province of the Police, not secret squirrels. ●

NZ Military Wants More Drones

The NZ military intends to buy more drones to replace some that are obsolete and add new ones. Defence has some expensive Flir Skyrangers and the Army operates a single top-end AeroVironment Puma drone. According to an *RNZ* report (23/5/21) most of the NZ defence drones are cheap Chinese-made Da-Jiang Innovations drones (these

are suspected of providing back doors for Chinese government hackers. See other items this issue).

A Defence Ministry spokesperson said they were aware of the cyber risk using these drones but never connected them to the Internet or their own networks (*RNZ*, *ibid*). “DJI drones are only to be used for training support tasks and are not for operational use ... All three services will be acquiring various types of drones for use in the coming years,” the spokesperson said. Drones “helped identify threats and scenarios beyond the line of sight and do the ‘dull, dirty and dangerous’ tasks which reduces risk to personnel”. ●

NZ Police Using Controversial Drones

Information about law enforcement use of new technologies, sent to *RNZ* under the Official Information Act, reveals the Police are using drones that have been partly banned in the US over fears that China is using the technology to spy (*Stuff*, 3/3/21, from *RNZ* report). In a later *RNZ* report it was stated the Police have judged the benefits of drones outweigh the risks of data being hijacked, and are looking to add to their own fleet of 26 drones (23/5/21). A comment on the drone controversy notes that bans are very helpful for US manufacturers and others who have been unable to compete with the Chinese product. ●

Facial Recognition

In May 2021, global technology giant Amazon extended a ban on the use of its facial recognition software

by law enforcement until further notice. It had originally stopped the use of Rekognition in June 2020 after the killing of George Floyd sparked protests against police brutality towards people of colour. The Rekognition software has been criticised for apparent racial bias. The *Washington Post* reported it mis-identified the gender of darker-skinned women in roughly 30% of their tests, but was "flawless" in identifying the gender of lighter-skinned men (*MSN News*, 19/5/21).

Microsoft has announced it wouldn't provide its facial recognition software to police until laws on how it could be used without infringing on human rights or civil liberties were implemented. Meanwhile, Google has supported a temporary ban until governments can regulate it appropriately. Here in New Zealand, the use of facial recognition software has been under scrutiny since it emerged police used Clearview AI to search for suspects without consulting with their bosses or with the Privacy Commissioner.

A Law Foundation New Zealand paper entitled "Facial Recognition Technology: Towards A Legal And Ethical Framework" was made public in December 2020, calling for a moratorium on any use of live automatic facial recognition by the Police (*MSN News*, 19/5/21). Police also played down the potential invasive use of their other recent high-tech acquisitions, such as Nuix, Cellebrite and BriefCam (the first two are designed to transform massive amounts of communications and social media data into searchable form, and the third is used for rapid video review).

These three new technologies which the Police have acquired all have facial recognition capabilities, but the Police have said they don't use this power. The data is stored locally on Police servers, and *RNZ* was told only a small specialist team of five investigators got to use the three products (*Stuff*, 3/3/21).●

More Nasty Thompson And Clark Spookery

Over the years we have printed a number of stories about the appalling private eye spying of the Auckland company Thompson and Clark. They have made a specialty of spying on environmental activists and groups pushing for social change. But their latest exploits, uncovered

by investigative journalist Nicky Hager, have revealed their spying on school students.

A two-year investigation has found that recent targets of Thompson and Clark, paid by clients from the oil and gas industry, were school children from the group School Strike 4 Climate who joined a peaceful protest against the oil-exploration company OMV in New Plymouth. Other climate change groups have also been targets of the private investigation firm (*RNZ*, 22/4/21).

The investigation revealed that a major focus of Thompson and Clark in 2019 and 2020 was monitoring and helping to counter citizen groups concerned about climate change. Insiders say OMV staff received daily intelligence reports from Thompson and Clark, mostly based on Facebook, about the climate change groups and their protest plans. The company then worked with OMV staff to try to evade or minimise the protests.

OMV New Zealand spokesperson Jane Gower said "... we will take the appropriate steps when necessary if our people or businesses are under threat" (*RNZ*, *ibid.*). "Threat" being a bunch of pro-environment school children apparently. Operations against the targeted groups were run by a "collection manager" who joined Thompson and Clark ten years ago, after 30 years with the NZSIS. These operations included activities at a number of conferences and protests to undermine the fossil fuels opposition.

In 2018 a State Services Commission (SSC) inquiry into Thompson and Clark confirmed the company spied on Christchurch insurance claimants (Southern Response) and Greenpeace. Somewhat alarmingly, the inquiry also revealed a Minerals Exploration Joint Intelligence Group of Government departments "set up to coordinate intelligence provided to the various agencies involved in enforcing the laws regarding offshore petroleum and mineral exploration". Thompson and Clark "attended meetings with officials as a key participant" (*RNZ*, *ibid.*). A couple of years ago the State Services Commission advised that Government departments should not be using Thompson and Clark as private spooks.●

Who Sees The Data?

One of the disturbing revelations of Edward Snowden was how many people – thousands - working for private corporations had access to voluminous collected spy dossiers. In NZ there is much less scope for anyone who is not an official spook to access files, but we still need to be concerned. The SIS has been admonished by the Inspector-General in the recent past for wrongful handling of files, and Police data is probably open to many more individuals.

Another example of unlawful access to files was reported in February (*Newshub*, 11/2/21) when Police charged a worker at the New Zealand Transport Agency, and the worker was sacked for accessing the personal details of 44 customers. Details accessed included driver licence numbers, number plates and home addresses. We are very dependent on the professionalism of the spooks and the Police to ensure private individuals are not negatively impacted by unlawful use of data.●

KiwiSaver Providers Investing In Weaponry

"An investigation by ethical investing advocate Mindful Money showed 88 KiwiSaver providers are invested in companies making such weapons, components or delivery systems" (*RNZ*, 18/3/21). Although surveys show about 80% of Kiwis do not want their money invested in companies connected with arms or weapons componentry, Mindful Money Chief Executive Barry Coates said the amount invested totalled more than \$52 million at the end of September 2020.

Funds were in companies such as Boeing, Airbus and Lockheed Martin (a controlling shareholder in Rocket Lab), and electronics firms, including Raytheon and Bae Systems. These corporations represent the biggest arms manufacturers in the world. "Members of the public aren't given full information about what's in their KiwiSaver fund. Even if some funds say they exclude weapons, they often don't exclude all of them" Coates said. He also said KiwiSaver investors could go to the group's Website and find detail on the funds invested in weapons. "Then they should ask their provider questions about why they are investing in such companies," Coates said.●

AUSTRALIA

Protest On Behalf Of Persecuted Aussie Whistleblowers

The Australian government has been trying to incarcerate lawyer Bernard Collaery and his anonymous client who blew the whistle on a classic Five Eyes operation that gave Canberra a way to enforce its will over Timorese oil fields. Protests that urged the Australian Government to drop "unjust and unwarranted prosecutions" of Bernard Collaery and "Witness K" were held around Australia in November 2020.

"The Australian government is using terrorism laws and the excuse of 'national security' to prosecute these two men of integrity and is flouting the principles of open justice in the process. Secret trials must not become the norm in Australia" and "national security" must not be used to corrupt our system of open justice. These prosecutions must be dropped immediately" (Independent and Peaceful Australia Network [IPAN] media release, 8/11/20).

"The courageous and conscientious actions of these two men led to a fairer sharing of resources, after Australia had bugged the Timor-Leste government offices in 2004 during negotiations for the Timor Sea oil and gas resources," said Kathryn Kelly, IPAN Coordinating Committee member and one of the organisers of the protest in Canberra.

"The question has been raised whether Christian Porter is fit to be Attorney-General, when he ignored the ruling of a court that Minister Alan Tudge had broken the law in relation to a refugee's detention. The basis for these prosecutions has also been questioned by senior lawyers". The protestors demanded a response to the question of whether those responsible for the bugging committed a crime, and who was actually responsible. As far as PR is concerned, this is a case which has clearly exposed the sordid nature of Five Eyes operations, and should be far more widely known.●

Australian SAS Under Fire

A *Four Corners* documentary shown on *Al Jazeera* (17/2/21) revealed unhappy details of Australian Special Air Service (SAS) soldiers killing unarmed civilians in Afghanistan. The video shows an Australian

SAS soldier shooting and killing an unarmed man at close range in Afghanistan (*ABC Investigations* and *Four Corners* first posted the programme on 20/3/20).

The unarmed Afghan was shot three times in the head and chest while he cowered on the ground. An Australian Defence Force (ADF) investigation later ruled the killing was justified because it was in self-defence. But in November 2020, ten SAS soldiers were put under investigation for war crimes over 12 Afghan deaths (*Age*, 13/11/20).

And the *Christchurch Press* (16/4/21) ran a very short article reporting that Australia's most decorated living soldier, who has been under investigation for his actions in Afghanistan, has been found to have buried incriminating defence documents in his back garden. Ben Roberts-Smith, awarded the Victoria Cross (VC) in 2011, left the Army in 2013 and became a manager in regional television.

Over the last three years Australian Federal Police have been investigating him for possible war crimes. He has also been investigated for intimidation of witnesses who might give evidence at a forthcoming trial. *Wikipedia* states that when Roberts-Smith sued Fairfax for defamation, the media group defended its reporting as "substantially true", detailing a series of six unlawful killings alleged to have been carried out by Roberts-Smith in Afghanistan (retrieved 3/5/21).●

ASIO Reports How Wonderful It Is

In a March 2021 report to Parliament, the Australian Security Intelli-

gence Organisation's (ASIO) Director-General of Security, Mike Burgess, announced a "significant number of foreign spies and their proxies have been removed from Australia or rendered inoperative in the past 12 months" (*9News*, 17/3/21). Australians can sleep easier in their beds.

And some particular sectors of the population can relax because ASIO has also made a significant change to the way it speaks about threats, wiping out terms such as "Islamic extremism" and "Rightwing extremism" in favour of addressing religious or ideological motivations. He also claimed ASIO's focus was on the threat of violence, not a target's political views. Decades of redneck institutionalism will vanish in the blink of an eye.

Burgess said the number of spies and proxies dealt with in the previous year was in the "double figures". He talked about a "nest of spies" from a foreign intelligence service outside of the region, which had developed targeted relationships with current and former politicians, a foreign embassy and a state police service (*9News*, *ibid.*).

"(The spies) monitored their country's diaspora community. They tried to obtain classified information about Australia's trade relationships They asked a public servant to provide information on security protocols at a major airport. They successfully cultivated and recruited an Australian government security clearance holder who had access to sensitive details of defence technology" (*Market Herald*, 18/3/21).



Back in February 2020, Burgess claimed a “sleeper” agent had been dormant for many years, quietly building community and business links while secretly maintaining contact with his offshore handlers, then the agent started feeding his spymasters information about Australia-based expatriate dissidents, which directly led to harassment of the dissidents in Australia and their relatives overseas. This agent was given “significant cash payments” to provide logistical support for spies who travelled to Australia to conduct intelligence activities (*City News*, 25/2/20). The mostly unstated inference is that China is the foreign power behind most of the espionage.

“We’ve used all of the human and technical capabilities, partnerships and legislative instruments at our disposal to discover, disrupt and deter threats to Australia and Australians,” the ASIO Chief was quoted as saying (*Market Herald*, 18/3/21). How many of these “instruments” are either legally or morally unacceptable we do not know. But ASIO’s long history of prejudice and farce is not reassuring. There is no doubt that Australia is a key target for military, technology and economic espionage; a question is how much of this is brought on by being knitted to the Pentagon and pursuing a bellicose expansionist military programme.

The Australian Defence Department claims foreign agents are now “highly active” in plots to steal Australian military secrets, warning the threat to the nation’s multi-billion-dollar shipbuilding projects is considered “extreme”. Over the next few decades, Australia is spending \$90 billion on a massive naval shipbuilding plan to design and construct dozens of cutting-edge warships and submarines, with much of the work to be done in South Australia (*RNZ from – ABC*, 16/8/20).

Coincidentally, Chinese diplomatic staff in South Australia have significantly increased in numbers. One unfortunate side effect of these goings-on is that foreign spying is being cited as an official reason by the Defence Department for blocking the public release of confidential briefing notes to the Morrison government about current and future defence projects. ●

UK

MI6 Supports Killer Squads In Kenya

According to *Declassified UK*, “a covert Kenyan paramilitary team, armed and trained by the US and supported by UK intelligence, is behind renditions and controversial killings of terror suspects in night-time raids” (*Declassified UK*, 28/8/20). In an article based on interviews with over two dozen US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), US State Department and Kenyan intelligence, paramilitary and police officers, the Website describes an investigation that has found that in its 16 years of operation, the CIA-backed team has been responsible for the capture of wanted terror suspects, as well as rendition operations, killings and alleged summary executions.

The story reports that Britain’s MI6 plays a key role in identifying suspects for a “kill or capture” list and finding and fixing their location. The CIA’s covert programme, which began in 2004, is managed by a paramilitary liaison officer at the US Embassy in Kenya’s capital Nairobi. “Paramilitaries use covert tactics such as fake number plates and disguise themselves as aid workers on operations in refugee camps, which shield perpetrators of abuses from any shred of accountability” (*ibid.*).

The *Declassified* article comments that the brutal programme has largely been hidden from public scrutiny, but in 2019, a book written by a human rights investigator for UK’s Reprieve group also documented hundreds of cases of rendition, secret detention, and targeted killings in Kenya and other parts of East Africa.

In “America’s Covert War In East Africa: Surveillance, Rendition, Assassination” Clara Usiskin states that “whilst there is limited evidence of direct US or UK involvement in most of these killings, they are clearly being carried out in a context where foreign partners will be aware of the pattern of abuses, have long been supplying significant material and practical support to Kenyan counterterrorism operations and are therefore, in effect, condoning these killings...” (see pp110-112. The book was reviewed by Jeremy Agar in *PR* 58, November 2019, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR58.pdf>).

The investigators for the *Declassified* article report that “... multiple current and former US and Kenyan diplomatic, intelligence and police sources said that Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, better known as MI6) plays a key role in identifying, tracking and fixing the location of targets, as well in decisions determining their fate: kill or capture...”.

“As well as long-standing colonial ties to Kenyan tribes and communities, MI6 boasts a speciality in human intelligence, tracking and infiltration operations. Such capabilities are often relied on by the CIA in Kenya and other covert counterterrorism operations, such as in Yemen, two former senior US officials confirmed” (*Declassified Website*). *PR* notes that in 2013 an NZ citizen was tracked and killed by a drone in Yemen). ●

MI6 Expansion

In May 2018, the *Sun* (if we can believe anything it reports) announced MI6 was preparing for a massive recruitment drive which could see it grow in size by around 40% between 2018 and 2022. In September 2018 the agency began preparing to recruit up to 1,000 more agents. This would increase the number of spooks from 2,500 to 3,500 to “combat increased threats of terrorism”. ●

What A Nice Man

In a *Daily Mail* public relations exercise (8/4/21), the boss of MI6 (“C”) is presented as a nice bloke who played hockey and rugby, loves cricket, and dodged lectures while enrolled at Oxford. The Secret Service chief Richard Moore told the newspaper he only went to ‘half a dozen lectures’ while at Oxford University as he wanted to play hockey and see his girlfriend. He experienced “impostor syndrome” while he was at Oxford because he was surrounded by “cleverer dons” and wondered if he was in the right place. He is also “revealed” as a student colleague of Boris Johnson and portrayed as a family man who met his blind wife on a pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Moore is reported as saying that it was a “curse” of popular culture that intelligence officers were portrayed as amoral and violent, “frequently on the wrong side of the law. The reality is the polar opposite”, he added, saying that his staff were “extraordinarily idealistic and commit-

ted” to doing “the right thing – we don’t cut ethical corners” (*Mail*, *ibid.*). Given the other *Spooky Bits* articles in this issue of *PR*, the editors beg to differ!).●

UK Allows MI5 Agents To Break The Law

Recently the British government has introduced a Bill allowing MI5 agents to break the law. While the Government claimed the Bill was not a “licence to kill”, critics called for limits on agents’ activities. MI5 has long had a policy allowing its officers and informants to participate in criminal activity if the offences involved were proportionate to the evidence gained, and a court narrowly ruled it was “legal” at the end of 2020 (*Guardian*, 24/9/20). The pending legislation will clarify the spooks’ ability to avoid legal liability. *MI5 is Britain’s domestic spy agency; MI6 is its overseas one. Ed.*●

MI5’s Use Of Personal Data Unlawful

(This article is two years old but important for the ubiquitous theme of illegal Five Eye activities. Published by *BBC News*, 11/6/19). More evidence of Five Eyes’ disdain for the law emerged in a UK High Court in a case where human rights group Liberty challenged parts of the Investigatory Powers Act. The security service MI5 handled large amounts of personal data in an “undoubtedly unlawful” way, according to the UK watchdog, the Investigatory Powers Commissioner. He told the hearing that information gathered under warrants was kept too long and not stored safely. The High Court heard MI5 knew about the issues in 2016 but kept them secret.

Civil rights group Liberty said the breaches involved the “mass collection of data of innocent citizens.... MI5 have been holding on to people’s data - ordinary people’s data, your data, my data - illegally for many years,” said Megan Goulding, a lawyer for Liberty, which brought the case. “Not only that, they’ve been trying to keep their really serious errors secret - secret from the security services watchdog, who’s supposed to know about them, secret from the Home Office, secret from the Prime Minister and secret from the public”.

Under the Investigatory Powers Act, MI5 can apply to judges for warrants to obtain information such as people’s location data, calls, messages

and Web browsing history. As well as “bulk data” collection, which can include information about ordinary members of the public, MI5 can use targeted interceptions of communications and computer hacking for investigations such as counter-terrorism.

But the act includes safeguards about how all this information is stored and handled. It is against the law to keep data when it is no longer needed, or to store it in an unsafe way. MI5 had a “historical lack of compliance” with the law, said Lord Justice Sir Adrian Fulford, who oversees the security service’s use of data as Investigatory Powers Commissioner. In a ruling revealed during the court case, he said the security service had to be placed under greater scrutiny by judges when seeking warrants in future - which the Commissioner compared to a failing school being placed in “special measures”.

The Court heard that senior members of MI5 were aware three years before that there were serious issues with the management of data. The security service took “immediate and substantial steps” to comply with the law, Home Secretary Sajid Javid said. Two years later, in 2021, it is hard to take his comment seriously.●

MI5 Bugging Leads To Jail For Bombers

In November 2020, the *Guardian* reported that seven leading Irish republican dissidents were jailed following an MI5 bugging operation aimed at the Continuity Irish Republican Army (IRA). The seven defendants were arrested after MI5 secretly bugged a house in the border town of Newry in 2014 where meetings of the Continuity IRA leadership were held. The article says that the Continuity IRA is the “...oldest and most ideologically hard-line armed republican group opposed to the Northern Ireland peace process” (*Guardian*, 13/11/20).●

Old UK Assassination Revisited

The Council of Europe is to reopen its review into the 1989 murder of the Belfast solicitor Patrick Finucane, an attack found to have involved British State collusion. The 39-year-old lawyer was shot dead in front of his family at their home in north Belfast in 1989 by the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) with the collusion of British State forces (*Irish*

Times, 12/3/21). Finucane had defended a number of high-profile IRA men in court.

Brian Nelson, who directed this and other loyalist attacks, was an agent controlled by the British Army’s Force Research Unit. The decision is the latest twist in a legal saga that has pitted the Finucane family and its supporters in a decades-long quest to extract information from the State about the murder (*Guardian*, 12/3/21).

The European Union’s Committee of Ministers regularly assesses the implementation of European Court of Human Rights judgments. It has become increasingly concerned over what it sees as the UK’s failure to enforce rulings requiring effective investigations into controversial killings during the “Troubles”. In November 2020 Brandon Lewis, the Northern Ireland Secretary, acknowledged State collusion and apologised to the Finucane family for their suffering but said there would be no new inquiry.●

Another Cover-Up Not To Be Forgotten

“Scotland Yard spied for more than two decades on the partner of an anti-racist protester who Police accept was almost certainly killed by one of their officers at a demonstration, a public inquiry has been told,” (*Guardian*, 6/5/21). Documents disclosed by a recent public inquiry reveal how undercover officers working for a secret Metropolitan Police unit monitored the progress of the campaign that Celia Stubbs and other activists ran to uncover the truth of how her boyfriend, New Zealander Blair Peach, died at an anti-racism protest in London in 1979.

“Throughout the years that the surveillance was taking place, the Met (London Police) concealed a report of an internal investigation that said it could “reasonably be concluded that a Police officer” struck the blow to the head which killed Peach in 1979” (*Guardian*, *ibid.*). The report was concealed until 2010, and has been made public only recently.

Stubbs is quoted in the *Express* (7/5/21): “I believe my case and the circumstances of my surveillance shed light on a significant aspect of how the Police behaved in response to Blair’s killing. They abused their surveillance powers. They deployed

them not to protect the public from harm but to protect themselves from facing justice. They wanted to know what I was doing and what others who were helping me were doing, with the obvious inference that they did so to ensure that they stayed one step ahead of our campaign to hold Blair's killers to account".●

Metropolitan Police Spied On Women's Lib

An ex-Police officer has told a UK inquiry that in the 1970s she infiltrated meetings of a group that lawfully campaigned for equal pay, free contraception and better nursery provision. The Police spy, who used the fake name Sandra when she infiltrated a branch of the Women's Liberation Front in north London between 1971 and 1973, conceded that her deployment failed to uncover any useful intelligence.

Her testimony adds to the mounting evidence that the Metropolitan Police's decades-long operation to infiltrate political groups involved an alarming intrusion into the political activities of mostly Leftwing activists from its inception (*Guardian*, 18/11/20). The London Met has a long history of dubious surveillance and cover-up activities in regard to Leftwing activism. Which is something those that advocate a Police role in the place of spook agencies (like *PR*) need to remember.●

GCHQ Boss Says Spy Agency Is "Not Nearly Diverse Enough"

The head of Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) has conceded that the British spy agen-

cy is "not nearly diverse enough" and admitted it urgently needs more black and ethnic minority recruits to better reflect the country as a whole. In October 2020, GCHQ boss Jeremy Fleming told a security conference that GCHQ required "a different set of minds", in remarks that came a few days after an official history of the signals intelligence agency revealed it enforced a colour bar from the 1950s to the 1980s (*Guardian*, 21/10/20).

Few details about GCHQ staff are released, although a special report from the Intelligence and Security Committee from 2018 demonstrated that GCHQ had the lowest proportion of black staff of the country's main spy agencies. The proportion of BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) staff at MI5 has risen to 10% - there is about 14% in the general community. Only around 3% of GCHQ staff were minority people in 2017.

The *Guardian* reports that the authorised history of GCHQ, "Behind The Enigma", revealed that from 1956 right into the 1980s the spy agency did not want to employ any minority ethnic person, defined in the language of the time as anybody "either or both of whose parents is not of old Dominion white stock". All three of the main spook agencies - GCHQ, MI5 and MI6 - are said to be desperate to combat the idea they are staffed by Oxbridge-educated white males recruited by a tap on the shoulder; however, they do not seem to be enjoying much success.●

US Govt Enforces Sacking Of UK Official

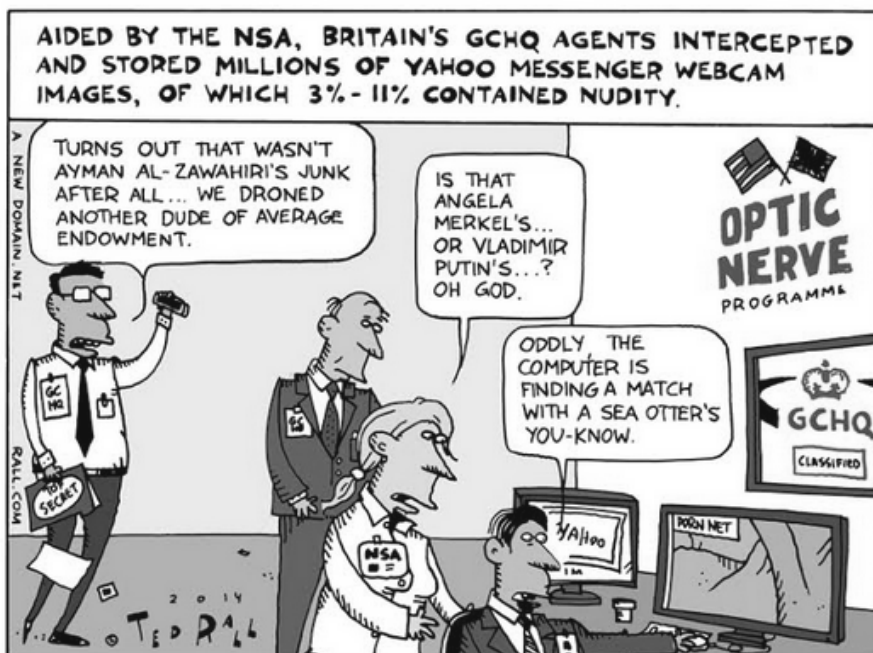
A senior British prosecutor was unfairly sacked by the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) after the US Department of Justice filed complaints against him in an attempt to sabotage his position at the agency, an English judge has found. Tom Martin, who prosecuted large-scale corruption, was dismissed by the UK agency in 2018 after it was alleged that he verbally abused an US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent during a trip to a pub in London. Which seems a pretty trivial offence.

Judge Andrew Glennie found instead that American prosecutors filed a series of complaints against Martin in order to get him removed from a major investigation into international bribery that he was leading. At the time the SFO and American prosecutors were embroiled in a bitter transatlantic row over who should control the investigation, which was supposed to be run cooperatively between the two countries (*Guardian*, 17/2/21). *PR* is greatly concerned about what this all means for Five Eyes partners in general. Can NZ officials be pressured into changing their actions on the basis that American spooks do not like the way an investigation or a court decision is going?●

Boris Wants More UK Nukes

Britain will grow its nuclear warhead stockpile by more than 40% to ensure its security in a more risky global environment and as it faces new technological threats, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced (*Reuters Website*, 17/3/21). Previous British governments had been reducing the UK nuclear weapons stockpile; in 2010, the Government set a cap of 180 warheads for the mid-2020 period. Johnson scrapped the earlier limit and said the number would now rise to a maximum of 260.

The move was been greeted with alarm by peace advocates. One group of significant former global policymakers stated: "While the UK cites increased security threats as justification for this move, the appropriate response to these challenges should be to work multilaterally to strengthen international arms control agreements and to reduce - not increase - the number of nuclear weapons in existence" (*Reuters*, *ibid.*).



In a typical Borisism, when questioned over the policy in Parliament, Johnson said *Britain was still committed to global nuclear arms reduction*. More is less it seems. The British government also plans to replace its current nuclear warhead with a new one which would be able to operate throughout the lifespan of four new submarines being built and due to enter service in the early 2030s.●

UK Wants New Drone Programme In Wake Of Azerbaijan Military Success

Reports at the end of 2020 (see, e.g., *MSN Website*, 29/12/20) say Azerbaijan's controversial use of drone technology to overcome Armenia in their recent territorial conflict has persuaded the UK military to begin a large-scale new armed drone programme. Ministry of Defence sources added that the UK wants to procure its own cheaper drones as part of the five-year defence review due to be unveiled in 2021, despite warnings about the risks of the proliferation of deadly unmanned aircraft.

A UK defence official said drones have "been responsible for the destruction of hundreds of armoured vehicles and even air defence systems" (*MSN*, *ibid.*). But critics say there is video evidence that suggests they also killed many people, some (or many?) of whom were not the intended victims. One expert said the UK's drone plans would legitimise a technology that could promote conflict in disputed areas. Chris Coles, director of NGO Drone Wars UK, said: "Civil society groups have been warning for some time that because drones lower the cost of warfare, they are likely to fuel this type of bitter, lethal conflict between neighbouring states" (*MSN*).

Manufactured by Baykar Makina, the TB2 drones used by Azerbaijan cost as little as \$1m to \$2m each, far less than the purchased high-end, next-generation Protector drones manufactured by US specialist General Atomics, which cost about \$US20 million each. The TB2 drones are able to loiter in the air for up to 24 hours. Significantly, because they are cheaper, armies can afford to lose more in action (*MSN Website*, *ibid.*).●

Algorithms For Drone Targeting Flawed

In July 2020 the UN Special Rap-

porteur on Extrajudicial Killings, Agnes Callamard, stated that the US drone strike that killed Qassem Soleimani, Iran's top general, and nine other people on 2 January 2020 was a violation of international law. This strike could well have been targeted using information gathered by the US spy base at Menwith Hill in the UK (see *Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign Newsletter* issue 6, Spring 2020, p4, https://www.themhac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/MHAC%20MAY%202020_0.pdf).

Also, according to an email from the Reprieve Human Rights group (received in August, 2020): "The algorithms used to identify and kill people around the world are flawed. They are embedded with mistakes. And because of these mistakes, innocent people die. In Yemen alone, 94% of those killed by lethal drones since 2002 were not militant leaders".

"The US National Reconnaissance Organisation (NRO), which is the main Five Eyes satellite spy agency, runs surveillance satellites from Menwith Hill in UK, (and indirectly from Waihopai, NZ). These collect the information to feed these algorithms. The NRO has launched four new satellites in 2020" (edited excerpts from *Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign Newsletter*, Winter 2020-21, which cites "The War In Yemen: Militant Leader Deaths As A Percentage Of All Deaths In Yemen", *New America*). *The NRO has been among Rocket Lab's clients for satellites launched on Rocket Lab's rockets from its NZ launch site. Ed.*●

UK Army Buys 30 "Bug" Drones

The *Guardian* reports that the British Army has already bought 30 "nano 'Bug' drones" for soldiers to spy on targets up to 2km away, in the latest step in the military use of controversial unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The drones are small enough to be held in the palm of one hand, and weigh 196g, about the same as a large smartphone. They have a 40-minute battery life, with the ability to livestream video back to their controllers, and the potential to be used with other automatic robotic weaponry.

There are several reasons for public concern. One of the reasons is that the increasing capabilities of smaller drones, similar to those widely available to retail consumers, has led to their widespread use for monitoring

in both civilian and military situations. At the same time, it has led to increased concerns about the lack of rules governing their use, as well as questions as to how they will actually be used by military forces.

Chris Cole, Director of Drone Wars, an independent watchdog, comments: "We have seen many times in the past commanders ordering airstrikes and other lethal action based on information obtained via remote surveillance only for the situation on the ground to have turned out to be very different with this false sense of understanding leading to civilian casualties" (*Guardian*, 28/12/20).

Some autonomous equipment has already been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, and the head of the UK's armed forces last month said that robots could make up a large part of the Army by 2030. (*Guardian*, *ibid.*). The tactics have a huge advantage for military commanders who don't want to risk the lives of their soldiers, but the downside is the likely expansion of "collateral damage" where drones or robots kill in error.●

USA

More CIA Disinformation

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki has admitted there is no strong evidence that Russia allegedly offered bounties to the Taliban to target US and allied forces in Afghanistan. Psaki said a review by the Intelligence Committee conducted in the wake of explosive news reports in 2020 about the allegation determined its veracity with only "low-to-moderate confidence".

The Press Secretary claimed that assessment was due to the information coming from detainee reports and the "challenging operating environment in Afghanistan". The reports in the media citing "intelligence sources" provoked outrage from Congress and America's allies, stoking demands for anti-Russian retaliation. Much more likely is that the whole story was CIA disinformation. Does this kind of stuff get fed by NZ spooks into PM briefings? (*Politico*, 15/4/21).●

And Washington Rewrites The Spook Data

A Department of Homeland Security

official said in a whistleblower complaint that he was pressured by more senior officials to suppress facts in intelligence reports that President Donald Trump might find objectionable, including information about Russian interference in the election and the rising threat posed by white supremacists.

The official, Brian Murphy, says he was pressed to alter reports so they would reflect Administration policy goals and that he was demoted for refusing to go along with the changes and for filing confidential internal complaints about the conduct. Murphy, a former FBI agent and Marine Corps veteran, was Principal Deputy Under-Secretary in the Office of Intelligence and Analysis.

He was told to stop providing intelligence reports on the threat of Russian interference in the 2020 election, in part because it "made the President look bad," and alleged that senior officials told him to modify other intelligence reports, including about white supremacists, to bring them in line with President Trump's public comments (*Washington Post*, 20/9/20). So how much should NZ trust the avalanche of Five Eyes reports it receives?●

Victim Challenges Brutal American Rendition Programme

A Palestinian victim of Guantanamo Bay, Abu Zubaydah, detained for 19 years without trial, is taking the US, UK and five other countries before a panel of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The UN office has a mandate to investigate individual complaints of arbitrary detention and issue opi-

nions, but cannot enforce any judgement.

Abu Zubaydah is a 50-year-old Palestinian raised in Saudi Arabia, who was detained in 2002 and handed over to the CIA. *He was initially described as an al-Qaeda leader, but the agency by 2006 had concluded he had not even been a member of the group* (PR emphasis). He has, however, been held at Guantanamo ever since, with no prospect of release (*Guardian*, 30/4/21).

According to his lawyer, he was handed over to the CIA, which moved him through a series of secret units in several countries where he was brutally interrogated. He was one of the first of a series of detainees to go through waterboarding and other now-banned techniques as US intelligence sought to force information from him about others in the group.

In 2003, he was transferred to Guantanamo, where he has stayed ever since. US officials have since admitted he was never a member of al-Qaeda or an important figure among outlawed groups. Moreover, one of his interrogators, an FBI agent, has said that he cooperated easily before he was tortured, so that he had nothing to add once he was subjected to the CIA's extreme interrogation methods, which included 83 instances of waterboarding (*Al Jazeera*, 1/5/21).

His lawsuit says he was held in arbitrary detention and tortured in secret CIA interrogation facilities in Thailand, Poland, Morocco, Lithuania, Afghanistan and the US prison at

Guantanamo. He is also suing the UK government, which he accuses of "complicity in rendition", for participating in interrogations and receiving information it knew was obtained under torture. Like most others among the last 40 detainees in Guantanamo, Zubaydah has never been charged and faces indefinite imprisonment. (PR note: NZ's SIS has admitted accessing hundreds of dossiers, obtained by torture, in its operations. Presumably they also could be sued for using information knowing it was obtained by torture).●

Another Promise To Close Guantanamo Bay

According to the White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, the Biden Administration aims to close the controversial detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. In early 2018, Trump ordered Guantanamo prison to remain open and also signed a directive for the Defense Secretary to investigate ways to make it possible to send more victims there.

Psaki said the Biden Administration had launched a process with the National Security Council to examine steps for shutting down the facility. She said it is "certainly our goal and our intention" to close the controversial prison, which was a priority for former President Barack Obama that he failed to fulfil (*Politico*, 12/2/21). Joe Biden has pledged to close the prison camp, and either free or transfer the remaining 40 inmates. However, Barack Obama also promised to shut down the camp but ran into resistance from the Pentagon and Congress and succeeded only in sharply reducing the number of inmates.

Recently the Reprieve human rights group announced Saifullah Paracha has been cleared for release from Guantanamo Bay. The oldest man in Guantanamo has been locked up without charge or trial since 2004. Along with two others, Saifullah was finally told in May 2021 - by six separate US government agencies - that he is not a threat to the US. This news means that a total of nine of the 40 men left in Guantanamo are now cleared for release. Some, like Abdul Latif Nasser, were cleared for release years ago (*Reprieve*, 21/5/21).●

Biden Planning Aggressive Cyber-Attacks

The *Press* (22/3/21) reports that in



March 2021 the U.S. was preparing to launch “a series of aggressive cyber-attacks” in retaliation for large-scale Russian hacking over the last two years. The Americans said they would not aim at civilian structures or networks, and would take a “mix of actions” but gave no clear indication of their targeting strategy. The article, based on one in the very conservative UK *Telegraph*, suggests “fake news” is a likely area of retaliation. (Note reference to CIA disinformation above). Action against Moscow is a big change from Trump’s policies which never challenged the Russian leaders. The question arises as to what part NZ’s GCSB plays in the machinations of Five Eyes cyber warfare. ●

Nuclear Weapons Agency Hacked

In mid-December 2020 it was revealed that hackers had accessed systems at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), which maintains the US nuclear weapons stockpile. Suspicious activity was found in networks belonging to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories in New Mexico and Washington, the Office of Secure Transportation at NNSA, and the Richland Field Office of the Department of Energy. Investigators had evidence that hackers accessed their networks as part of an extensive espionage operation. A Department of Energy spokesperson, said that an ongoing investigation into the hack has found that the perpetrators did not get into critical defence systems (*Politico*, 17/12/20). ●

Cradle-To-Grave Surveillance

The “expanding category of software, apps, and devices is normalising cradle-to-grave surveillance in more and more aspects of everyday life. ... [and] typically show up in the areas of life where surveillance is most accepted and where power imbalances are the norm: in our workplaces, our schools, and in our homes” (Electronic Frontier Foundation [EFF], 20/5/21). Some examples given are employee and student monitoring, and recording of preferences by the big social media giants, as well as the large number of surveillance systems being set up in our communities.

In 2020 one of Amazon’s software engineers wrote a letter to management saying that Amazon’s home security Ring system is “simply not compatible with a free society” (*Opinion* writer in *Guardian*, 16/5/21). Ring is said to be effectively building the largest corporate-owned, civilian-installed surveillance network that the US has ever seen (*ibid.*). One in ten US Police departments can now access videos from millions of privately owned home security cameras without a warrant. Amazon purchased Ring in 2018. It has arrangements with more than 1,800 American law enforcement agencies who can request recorded video content from privately owned video security cameras without a warrant.

As *Spooky Bits* writer, and an aficionado of British cop dramas, I have to say I have been rather concerned about the number of crimes that are solved by accessing CCTV footage. And the amount of surveil-

lance camera material that is available. The temptation for authorities to expand such surveillance, especially as facial recognition techniques become so effective, is overwhelming. The *Guardian* writer says she has collected data from Ring’s quarterly reported numbers which shows that in the year to the end of April 2021, law enforcement had placed more than 22,000 individual requests to access content captured and recorded on Ring cameras.

EFF believes there are some positive responses. Many American communities have found Community Control of Police Surveillance (CCOPS) laws to be an effective step towards control of the surveillance. CCOPS laws can “... empower the people of a community, through their legislators, to decide whether or not city agencies may acquire or use surveillance technology. Communities can say ‘no’, full stop”.

“All too often, police and other Government agencies unleash invasive surveillance technologies on the streets of our communities, based on the unilateral and secret decisions of agency executives, after hearing from no one except corporate sales agents. This spy tech causes false arrests, disparately burdens BIPOC (Black, indigenous and people of colour) and immigrants, invades our privacy, and deters our free speech. If the community chooses to say ‘yes’, CCOPS laws require the adoption of use policies that secure civil rights and civil liberties, and ongoing transparency over how these technologies are used” (EFF). ■

FROM COUNTER-INSURGENCY TO NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE? Disarm Or Die!

By Dennis Small

“And the simple touchstone of morality about nuclear warfare is that it remains unthinkable” (“Nuclear

Nightmares, An Investigation Into Possible Wars”, Nigel Calder, BBC, 1979/80, p162).

Governments in the US, Russia, and other countries appear to consider nuclear weapons, more-and-more usable, increasing the risks of their actual use” (Current Time – 2021; Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, 27/1/21)¹.

“Joe Biden has signalled he will pursue an aggressive foreign policy, calling Vladimir Putin a ‘killer’” (“‘Killer’ Putin To Pay For Meddling, Says Biden”, Press, 19/3/21). Biden himself has a very grim proven track record of killing and meddling! As

Putin apparently retorted, it takes one to know one. Such is American brazen geopolitical hypocrisy!

“Militaries train soldiers to over-ride their inhibitions against killing ... (and) the training has become more effective – trainees no longer fire at bull’s-eyes; instead, it’s rapid-fire situations of mobile virtual reality figures coming at you, where shooting becomes reflexive” (“Behave: The Biology Of Humans At Our Best And Worst”, Robert Sapolsky, Bodley Head, 2017, p647).

The first casualty of war is truth. The rest are mostly civilians (a World Beyond War T-shirt logo)².

Writing about Hitler's aggression and the causes of World War II (WWII), prominent British historian AJP Taylor observes that Hitler "aimed to make Germany the dominant Power in Europe and maybe, more remotely, in the world. Other Powers have pursued similar aims, and still do. Other Powers treat smaller countries as their satellites. Other Powers seek to defend their vital interests by force of arms. In international affairs there was nothing wrong with Hitler except that he was a German" ("The Origins Of The Second World War", Penguin, 1964, p27).

"The resources race is on. Powering our digital lives and green technologies are some of the Earth's most precious metals – but they are running out. And what will happen when they do? (quote from back cover blurb, "The Rare Metals War: The Dark Side Of Clean-Energy And Digital Technologies", Guillaume Pitron, Scribe, 2020).

"The more empire appears to have declined and fallen, the more a fantasy of empire has been conjured up as a model for projecting power onto the world stage, and legitimised colonialist interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria" (from abstract for "Empires Of The Mind: The Colonial Past And The Politics Of The Present", Robert Gildea, Cambridge University Press, 2019).

"Barring the outbreak of a catastrophic war between major powers, SOCOM (Special Operations Command) will likely remain a primary way America projects force, one that is well suited to the global, varied, and collaborative nature of war in the 21st Century" ("Why Special Ops Is The National-Security Catchall", Atlantic, April 2021)³.

"We must search always for the chance of peace amidst the curse of war, until we are faced with the only prudent, if sorrowful course – to send off yet again, our warriors to fight the nation's wars" (Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs of Australia, Michael Pezzullo, quoted in: "Australian Official Warns Of 'Drums Of War'", NZ Herald, 27/4/21). Pezzullo was speaking with specific reference to China. He is apparently due to be the next Australian Secretary of Defence. Heaven help us all because Hell is gaping wide with such political leadership round the planet!

"The Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt, who was visiting the US (in late 1965), offered a striking example of his sense of humour (about the Indonesian Genocide 1965-1970): 'With 500,000 to a million communist sympathisers knocked off', he said approvingly, 'I think it's safe to assume a reorientation has taken place'" ("The New Rulers Of The World", John Pilger, Verso, 2002/3, quoted in ch.1, "The Model Pupil", p35).

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres emphasises the imperative of tackling Covid-19 and other threats like climate change and nuclear war with full international cooperation ("UN Chief Stresses 'Clear And Urgent Need' For Concreate Multilateral Solutions", UN News, 24/4/21)⁴.

In one of the introductory quotes to this article, Joe Biden, the new American President, has openly signalled that his Administration will pursue a policy of aggressive geopolitical imperialism. Given the current conditions on planet Earth with the deadly pandemic Covid-19 still raging, the impact of climate change rapidly growing, ecological collapse compounding, etc., *this is madness indeed!*

But ever so lamentably, it is only what we might well expect from such a President, given his already documented political record on foreign policy to date. Nazi-style belligerence is thus proclaimed as the official foreign policy of the leading nation of the so-called "free world"! Mind-bogglingly disturbing rhetoric, you might think. After all, endemic to the West is a long tradition of ritualised "lip-service" on freedom, democracy, and human rights. In reality, of course, warfare and exploitation inflicted on other peoples have been regular practice. *Institutionalised hypocrisy indeed!*

Today, the West in general seems quite okay with President Joe Biden's declaration of aggression. We just need to note the similar kind of statement from a warmongering top Australian official, namely Mike Pezzullo (Secretary of Home Affairs of Australia, op. cit.). PM Scott Morrison reinforced this posturing with the ritualistic appeal to "freedom". *Australia, of course, is always the obedient and loyal "gung ho" deputy sheriff of the US!*

In my article, I explore and elaborate on some familiar history, as well as examining certain recent events and trends. We have to continually monitor, analyse, interpret, and generally do our best to try and understand what is actually happening in the wider world. We must do so in order to more effectively tackle the causes of conflict constantly arising, and worsening in multiple ramifications.

In recapping on certain well traversed themes, as well as updating and expanding commentary as appropriate, the main objective is to delineate the mounting challenges we now face and to thus emphasise the imperative of pre-emptive action. My basic aim then is to try and help reinforce the work of all those cutting-edge organisations and individuals in the international peace and anti-nuclear movements, and their wider networking with other groups. We need to build solidarity and cooperation as never before in vitally urgent and pre-emptive campaigns for peace, social justice, and sustainability.

Embracing Doomsday's Midnight?!

It has long been received wisdom that with the existence of nuclear weapons we cannot hope to ever succeed in putting the evil genie back in the bottle. In other words, we have to learn to live somehow indefinitely into the future with the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation. The obvious problem with this position, of course, is that such a situation is not viable in the long-term, certainly given the human record to date and all the challenges currently unfolding. Witness the militarist tribalism now promulgated by President Joe Biden, and similar behaviours exhibited elsewhere around the globe. *To be sure, human warfare with nuclear weaponry is ultimately and inevitably a very dead end!*

Whether by miscalculation, accident, stupidity, outright aggression, a sequential combination of such factors - or whatever the exact forms of behaviour or interaction that might eventuate – there is an accumulating risk of crossing the brink into all-out war. Moreover: "There continues to be an extraordinary disregard for the potential of an accidental nuclear war, as well-documented examples of frighteningly close calls have emerged" ("Current Time – 2021", *Bulletin Of*

The Atomic Scientists (BAS), op. cit.). Underlying tensions that would “normally” have been released in the large-scale wars of the past fester away, and threaten to suddenly explode to the surface!

Recently, the prestigious *BAS* has alerted the world to the mounting dangers, moving the hands of its Doomsday Clock forward in 2015 to ever nearer midnight. “The probability of global catastrophe is very high and the actions needed to reduce the risks must be taken very soon” (Doomsday Clock – Timeline, *BAS*⁵; for a comprehensive update, including a vital list of pre-emptive actions, based on far greater international cooperation, see: “Current Time – 2021”, *BAS*, *ibid.*).

President Biden's proudly and blatantly proclaimed commitment to “aggression” is thus guaranteed to further inflame the growing global crisis. With Biden & Co., we are clearly dealing again to some extent with the zombie brain-dead products of the piratical military-industrial complex. Allegations from political enemies aside, Biden himself – at 78 years old – is even suspected by some medically informed people to be suffering mental decline.

Former President Trump exemplified the syndrome of malicious and cranky aged world leadership, and Biden may be destined to follow. However, the latter has yet enunciated, as well, some most welcome and long overdue balancing policies. We have to strongly support, promote, and cultivate these announced policies, e.g., a renewed commitment to combating climate change; easing off the war on Yemen; re-engaging the nuclear deal with Iran; withdrawing from Afghanistan; and also, the revival of talks on nuclear weapon regulation.

More than ever before, peoples worldwide need to rally together in desperate urgency in order to hold their leaders to account, and encourage further positive progress on vital issues. *At present, however, the new American Administration is confounded with contradictions. There are still lots of fish hooks in the seemingly better policies. The international peace/anti-nuclear movement faces unprecedented challenges in trying to unravel so much of all this!*

The Precariously Unstable Paradox Of Nuclear Weapons

Since the horrendous nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of WWII, no more nuclear weapons have been detonated in war at the direct and immediate cost of human life. Even this needs a qualification as certain tests, e.g., in the Australian desert, may have cost human lives. Many factors, including, crucially, the influence of the international peace/anti-nuclear movement, have contributed to this situation for which we can all be so truly thankful.

But undoubtedly the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction or MAD has been central. The absolutely terrifying prospect of instant incineration and horrific injuries on both sides for so many people, along with obliteration for virtually all societal institutions of whatever sort, has, to date, kept fingers from the Doomsday firing button.

As well, if it had not been for nuclear weapons the West would almost have certainly engaged with the Soviet Union in a massive conventional war, with all the enormous risk of rapid and uncontrollable escalation. There have yet indeed been some very close calls on all-out war. The most publicly and globally dramatic of these was the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and its geopolitical game of “nuclear chicken”.

Again, later in the Reagan era of the 1980s, American nuclear war fighting doctrine and technology took the world to the very brink with the seemingly very real possibility of a *first strike* on the purportedly “evil empire” of the Soviet Union (“Nuclear Nightmares”, op. cit.; “First

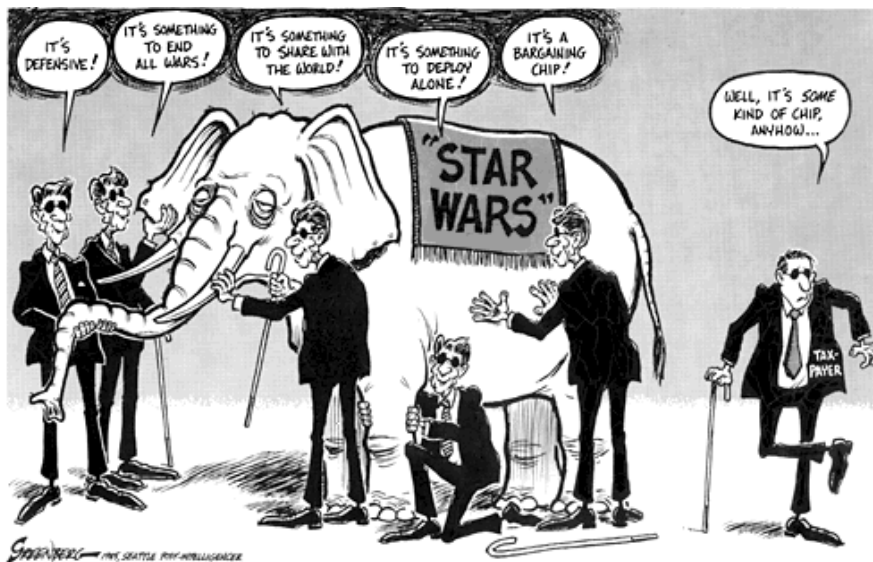
Strike! The Pentagon's Strategy For Nuclear War”, Robert C Aldridge, South End Press, 1983; “Peddlers Of Crisis: The Committee On The Present Danger And The Politics Of Containment”, Jerry W Sanders, Pluto Press, 1983; “To Win A Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret War Plans”, Michio Kaku & Daniel Axelrod, South End Press, 1986/93). Ultimately obscene nuclear depravity was ludicrously paraded as the high ground of morality and exultation of “freedom”.

Blinded And Dazzled By The Stars In Their Eyes!

This kind of thinking has continued into the 21st Century (“The New Nuclear Danger: George W Bush's Military-Industrial Complex”, Helen Caldicott, Scribe, 2002). Writing in 2002, the renowned peace/anti-nuclear activist Helen Caldicott warned “that first-strike winnable nuclear war is the real (secret?) agenda of Star Wars revitalisation” (*ibid.*, p108).

“‘Star Wars’ now covers the gamut from ‘Antisatellite (ASAT) Weapons to knock out the (Russian and Chinese, etc.) early warning systems’ to the so-called *Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)*, which has been cunningly sold to the public as some sort of salvationist solution” (*ibid.*, pp107/8). SDI, the brand image of “Star Wars”, is a touted “ballistic missile-defence system to mop up any (enemy) missiles that survived counterforce, and had been launched” (*ibid.*).

Note the Pentagonese propaganda term here of “counterforce”. American first strike strategy public relations (PR) boffins very deliberately



and calculatedly gave the strategy a most euphemistic and totally misleading label for public consumption ("The Counterforce Syndrome: A Guide To US Nuclear Weapons And Strategic Doctrine", Robert C Aldridge, Transnational Institute, 1978). Sinister and deliberate deception of the American and other peoples was clearly their real intention.

Orwellian "Nukespeak" has long been a malicious PR ploy ("Nukespeak: The Media And The Bomb", ed. Crispin Aubrey, Comedia Publishing Group, 1982). Under the verbal camouflage covering first strike strategy, the Reagan Administration even openly endorsed the feasibility of a so-called "limited nuclear war". This concept supposedly meant using only "tactical nuclear weapons against troops in the field without it bringing either one of the major powers to pushing the button" – *to quote the then President himself!* (ibid., p7).

Reaganite nuclear posturing not only dangerously alarmed the Soviet Union but instigated a shocked international social reaction, which mobilised peace and anti-nuclear movements all round the world, including of course here in Aotearoa/NZ ("Protest And Survive: Stop Nuclear War", ed., EP Thompson & Dan Smith, et al, Monthly Review Press, 1981; "Exterminism And Cold War", ed., by *New Left Review*, Verso, 1982).

Truly MAD!

But the MAD doctrine has so far obviously kept its dominant hold over nuclear strategy. *We still survive! Yet again, however, we would certainly be Mad to count on it indefinitely!!* Massive nuclear war-fighting preparations are still proceeding apace. At the same time, too, MAD has not deterred a grim series of conventional national, regional, and civil-war type armed conflicts since WWII. A number of these could have triggered even greater crises between the super-powers, given various circumstances, events, or decisions that might have quite easily occurred.

Meanwhile, deep, underlying tectonic-type strains and stresses continue to build up in the processes of geopolitical competition. The danger lies in accumulating and compounding pressures which a relatively small initial spark might rapidly trigger into

an uncontrollable explosion, a final deadly earthquake for humankind in general.

Some previous conflicts, like the 1991 Gulf War, and that earlier one between Britain and Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas islands in 1982, have been typical conventional wars. To a considerable degree, this designation even applies to the ever so sadly tragic ten year "civil war" in Syria, which has taken on many aspects of yet another geopolitical struggle between West and East. But in these three examples, the spectre of an even more menacing confrontation has hovered over the hostilities, as it has over others.

Outcomes can still prove hugely problematic for the future, as in the case of the 1991 Gulf War. The briefly proclaimed victory against the Saddam Hussein regime meant little given ultimate American aims and blundering geopolitical behaviour. As Professor Tony Judt pertinently observes: "For many American commentators and policymakers the message of the last (20th) century is that war works" ("Reappraisals: Reflections On The Forgotten Twentieth Century", T Judt, William Heinemann, 2008, p7). *These war-mongers are so horribly wrong!*

In June 2021 World Beyond War (WBW) partnered with a whole range of activist organisations from 350.org to the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space for the #NoWar2021 Global Conference "From Weapons Fairs To War Zones: Unravelling The War Machine"⁶. It was a virtual conference presentation, featuring a host of experienced and expert speakers.

This conference systematically exposed the arms, death, and destruction industry from mining minerals to militarising space a la Rocket Lab right here in Aotearoa/NZ⁷ (see also recent *Peace Researchers*, namely issues 60 (November 2020)⁸, and 58 (November 2019)⁹ for detailed articles on Rocket Lab.

WBW admirably points ahead to constructive, participatory action on peace issues. As it says: "We do know what success looks like, from stopping the construction of military bases in Montenegro, to shutting down weapons' 'expos' in New Zealand, to converting arms factories to ventilator and mask-making amidst the pandemic" (#NoWar2021 Global

Conference, op. cit.).

Blowback To Anglo-American Aggression

US history is a long, ongoing record of constant wars of aggression and imperial expansion. The accumulating result has been a compounding and counter-productive process of the destabilisation of world politics ("Blowback: The Costs And Consequences Of American Empire", Time Warner, 2000/02, & "The Sorrows Of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, And The End Of The Republic", Verso, 2004, both by Chalmers Johnson; "Overthrow: America's Century Of Regime Change From Hawaii To Iraq", Stephen Kinzer, Times Books/Henry Holt & Co., 2006; "War And Empire: The American Way Of Life", Paul L Atwood, Pluto Press, 2010).

It is well worth noting here that one author cited above, Stephen Kinzer, is also the author of three other books very relevant to the themes of my article, namely, "Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story Of The American Coup In Guatemala", co-author with Stephen Schlesinger (Harvard University Press, 1982); "All The Shah's Men: An American Coup And The Roots Of Middle East Terror", (John Wiley & Sons, 2003); & "Blood Of Brothers: Life And War In Nicaragua", (Harvard University Press, 2007).

While a strong critic over the years of various aspects of US foreign policy, Kinzer – a former *New York Times* journalist – remains a believer in the free market. Indeed, his record is actually pretty convoluted, and he has even been roundly criticised as an American apologist in certain capacities (e.g., on Nicaragua: see *Wikipedia*)¹⁰.

Anyway, given the well documented background, courtesy of Kinzer and others, of multiple American coups around the world since the end of WWII – including against democratically elected governments as in Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954 – a springboard was set for further coups and coup attempts right up to the present. In 2014, famed investigative reporter John Pilger aptly pointed out that Washington's subversive role in the Ukraine, and its backing for the newly installed regime's neo-Nazis, has huge implications for the rest of the world" (*Guardian*, 13/5/14, "In Ukraine The US Is Dragging Us Towards War", John Pilger)¹¹.

Pilger went on to observe that: "Every year, the American historian William Blum publishes his 'updated summary of the record of US foreign policy', which shows that since 1945 the US has tried to overthrow more than 50 governments, many of them democratically elected; grossly interfered in elections in 30 countries; bombed civilian populations of 30 countries; used chemical and biological weapons; and attempted to assassinate foreign leaders. In many cases, Britain has been a collaborator" (ibid.).

Blum's books include "Killing Hope: US Military And CIA Interventions Since World War II", Zed Books, 1995; & "Rogue State: A Guide To The World's Only Superpower", Zed Books, 2000, 3rd ed., 2006). *William Blum died in December 2018. His obituary can be read in Covert Action*¹². Ed.

Propaganda For The Coming (?) War With China

I have already drawn attention more than once to Australia's aggressive posture towards China (Secretary of Home Affairs of Australia, op. cit.). Recently, strong criticism by the so-called "Five Eyes" Anglo-American intelligence/covert action club has been levelled at China for human rights abuses. These charges are part of the international outcry concerning China's outrageous treatment of its Muslim Uyghur minority in northwestern Xinxiang province. China has even been accused of "genocide".

It is indeed true that the Chinese government's treatment of the Uyghurs demands the strongest global condemnation for the systematic totalitarian persecution of this ethnic group ("Rights Experts Concerned About Alleged Detention", *UN News*, 29/3/21)¹³. But the glaring contradiction in regard to human rights is that some major accusers against China's crimes inflicted upon its Uyghur minority have a host of actual killings, and associated societal wreckage on their own hands. *It is an extraordinarily egregious example of stinking evil warmongering hypocrisy!*

In particular, the "Five Eyes" nations club – i.e., the US, Britain, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand – are clearly bent on orchestrated propagandist rhetoric, although New Zealand has, thankfully, in April 2021 withdrawn from dealing with human

rights via "Five Eyes". Our Government must be warmly congratulated for this in the face of reactionary political and media criticism, both domestically and internationally orchestrated.

"Beautiful" Barbarity Courtesy Of The "Five Eyes" Brigade

Millions of people have died, both directly and indirectly, from US-led depredations since WWII in what used to be called the "Third World". Let us take just one case in which all "Five Eyes" members were involved, whether directly, indirectly, or by complicity. This is the case of the Indonesian Genocide, 1965-70, as highlighted by one of the introductory quotes to my article, namely a statement by the then Australian PM Harold Holt ("The New Rulers Of The World", op. cit.). One might well say that Holt considered the outcome of the genocide rather "beautiful".

Robert M Sapolsky, a Professor of Biology and Neurology at Stanford University, can set the scene for us for a number of the barbarous massacres during the Indonesian Genocide. I quote him at some length as follows.

"In the mid-1960s, a Rightist military coup overthrew the Government of Indonesia, instituting the 30-year dictatorship of Suharto known as the New Order".

"Following the coup, Government-sponsored purges of communists, Leftists, intellectuals, unionists, and ethnic Chinese left about a half million dead (*note one Indonesian general boasted of three million slaughtered!*). There were "mass executions, torture, villages torched with inhabitants trapped inside" ("Behave: The Biology Of Humans At Our Best And Worst", Bodley Head, 2017, pp12/13).

Quoting from VS Naipaul's book "Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey" (Vintage Books, 1992), Professor Sapolsky describes how "when a paramilitary group would arrive to exterminate every person in some village, they would inconspicuously bring along a traditional gamelan orchestra" (ibid., p13). One unrepentant veteran of such slaughter explained why: "*Well, to make it more beautiful*" (my emphasis; ibid.).

John Pilger has documented the en-

thusiastic participation of the Australian government a la PM Harold Holt in helping the US, Britain, NZ (under a National Party government!), and Canada instigate, facilitate, and urge on the systematic butchery ("The New Rulers Of The World, op. cit.). The West, while hiding its own responsibility, even globally celebrated the genocide.

Somehow, at least on the domestic front, it has overwhelmingly got away with this. Compare the complete glaring contrast in behaviour with the ongoing denunciation of the later Khmer Rouge-perpetrated genocide in Cambodia! This difference in treatment of the two genocides is indeed damning testimony to the power of self-serving American-orchestrated propaganda and perfidy.

In commenting on US relations with Indonesia, Chalmers Johnson, Professor Emeritus at California University, San Diego, has observed that: "Many CIA covert operations were mounted" against the country when President Sukarno, its founder and independence leader, was the ruler there ("Blowback", op. cit., p76). The 1965 CIA-contrived coup finally succeeded in ousting Sukarno and replacing him with General Suharto, and "a bloody pogrom eliminated Leftist forces throughout the islands. Suharto and the Army ruled with a strong authoritarian hand until May 1998" (ibid.). In the end, Suharto's corruption which had served Western and Japanese corporate interests so well proved the undoing of him and his family.

Making A Bloody Mess!

In the Middle East, the same US-led predatory pursuit of natural resources and profitable investment continued to exact its grim toll. The fractious, bloody aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War eventually resulted in another seemingly "quick-fire" conventional war with the illegal US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. President George W Bush was soon boasting "mission accomplished", in the wake of a tide of malign lying propaganda.

("Weapons Of Mass Deception: The Uses Of Propaganda In Bush's War On Iraq", Sheldon Rampton & John Stauber, Tarcher/Penguin, 2003; "Target Iraq: What The News Media Didn't Tell You", Norman Solomon & Reese Erlich, Context Books, 2003; "Tell Me Lies: Propaganda And Media Distortion In The Attack on Iraq",

ed., David Miller, Pluto Press, 2004).

Of course, for many informed observers and analysts the aftermath here again would so very predictably and inevitably prove fractious, messy, and bloody (e.g., “Full Speed Ahead Into The Quagmire: NZ Blunders Into Iraq”, Murray Horton, *Peace Researcher* 28, December 2003)¹⁴.

“For more than 17 years, since its invasion of Iraq, the US has failed to present itself as a partner interested in supporting Iraqi efforts for democratic and economic development. It has continued to pursue its military and geopolitical interests at the expense of the Iraqi people, their security, and well-being” (“Biden Should Not Repeat Trump And Obama's Mistakes In Iraq”, *al Jazeera*, 14/12/20)¹⁵.

Zeidon Alkinani, a “political analyst and researcher on Iraq and the Middle East”, called on the new Biden Administration not to repeat the mistakes of the former Obama and Trump Administrations in Iraq (ibid.). But these so-called “mistakes” were, in fact, firmly in the tradition of America’s grasping geopolitics and gory track record. Iran, the formerly implacable enemy of Iraq, has emerged as its strongest ally despite American machinations.

From his own point of view, Alkinani would like to contain Iranian influence in Iraq. He sees the US having blundered badly in this goal. For sure, it was stunningly obvious that by deposing the Sunni dictator, the illegal 2003 invasion would usher in greater Shiite power, and so inevitably more Iranian influence (“The End Of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created A War Without End”, Peter W Galbraith, Simon & Schuster, 2006/7; “Full Speed Into The Quagmire”, op. cit.).

Alkinani is worried about Joe Biden's approach in that the new President has repeatedly signalled in the past his idea for a federalist system as the best constitutional option for Iraq. In 2006, Biden even explicitly proposed a “partition of Iraq to allow for federal autonomy for the Shia Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish communities, which was welcomed by the Kurds, but rejected by many Arabs” (“Biden Should Not Repeat”, op.cit.). He later brazenly promoted this idea amid the

war against ISIS (ibid.). De facto “balkanisation” has pretty much happened anyway (“The End Of Iraq”, op. cit.).

The roots of this fractured “nation” lie back in earlier colonial history when Britain had cobbled together the country for its own ends from three separate former Ottoman imperial provinces – Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul. In order to counter Iranian influence, commentator Zeidon Alkinani advocated that President Biden can undo the disastrous legacy of his predecessors in Iraq by using nuclear talks with Iran to strike a deal on ensuring stability for Iraq (“Biden Should Not Repeat”, op. cit.). Whereas Iran will always have some presence in Iraq for obvious reasons (size, proximity, and religion) a new nuclear non-proliferation agreement – drawing on the previous pact – could curb the former country's reach (ibid.).

Positive Peacemaking Initiatives With Iran, Etc.

While we can well consider the US to be acting in a neo-colonialist role in the Middle East and so many other places, its’ still dominant presence on the world stage ensures ongoing power and influence. A new fairly determined deal with Iran on nuclear non-proliferation would indeed be most welcome, and the international peace/anti-nuclear movement must continue to advocate strongly for this. *Peacemaking must triumph over aggression!*

President Biden signposted in February 2021 “that the US stands ready to rejoin talks about re-entering the 2015 multilateral Iran nuclear deal abandoned by the Trump Administration” (“US Ready To Resume Talks For Return To Iran Nuclear Deal”, *Press*, 20/2/21). “After some tough negotiating difficulties, the US and Iran (have) agreed to try and synchronise Washington's lifting of sanctions and Iran's limiting of uranium enrichment” (“Iran And US Agree On Path Back To Nuclear Deal”, *New York Times*, 6/4/21)¹⁶.

The two nations have been meeting in Vienna under auspices of the European Union (EU) with other partners to the agreement, i.e., Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia. While there are now signs of progress, elements of conflict continue with the potential for real disruption, e.g., ongoing Israeli state

terrorism inflicted on Iran and corresponding behaviour from Hezbollah, and other Iranian allies. Hearteningly, the American announcement on progress for the US-Iran nuclear deal was coupled with “US\$4 billion for an international effort to bolster the purchase and distribution of coronavirus vaccine to poor nations, a programme that Trump refused to support” (“Iran And US Agree On Path Back”, ibid.).

The US, as well, is evidently pressing for full G-7 support “to Covax, an initiative by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to improve access to vaccines, even as (President Biden) re-opens the US spigot” (ibid.). Biden has also pulled back from the war on Yemen, at least on the public relations front. So, in actual practice, declared “aggression aside” then, the new Administration is demonstrating a measure of humanity in certain spheres of its foreign policy which has to be both warmly welcomed and encouraged to the maximum.

Geopolitical Pitfalls

We can trace back the roots of the geopolitical pitfalls of Afghanistan and Iraq to earlier American destabilisation of the Middle East, in particular the promotion of the Iranian Shah as the “policeman” of the Gulf (“All The Shah's Men”, op. cit.). Further interventions followed. In the aftermath of American aggravation of the Iraq-Iran War (1980-88), and the very deliberately contrived promotion of Muslim fundamentalist militancy during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-89), both the Taliban and al Qaeda arose from the wreckage of the last-mentioned country.

By 2008, it was estimated that the war dead in Afghanistan totalled around a million and a half (“Where We Are Now: The Smartest, Clearest Guide To The Issues That Shape Our World”, CIRCA, Mitchell Beazley, 2008, p103). The butchery and misery inflicted on yet another of the world's poorest countries is one more shocking testament to big power barbarity.

Violence flows on, stemming ultimately from the American “bear-trap” set for the Soviets/Russians in 1979 (see 1998 interview with former US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski on how the CIA's provocative intervention in Afghanistan preceded the brutal 1979

Soviet invasion in: "The CIA's Intervention In Afghanistan"¹⁷.

Ironically enough, "German Chancellor Angela Merkel (has indicated it is) willing to keep troops in Afghanistan for longer, to ensure that the country did not descend into chaos" ("US Troops May Stay In Afghanistan For Longer", *Sunday Star Times* [SST], 21/2/21). Meantime, the US has announced it is leaving by 11/9/21 (the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks that started the whole thing), although this is actually quite a devious public relations ploy as I shall note later below.

Foreign Fire, Fury, And Follies

Foreign interventions and presence over decades – above all, American instigated and mandated for many years now – have repeatedly plunged Afghanistan into chaos and immense suffering. Western military intervention has proved completely counter-productive as determined by what is clearly good for the inhabitants of this tragically tormented land.

Naturally, the self-serving propaganda flows on. For instance, the Establishment *Washington Post* predicts that the US withdrawal from Afghanistan by September 11, 2001, "will almost certainly be a disaster for the country's 39 million people – and in particular, its women. It could lead to the reverse of the political, economic and social progress for which the US fought for two decades, at the cost of more than 2,000 American lives and hundreds of billions of dollars" ("The Likely Result: Disaster", reported in the *Press*, 16/4/21).

Washington Post editorial staff, including Bob Woodward of Watergate fame, are content to write such imperialistic propaganda despite all the damning documentation of American perfidy. So it goes ... A key rationale is evident enough in the *Post's* warning – citing US intelligence and a Congress study - that "it could allow al-Qaeda to restore its base in Afghanistan" (ibid.). So, after all this time, what another bloody terrible failure of US predatory projection!

Ironically enough, Steve Coll – when a Managing Editor of the *Washington Post* – wrote a revelatory Pulitzer Prize winning expose of American intelligence/covert action agencies in Afghanistan during the



Soviet occupation ("Ghost Wars: The Secret History Of The CIA, Afghanistan And Bin Laden", Penguin, 2004). In competition and cooperation with other such foreign agencies, the CIA & co. played a major role in priming "Afghan factions with cash and weapons", secretly training guerrilla forces, funding propaganda, and manipulating politics (*Wikipedia*)¹⁸.

Coll traced the US intervention in "its covert programme against Soviet troops from 1979 to 1989, to the rise of the Taliban and the emergence of bin Laden, (and) to the secret efforts by CIA officers and their agents to capture or kill bin Laden in Afghanistan after 1998" (ibid.). Ironically, too, so-called "capture or kill" became the death squad mantra for US/NATO counter-insurgency operations in pursuit of Afghani guerrillas when Western interventionist forces consolidated their grip on the country in the wake of revenge for 9/11.

Intervening, Invading, Occupying, And Hanging On – A Well-Worn Tale!

The truth is that, following the US de facto invasion of Afghanistan, al Qaeda was swiftly routed in a grossly over-blown and barbarous operation that further severely damaged Afghan society and its civilian population. Then the US chose to stay on, deepening the socio-economic mess created by its former interventions. The pretext for occupation had vanished. But imperialist aims were to dominate, whatever the heart-rending costs and consequences for Afghan society ("Other People's Wars: New Zealand In Afghanistan, Iraq And The War On Terror", Nicky Hager, Craig Potton

Publishing, 2011. Reviewed by Jeremy Agar in *Peace Researcher* 42, November 2011¹⁹. Ed.).

Again, Steve Coll, like Nicky Hager (ibid.), has critiqued the bungling "botch-up" of American foreign policy in its failure to define the limits of military intervention in Afghanistan, with a story of "just how badly foreign policy decisions can go wrong and of many lives lost" ("Directorate S: The CIA and America's Secret Wars In Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001-2016", Penguin, 2018). These days, having moved on from the *Washington Post*, Coll is Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University.

From his own particular perspective, Coll identifies the "highly secretive arm of the Pakistan state", Directorate S, at the heart of the problem. This intelligence/covert action body has its own regional agenda in competition between India and China, and with any other players or intruders (ibid.). Yet surely the prime factor remains that the US is very much an outside hegemonic power, which has been extending the claws of its global reach. It has thus generated a quagmire with dire implications, another parlous entrapment pit on the frontline of global competition and conflict. *It will have heaps of difficulty indeed in extricating itself!*

Instead of malevolently conceived imperialist intervention, the Western focus should be on the provision of genuine humanitarian aid, working with communities and groups across the spectrum of Afghan society. The *Washington Post* nowadays in its editorial line acknowledg-

es concerns to preserve international aid as an incentive for the Taliban to compromise on their vision of a rigidly enforced Islamic state ("The Likely Result: Disaster", op. cit.). Without such aid, the *Post* well warns that "Afghanistan's economy would implode" (ibid.). It sees the Taliban caught in a quandary ("Taliban At Inevitable Crossroads", another article reproduced in the *Press*, 29/3/21).

Cooperation Versus Conflict?

Creating greater social cooperation by proper humanitarian programmes would do far more to build holistic security from the base up as opposed to the history of obviously failed militarist repression and self-interested political manipulation by foreign forces. There yet remains the nagging question of the extent of damage already done to the nation's social fabric, and the destructive factors unleashed over decades.

The consequences of the changing dynamics of US intervention in Afghanistan have indeed been ugly in multiple ways. To be sure, the *Washington Post* unashamedly predicts this kind of outcome in the wake of the American withdrawal (ibid.). The US has systematically, callously, and pervasively subjected the people of Afghanistan to ongoing disaster for its own geopolitical aims!

It is egregiously evident in the propaganda peddled by CBS and other American media corporates – besides the *Washington Post* – that any concerns expressed about the withdrawal from Afghanistan are ultimately self-serving. Any apparent humanity evinced, e.g., regarding women's rights, is eminently hypocritical and self-serving, as shown by the historical record. *Imperial self-image rules!*

The *Washington Post* is so perverse in its propaganda that it actually trumpets the delusion that the American withdrawal "will mean an abandonment of those Afghans who believed in building a democracy that guaranteed basic human rights" (ibid.). *American foreign policy has in fact never countenanced the establishment anywhere of a nation state "democracy" in the true sense of the word – at most only a facade under its effective control! And, as for human rights, what ongoing travesty!*

In fact, as so often happens, the US will not be making a total withdrawal from Afghanistan by any means. American dirty work is shaping up to take a heightened form in one of its crucial counter-insurgency dimensions. Drones and bomber attacks are very likely to be stepped up to compensate for the lack of boots on the ground (Webinar: "Campaign to Ban Killer Drones Is Launched"²⁰; "Biden's Drone Wars", *World Beyond War*²¹).

In an internationally coordinated campaign, *World Beyond War* is moving to try and counter Biden's escalation of targeted aerial death squad operations in Afghanistan, and elsewhere (ibid.). Civilians are predominantly the victims of these murderous attacks perpetrated by the US and its close allies across the world. The rogue state continually fires from a safe distance at some of the poorest people on the planet. Death delivered from the skies via sophisticated technological platforms has however egregiously failed to quell the Afghani insurgency. But it serves the aims of the empire no matter what the human costs.

Cooperating For The Greater Good?

Significantly – *and we can only hope and press for the best outcome!* – Russia is now playing a part in negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government. "Russia is stepping up efforts to try and find a way forward in the peace process" ("US Troops May Stay", op. cit.). The Soviets lost at least 15,000 troops between 1979 and 1989 in "a grinding campaign against the US-backed mujahideen insurgency" (ibid.). *Like the US, they have skin in the game!*

Russia might provide a measure of balance that could play out in more pragmatic compromises by the Taliban's leadership. At the very least, both the US and Russia share an interest in dampening down the volatility of violent Islamism. Within its own national borders, Russia savagely quelled Muslim Chechen separatism in the Caucasus region.

I remember back in the 1990s hearing and reading via the mainstream media continually expressed Western concerns about Russian brutality being inflicted upon the poor Chechens. While this articulated outrage certainly reflected the reality on the

ground, it was very cynically and calculatedly contrived as all the gory record since 9/11 has again so dramatically demonstrated. Self-serving propaganda can be based on fact! *A central issue is then how one-eyed hypocrisy functions for geopolitical purposes.*

As well as Chechen separatists, Russia has confronted hardline Salafist rebels in its Republic of Dagestan, an area of the North Caucasus bordering the Caspian Sea. But the most recent conflict to catch international attention has been the latest round of fighting between Christian Armenia and Muslim Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

This particular conflict has stretched the capacity of Russia for meaningful mediation. Indeed, Russia faces a complex, dynamic, and changing inter-related sets of situations throughout the Caucasus, with both cooperative and competitive dimensions ("Russia's Stony Path In The South Caucasus", *Carnegie*, 20/10/20)²². Philip Remler, a former official at the US Department of State, sees Russia as increasingly conflicted and contested (ibid.).

Recently, China, Turkey, and the European Union (EU) have been gaining influence in the South Caucasus (ibid.). *Russia surely has a very hard row to hoe in these former Soviet territories as aggressively-edged competition steps up in the area.* More constructive peacemaking initiatives and projects are urgently required in this region, as in so many others around the world. Countries should be working together in their long-term mutual interest. Russian concerns and interests could be better harnessed jointly for the greater good.

The Interactions Of Wholesale And Retail Terrorisms!

Besides the creation of al Qaeda in the wake of the imperialist contest in Afghanistan, the later malignly orchestrated illegal US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 heralded the advent of the virulent Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) movement bent on carving out a reactionary Islamist caliphate in the Middle East. As so often has happened with American imperialist interventions, reactions and outcomes have eventually proved counter-productive to the intended foreign policy goals, at least

those publicly voiced (“Full Speed Ahead Into The Quagmire: NZ Blunders Into Iraq”, Murray Horton, *Peace Researcher* 28, December 2003)²³.

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the de facto “balkanisation” had rendered this country another conflict-ridden socio-economic morass out of which ISIS arose to confront the alien occupiers (“The Islamist Phoenix: The Islamic State (ISIS) And The Redrawing Of The Middle East”, Loretta Napoleoni, Seven Stories Press, 2014). We can only admire and duly praise the Pope's efforts at peacemaking in his 2021 visit to this sadly benighted land, yet another victim of the world's biggest predator and its vicious spawn.

The iconic enemy Islamist terrorist in Iraq, as portrayed – *and indeed so much even artificially, and one might well say, very deliberately created and inflated!* – by the American invaders, was the Sunni jihadist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The invaders desperately needed a publicly identified enemy after the capture of Saddam Hussein to help legitimate their war crime, and corresponding grab for oil!

“Few beyond the intelligence service had heard of Zarqawi when Washington made him a terrorist super-star, declaring to the world in 2003 that this obscure Jordanian was the link between Iraq's dictatorship and the plotters behind the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The claim was wrong, yet, weeks later, when US troops invaded Iraq, the newly famous and well-funded terrorist gained a battleground and a cause, and soon thousands of followers. He carried on with three years of terrorism” before being killed (“Black Flags: The Rise Of ISIS”, Joby Warnick, Bantam Press/Corgi Books, 2015/6, p31).

Once again, here is another example of Washington's self-fulfilling strategy at work; or rather, in this particular case, the calculated concoction of a viciously construed myth that took many innocent lives. Zarqawi had been present earlier in Afghanistan in 1989 and had evidently engaged in hostilities against the remnants of the Soviet-backed regime. A decade later, he returned to run an al Qaeda jihadist training camp there, 1999-2000. According to an associate, Zarqawi was motivated against the “Americans for the

crimes they committed during the bombardment of Afghanistan, which he witnessed with his own eyes” (ibid., p109).

The ISIS Phoenix And Other Irruptive Forces

ISIS, of course, still continues to operate in Iraq, albeit at a reduced level. It is currently proving more deadly in Afghanistan, having spread its tentacles there, and carrying out horrific mass civilian massacres per suicide bombing. It has been targeting the Shiite minority. This is a further horrible outcome of the American legacy and the super-power's ongoing violent interventions in the Middle East and adjoining regions, again the kind of fall-out that critics predicted – *especially given the rampaging post-9/11 overkill!*

So very predictably too, the American invasion and state terrorism with its overthrow of Sunni minority rule in Iraq under Saddam Hussein opened a direct front in the conflict with Shiite Iran. The invasion has spurred on more Sunni-Shiite conflict in general – from Afghanistan to Yemen, from Bahrain to Syria, and from Turkey to the Sahel.

For instance, it was reported in April 2021 that ISIS had staged an attack “in the town of al-Saan, Western Syria”, taking a number of hostages (“ISIS Kidnaps Dozens After Police Station Raid”, *Press*, 9/4/21). The raid on the police station flagged a return to the region by ISIS, after having been driven out by the Syrian Army several years ago (ibid.).

While the Biden Administration is still playing hardball with Iran to some degree, it has at least most crucially signposted its willingness to rejoin and repair the nuclear control deal that Trump & Co. so blatantly and stupidly sabotaged. Stopping further nuclear proliferation is an absolute necessity. The perilous confrontation between Iran and a Trump-headed US may have gone but tensions lie deep. “Israeli special forces are believed to have been behind an attack on a ship used by Iranian commandos in the Red Sea, escalating an undeclared maritime war between the two nations” (“Limpet Mine Used In Attack On An Iranian Ship”, *Press*, ibid.). Only minor damage was done in an ongoing feud (ibid.).

Later in April 2021, it was reported

that: “Three (crew were) killed in suspected drone attack on (a fuel tanker that was helping to deliver Iranian oil off the coast of Syria). The raid follows a series of ‘tit-for-tat’ explosions on Iranian and Israeli ships” (*Press*, 27/4/21). Such tit-for-tat engagements muddy the waters for peacemaking, no doubt Israel's nasty intention (“Israel's Shadow War With Iran An Obstacle To Peace”, *Press*, Donna Miles-Mojab, 19/4/21). Whether, too, the now self-styled “aggressive” President Joe Biden will actually do anything truly positive and peacemaking vis-a-vis Iran remains to be seen. We can only hope and agitate hard for progress.

“Full Spectrum” Aggression!

Following on from the fallout of 9/11 and the early years of the 21st Century, the US has tried to juggle a widening range of geopolitical interventions and commitments. During the previous Obama Presidency, it embarked on a massive “modernising” and boosting of its nuclear missile arsenal. Under Trump there was a pretence at reducing militarist commitments while potential confrontations continued to build. He launched the new “Space Force” in typical zombie fashion.

To even more directly confront the rise of China, the American pivot to the Pacific has in recent times broadened into the Indo-Pacific pivot. Again, as vis-a-vis Russia, newly elected President Joe Biden has actually and unashamedly summed up the growing contest with China as one of “*extreme competition*”. Once more, this is mindboggling stuff in that there can only be one eventual outcome of extreme aggressive competition, i.e., all-out military confrontation and war. *So, this then is Biden's declared position against both Russia and China!!*

Most ironically, given the *Washington Post's* criticism of Biden's announced withdrawal from Afghanistan as discussed above, the same paper acts in a cheerleader role for rejigging priorities (“Biden Shifts Focus With Afghanistan Departure”, reprinted in the *Press*, 15/4/21). A *Post* article praises Biden in his apparent aim to avoid becoming “entangled in long-running, slow-bleeding problems” (ibid.).

According to the *Post's* line, “Biden sees the (20-year) war against the Taliban as a drag on the need to

deal with bigger threats like China, climate change, the coronavirus pandemic – and even a terrorism menace that has mutated significantly since (9/11) ... He is also focused on threats from Russia and the decline of US influence abroad” (ibid.). The President is signalling that the US needs to concentrate on Asia, and the Indo-Pacific in particular. To some extent, the US is even stepping back from the Middle East in order to better deploy its forces (ibid.).

“Killer” Sparring Partners?!

At the same time, as repeatedly noted, President Biden has taken a tougher line with Russia. He is declaiming more belligerently against the rival power, and slapping on further sanctions. Despite some aggressive antics, the Trump Administration had adopted a softer approach to Russia. Hence, President Vladimir Putin had an obvious motivation to try and help keep the Republicans in power. Russian cyberwarfare directed at the Democrats can thus be seen as largely defensive.

Putin, as a de facto dictator, has certainly proved he can be ruthlessly dedicated in protecting the motherland according to his terms. His actions have ranged from viciously poisoning leaders of the internal opposition to the mobilisation of intimidatory military manoeuvres along the Ukrainian border in April 2021. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, a region already oriented under its ambit and crucial to its command of the Black Sea. While Russian justification for the takeover emphasised reclaiming Crimea to right a historic wrong, this intervention in Ukraine was clearly an angry riposte to the American coup against the demo-

cratically elected Government in Kiev.

The regime acted similarly in a less overt but still very effective manner in the Donbass area of south-eastern Ukraine. Most ominously of late, Putin has openly warned NATO and the West against burning bridges to better relations and crossing a red line to war. It certainly comes as a great relief that: “President Joe Biden has offered to meet President Vladimir Putin face-to-face in June to defuse tensions”, according to a Kremlin aide (“Biden Ready To Meet Putin In June, Says Moscow”, *Press*, 27/4/21). In the usual propagandist fashion, Putin is painted as the aggressor by this newspaper item (ibid.). But, once again, we must strenuously press for more positive global dialogue despite all the malicious hypocrisy of the Western mainstream media.

Cancerous Growth!

In general context, to stress the key point, the glaringly obvious thing about all of this is that the Russian leadership has been outrageously provoked by the US-led NATO march right up to their country's very borders. Perversely and malignly, the Western political Establishment and its media commentariat have twisted the facts in blatant rhetorical posturing.

One has only to imagine a Russian advance reaching up towards the US-Mexican boundary in order to understand the often malicious “topsy-turvy” propaganda world that we live in today! *The American reaction to such penetration would already have gone ballistic far earlier with the imperialist, anti-foreign Monroe Doctrine in a full tail-spin!* (“The Monroe Doctrine was a US

policy that argued that any intervention in the politics of the Americas by foreign powers was a potentially hostile act against the United States. It began in 1823...” *Wikipedia*)²⁴.

Meanwhile, China's reactions to the Western efforts to choke off its rise have included an authoritarian clamp-down on free expression in Hong Kong and further repressive militarisation of the seas off its coast and beyond in the South China Sea (e.g.)²⁵. Despite widespread international condemnation, as earlier observed too, China has proceeded with the chillingly systematic and pervasive persecution of its Uyghur minority in Xinjiang province.

In comparison with the US, both China and Russia are lacking the sea power muscle to project themselves forcefully on the wider global stage in this specific dimension. But American stupidity is increasingly forging a tighter bond between these two powers with joint military exercises, cooperation over energy supplies, etc., and thus creating another self-fulfilling prophecy in train. It is making joint enemies on the Eurasian continent.

Naval Manoeuvring

A *Press* headline in April 2021 announced that: “New Warship Counters Threat From China” (15/4/21). The relevant item described how Taiwan had “unveiled its first amphibious warship ... a day after the Chinese military breached the island's airspace with 25 warplanes amid escalating tensions in the region” (ibid.). This new Taiwanese warship is intended as a means “to land troops and bolster supply lines to vulnerable islets. Taiwan is responding to rising military pressure from Beijing, which sees the island as a Chinese territory and vows to take it back” (ibid.).

At the very same time, China is carrying on with its own naval build-up (“Xi Unveils New Warships In Warning To Taiwan”, *Press*, 27/4/21). It has unveiled “three new warships – one an amphibious helicopter carrier, hailed as the most advanced vessel in the nation's fleet – amid growing concern that (President Xi Jinping) is building a force capable of retaking Taiwan. The carrier, named *Hainan*, is designed as an offensive platform from which to launch an amphibious or airborne assault” (ibid.).



Joe Biden with Vladimir Putin

Symbolically enough, Hainan is an island province off the southern coast of China. So, we have a new Taiwanese amphibious warship counterposed to a new Chinese amphibious/airborne assault warship. This sort of war-gaming might well evoke black humour but it has deadly serious implications for the fate of the whole world. The US has been boosting Taiwan's military hardware. China versus Taiwan is just one of the increasing number of potential flash-points round the globe.

The Big Crunch Question For The Future

Of course, to reiterate and further stress a hugely important point, the deep underlying problem making for inevitable confrontation and war is the mounting competition for resources and investment on a small fragile planet. The shared global commitment to economic growth is ultimately a very dead end but as yet even the joint flails of Covid-19 and anthropogenic climate change are not inducing sufficient action for a properly comprehensive transition to more sustainable lifestyles.

It is still very evident that the general conventional expectation prevails that humans can somehow go on enjoying materially abundant production and consumption, whatever the looming problems ahead. Given hugely compounding inequities, ruling elites just about everywhere want to delude the masses in the same old ways! The mainstream media freely pumps out the mantra of continued consumer abundance, whatever the "green-washing" mixed messaging. It feeds a willfully blind and widespread ignorance about the extent and depth of environmental problems. There is thus a gross consequent failure to recognise constricting limits on economic growth, even in the face of compounding climate change.

Yet, "the consensus (of expert opinion) is that global warming won't do good things to global conflict" ("Behave", op. cit., p303). As World Beyond War declares: "Both anti-war and climate movements are fighting for justice and life for all people on a livable planet. It's increasingly clear that we can't have without the other. No climate justice, no peace, no planet" ("Saving The Climate From War", 29/4/21, "Militarism And Climate Change: Disaster In Progress")²⁶.

A "Dead-End" Mentality?

Time and again, big power leaders can embrace a "dead-end" mentality. Today, there is even increasing competition for the rare minerals like cobalt, gold, and palladium essential for the new "green" technologies touted to replace our reliance on fossil fuels ("The Rare Metals War", op. cit.). French journalist/researcher Guillaume Pitron advocates for "the need to limit our consumption of electronic goods built for obsolescence, to 'eco-design' goods for easy recycling and less waste, to opt for short supply loops, and to focus on saving resources" (ibid., p192).

While the Biden Administration has canned the Trump policy on climate change, the President's boldly announced "aggressive" and extremely competitive approach – as with China – could up the ante in the rare metals war. The move away from fossil fuels seems to be stepping up. There are thus enormous challenges desperately demanding the maximum of international cooperation. *Yet, to emphasise once more, the Biden Administration has basically chosen an "aggressive" foreign policy!*

In actuality, as we have seen too – in extending my examination of this crucial theme – Biden's stated position is riddled with contradiction and inconsistency. The Administration bizarrely contradicts itself in the American appeals for greater cooperation on climate change, nuclear weapon regulation, and other vital matters. These have been broadcast, and even admirably actioned to a degree in some spheres – most conspicuously, the international virtual climate change summit held on Earth Day, 22nd April 2021. NGOs and people's movements must try extra hard to sort out this mixed messaging by the American Administration into more positive, progressive programmes addressing the global crisis.

It is certainly true that the US has signalled and shown greater overall geopolitical aggression in recent years across the spectrum of full-on war preparation ("The Globalisation Of War: America's 'Long War' Against Humanity", Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, 2015). It has even been brazenly test-firing intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), a most menacing practice eschewed by the Russians for the

most part in the past (e.g., "US Test Fires Intercontinental Ballistic Missile", Anadolu Agency, 29/10/20)²⁷.

In riposte to American brain dead "blast-offs", the Russians have proceeded to flaunt a newly devised hypersonic weapon. They have also resorted to test firing ICBMs (e.g., "Russia Test-Fires Missile From New Nuclear-Powered Submarine", BBC News, 30/10/19)²⁸. Thus, the cycle of performative threats intermixed with real violence goes on. It only takes one misstep ... and there are multiple places across the Earth where this could occur ...

A Menacing March Up To Russia's Very Borders!

A further comment is appropriate at this juncture on the stand-off in the Ukraine. In recent years, as noted, US-spearheaded NATO aggression in the Ukraine is now threatening the very borders of Russia. This is highly concerning on a global basis. Joe Biden himself has been a key leader of this geopolitical confrontation, being particularly prominent in the campaign to subvert the Ukraine.

Indeed, he had special responsibility for this subversive campaign during the Obama Presidency and so can be considered the prime mover. Of course, a lot of controversy erupted about Democrat Biden and his son's connections in the Ukraine, courtesy of Republican Trump & Co. Trump's efforts to smear Biden and his son fall within this political purview. I hope to look at these matters a bit more closely in a future article.

Given American belligerence across a whole spectrum of military behaviour, doctrine, and machinery, the mounting Western threat to Russia's very borders has provoked President Putin to some very ominous missile-rattling as recorded above. This has been demonstrably for heartland defence but the whole pattern of big power interaction risks taking a very dangerous turn indeed.

With Belarus now also a worrying bone of contention between East and West, the stage is set for more perilously choppy waters ahead! In conjunction with the UN and other international mediatory agencies, we must strive harder everywhere to grow the global peace and anti-nuclear movements. We have to effectively counter and defuse these

geopolitical tensions and tendencies to conflict.

In sum, the general problem of American aggression covers the “full spectrum”: from promoting the intimidatory advancement of NATO in Europe against Russia; mobilising to face-off against China in the Indo-Pacific region; blitzing countries in the Middle East/Central Asia, and Africa with bomb and drone strikes (whether directly with allies, or via face-saving proxies – viz., the crucifixion of Yemen by Saudi Arabia and its Gulf States mates); regular targeted attacks on Pakistan, Somalia, etc.; to employing aggressive special forces operations in multiple locations around the globe (*a staggering total of over 120 countries subject to “secret wars”!*).

Militarist Market Runs Riot!

The US has postured threateningly with militarist market tactics against an increasing number of nations – from Syria to China, and from Russia to Iran and Venezuela. At the same time, “military undertakings are closely coordinated with a process of economic warfare, which consists not only in imposing sanctions on sovereign countries but also in deliberate acts of destabilisation of financial and currencies markets, with a view to undermining the enemies' national economies” (“The Globalisation Of War”, op. cit., Preface, pxi).

Meanwhile, too, the military-industrial complex draws client countries ever deeper into its voracious maw. Aotearoa/NZ is currently being screwed by the newly minted Yankee Space Force, courtesy of Lockheed Martin & co. in the guise of Rocket Lab, as so fulsomely extolled by our stupid zombie media (see “A Deafening Silence”, *Peace Researcher* 60, November 2020)²⁹. The American Space Force is deeply involved in the growing competition for mastery of the heavens with Russia, China, and other nations. Again, the risks of global war are rising sharply!

This increasing drive to big power conflict points up the monster paradox that we live with today. The potential nightmare of nuclear weapons has been critical in deterring full-on global warfare. But the longer it lasts the more the tectonic political pressures are building. Time is running out until that most horrible day of reckoning for us all, and for so

many of the other species with which we share this small Goldilocks planet.

Professor Michel Chossudovsky asserts a great irony of current geopolitical competition. “China and Russia, (which comprise together the Pentagon's greatest perceived threat to American national security), are no longer considered to be 'a threat to capitalism'. Quite the opposite. What is at stake is economic and financial rivalry between competing capitalist powers” (“The Globalisation Of War”, op. cit., p6). *Social Darwinism rules!*

Chossudovsky points out how: “The China-Russia alliance under the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) 'constitutes a competing capitalist bloc', which undermines US hegemony” (ibid.). But, writing in 2015, Professor Chossudovsky felt that in comparison with the “formidable force” of NATO, the SCO as “an alliance between Russia and China and a number of former Soviet Republics (had) been significantly weakened” (ibid., p87).

However, again in recent years, Russia and China have certainly got closer. The Trump Presidency prompted tighter ties, with a series of joint military exercises. Clearly, any Western attack on one would immediately induce the other to a joint Eurasian confrontation and retaliation against a common enemy. Both countries cannot harbour any illusions about the need to stand together.

Demented Delusions!

Delusions about peace, war, deterrence, aggression, defence, and armaments, and above all, nuclear weapons, run riot in militarist tribalism (“Towards A World War III Scenario: The Dangers Of Nuclear War”, Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, 2012). This was aptly illustrated by the outlandish war-mongering given vent by a former Deputy Head of NATO, General Sir Richard Shirreff, who has written the book “2017 – War With Russia”, supposedly warning about the danger of imminent war between an aggressive, expansionary Russia and the innocent West (e.g., “HARDtalk, General Sir Richard Shirreff”, *BBC World News*, 14/3/15)³⁰.

In fact, General Shirreff himself has so very obviously been one of the leading practitioners of the aggres-

sive, expansionist drive by the US-led NATO into former republics of the old Soviet Union. This expansion has been in blatant violation of a promise given to President Gorbachev over a quarter of a century ago. Shirreff is so perverse that he inveighs against what he considers the weakness of the West in confronting Russia in both Syria and Ukraine.

Yet the former Soviet republic of Ukraine shares historical and deeply seated cultural aspects and societal experiences with its much larger neighbour. Syria is a firmly established ally of Russia and part of its geopolitical orbit. The West has intruded brutally into Russia's Eurasian backyard. *To be sure, the US happily intervenes in countries thousands of miles away from its shores on the declared grounds of national security!*

As repeatedly stressed, the fallout from the Western capitalist crusade in eastern Europe, and in particular against Ukraine, has certainly rebounded in the form of President Putin's latest aggressive military response in the face of NATO's territorial belligerence. All this turmoil, in turn, stems from yet another so very predictable blowback sparked by the blundering predatory market. Putin is being demonised in the West even as the US/NATO capitalist crusade rolls on.

An earlier American strategic failure to try and turn Russia into a neoliberal client state has reaped a hard-line authoritarianism exemplified by President Vladimir Putin and his coterie right up to the present day (“Failed Crusade: America And The Tragedy Of Post-Communist Russia”, Stephen Cohen, WW Norton & Co., 2000; “Can Russia Survive Washington's Attack?,” Paul Craig Roberts, 19/5/16)³¹.

In another of the many ironies of geopolitics, the US-led NATO advance has consolidated Putin's grip on power. The West might have done its best to stir internal dissent with Russia but Putin has so far succeeded in harshly crushing any democratic or rebellious movements against his rule. Russia's President can marshal the appeal to patriotism in a land that has seen off the ravages of invaders in the past.

There have been tragically missed opportunities in relations between

the West and East since the end of the first Cold War. Russia and the US with the EU could have worked together to create a cooperative nuclear-free zone in eastern Europe, and thus the formation of a buffering, neutral region. But the world's dominant power very deliberately chose not to.

War Is Peace!

In media interviews, General Shirreff made plain his Social Darwinist principles: peace is not the default setting for international affairs – *war is!* (note the relevant quotes introducing my article). So, for Shirreff, we have to build up even more weaponry in the European region and increase military budgets. For him, this represents essential deterrence.

In reality, he is a militarist warmonger under the very transparent pretence of posing for peace, which has been a standard practice of the capitalist West for centuries. Shirreff's obvious underlying assumption constitutes a damning contradiction since his tacit premise is that war is inevitable sooner or later! Indeed, his very ideology guarantees it – i.e., *if the peoples of the world cannot rally in time to prevent the momentum to this self-fulfilling prophecy!*

Various hypocritical delusions and fantasies are typical of the Western bloc since 9/11. Yet even General Shirreff can refer to the Baltic states in which NATO is now ensconced as former Soviet Union republics. By his own acknowledgement, this clearly demonstrates how the Western alliance has muscled in on territory that Russia, until relatively recently, had considered its own.

Eastern European states that were formerly part of the Soviet empire could have been guaranteed neutrality by both sides, as had been previously promised to President Gorbachev. But the Anglo-American axis is set on the expansion of neoliberal militarism. The US already has some 50,000 troops stationed in Germany, plus a number of nuclear weapons.

Russia's borders and allies are being tested repeatedly by NATO, naturally eliciting aggressive if basically defensive reactions. This wargaming ranges from the Baltic to the Ukraine, and from Syria to Belarus. This kind of confrontation is now fast becoming an even more dan-

"I FIGURE IT'S EASIER TO FIND A WAR THAN A JOB THESE DAYS."



gerous situation with the long planned Western deployment of "Star Wars"-type missile defence systems ("NATO Ratchets Up Missile Defense Despite Russian Criticism", *New York Times*, 5/5/16)³².

Such destabilising deployment has long been condemned by Russia as undermining deterrence and providing cover for a first strike. The danger of how defence and offence are seen by both sides is becoming more and more problematic. General Shirreff actually advocates as deterrence an increase in complex hair-trigger weapon systems.

In this interactive process, what is supposedly defence, deterrence, and what is perceived as aggression becomes deeply fraught with uncertainty. President Putin's eminently defensive reactions to NATO's advance have been malignly construed by Shirreff & co. as Russia's efforts to try and undermine Europe. Truth, as so blatantly and repeatedly demonstrated in the Ukraine, in Afghanistan, in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, etc, has been continually turned on its head!

Capitalist Aggression Is Peaceful Progress!

This syndrome of propagandist military posturing is now paralleled as well in the North Pacific between the US and China. Meantime, Australia is backing its warmongering rhetoric with closer ties to the American military and a new spending splurge, including expensive "upgrades to

training bases and airfields in the north [of the country]" ("Canberra Adds To Military Muscle With Focus On Beijing", *Press*, 20/4/21). In the usual Orwellian style, PM "Morrison said that his country intended to 'pursue peace'" (ibid.).

Such belligerent behaviour reflects the sort of suicidal stupidity that can only make sense to military minds perverted by the psychopathological evil of the sophisticated technological warfare systems in which they are embedded. To such minds, and their disciples, even tactical nuclear weapons can be safely employed (i.e., without catastrophic escalation), a strategy to which the Pentagon is deliberately and crazily committed. The Reaganite strategy of the 1980s has gained credence. Increasingly; the safety boundary between conventional and nuclear weapons is being eroded away.

It is also very evident then, that for long-term human survival – let alone the viability of so many of the other species with which we share this small, vulnerable "Goldilocks" planet – that while the phase-out of nuclear arms must be the priority, there must be an ongoing programme of conventional disarmament as much as possible as well ("War And The Environment", Online Course, Global Campaign³³, an online course by World Beyond War [WBW]). At the very least, what is required is constant effort and peacemaking initiatives towards this ultimate goal of disarmament, limiting weaponry as

much as possible and encouraging international cooperation.

Furthermore, a disarmament programme needs to be coupled with a developmental approach embracing a low-carbon future in order to address climate change. This needs in turn to be linked with approaches addressing social justice and sustainability. Most importantly, the driving force at bottom of greater competition and conflict is the pursuit of economic growth on a planet with obvious limits.

Such growth and the cultivation of freer trade are still widely seen – so *very ironically!* – as antidotes to war. What, in fact, is urgently required is a whole reorientation of the global economy in a truly environmentally benign and cooperative way (see e.g., “A Life On Our Planet: My Witness Statement And A Vision For The Future”, David Attenborough, Witness Books, 2020).

Acting To Reduce The Dangers

In light of the BAS's latest alerts and action on the nuclear threat, it is heartening to see an international range of NGOs stepping up the urgency and momentum of their campaigns. For example, Global Zero has called for an urgent world Nuclear Weapons Summit in order to reduce the number of such weapons as much as possible. Global Zero is designated as “an international non-partisan group of 300 world leaders dedicated to achieving the elimination of nuclear weapons” (Global Zero, “A World Without Nuclear Weapons”)³⁴.

Significantly, too, a number of the leading NGOs are American-based and doing excellent work. Besides BAS and WBW, they include: Beyond the Bomb³⁵; & Roots Action³⁶. These particular NGOs are trying to put concerted people pressure on Washington to take some genuinely meaning moves towards nuclear disarmament and peacemaking.

Meantime, as indicated early on in my article, WBW held a big peace action event, albeit in the form of a virtual presentation in June 2021. Previous initiatives have included working with Campaign Nonviolence and the National Campaign for Non-violent Resistance, along with an increasing number of other NGOs. WBW, in its campaigning, has put out an online petition – among various others – condemning American

war crimes.

Reinvigorating The Peace Movement

In Aotearoa/NZ, the links with peace activism elsewhere are clear. We must help grow this global movement. Ideally, we look worldwide to a gathering chain reaction of cascading successes. NZ is now oriented to China economically but committed to the US militarily, although the militarist market connections are growing in the American dimension too, e.g., Rocket Lab and related projects. We have an ongoing challenge to try and play a more constructive role in the tangled disputes of the North Pacific in a neutral, mediatory mode.

Without greater peacemaking efforts, conflicts will eventually erupt into open warfare with Earth-shaking consequences. Only by adopting a more independent, neutralist position can NZ be taken seriously as a honest mediator. We must resist economic bondage to both China and the US, disconnect from the Pentagon's doomsday machine, and work more closely with American NGOs and the rest of the overseas' peace movement for a future worth living.

Weblinks:

- 1 <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/>
- 2 <https://worldbeyondwar.org>
- 3 <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/04/how-special-ops-became-the-solution-to-everything/618080/>
- 4 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1090522>
- 5 <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/>
- 6 <https://worldbeyondwar.org>
- 7 <https://rocketlabmonitor.com>
- 8 <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR60.pdf>
- 9 <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR58.pdf>
- 10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Kinzer
- 11 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/13/ukraine-us-war-russia-john-pilger>
- 12 <https://covertactionmagzine.com/2018/12/09/william-blum-dead-at-85/>

- 13 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088612>
- 14 <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr28.pdf>
- 15 <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/12/14/iraq-after-trump>
- 16 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/06/world/europe/iran-nuclear-deal.html>
- 17 <https://archives.globalresearch.ca/articles/BRZ110A.html>
- 18 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Coll
- 19 <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr42.pdf>
- 20 <https://actionnetwork.org>
- 21 <https://worldbeyondwar.org>
- 22 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/10/20/russia-s-stony-path-in-south-caucasus-pub-82993>
- 23 <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr28.pdf>
- 24 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monroe_Doctrine
- 25 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/26/china-send-nuclear-armed-submarines-into-pacific-us>
- 26 <https://worldbeyondwar.org>
- 27 <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-test-fires-intercontinental-ballistic-missile/2023962>
- 28 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50233511>
- 29 <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR60.pdf>
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- 35 <https://beyondthebomb.org>
- 36 <https://rootsaction.org/> ■

POISONING THE PACIFIC

The US Military's Secret Dumping Of Plutonium, Chemical Weapons, And Agent Orange

by Jon Mitchell
Rowman and Littlefield
Maryland, 2020

The sub-title wanders at such a vast length because the poisons are numerous. Jon Mitchell has written at length about Okinawa, an island that's politically, but uncomfortably, part of Japan. To the south-west of the main Japanese islands, Okinawa is well on the way to the Philippines and China. Its position is one reason it's long been of interest to warriors. At the end of World War 2 Okinawa was the last island obstacle as the Americans fought their way towards Tokyo. Like the many other islands that stretch south-east towards Australia, it was ruined by some of the fiercest fighting the world has ever seen.

Imperial Japan having been ground down - and twice atomic-bombed - the US found it a good idea to occupy these outposts, handy as they are to China and the eastern edges of Siberia. From 1945 the US was the world's great power, happy to refer, without irony, to the Pacific as an American "lake". From there its two Cold War opponents could be contained and, if need be, attacked.

Guam, Midway, Saipan - the familiar names from war movies - were powerless to resist American occupation, and they became the most convenient places for the US to station troops and weapons. Bikini was subjected to decades of nuke testing. The book catalogues the re-



sults, which take all its 300 pages to record. It's an appalling tale of death, sickness and misery.

Japan Has Always Been Complicit

Imperial Japan tortured and murdered, but in the post-war era it has not been the orderly regime that might be expected from a Government that calls itself Liberal Democrat and seems to manage domestic affairs well enough. Mitchell, though, is unimpressed. He sees a state that offers no resistance to the US, especially not in Okinawa, which remains effectively an American military base. There are 47 US bases in Japan.

Mitchell accuses both the US and the Japanese government of responsibility for the carnage caused by the tsunami that swamped a nuclear power station in 2011. The Americans wanted Japan to adopt nuclear power. Tokyo went along with it, despite both parties knowing that the site was prone to earthquakes.

There are other bad actors in this dismal story, notably nuke-happy Russia and France. We could soon get to hear about the area again. The first in-person meeting with a foreign leader of Joe Biden as President was when he hosted the present Japanese PM in April 2021, as they pushed their plan to link the US, Japan and Australia - and, they hope, India - as a counter to a newly confident China. And, of course, Vladimir Putin's Russia is not far away. ■

THE PALACE LETTERS

by Jenny Hocking
Scribe, Melbourne, 2020

Jenny Hocking is a very persistent historian. In 1975 the Governor-General (GG) of Australia fired the Prime Minister in murky circumstances. For years Hocking had tried to access documents which would shed light on what had gone on. For decades she was rebuffed. This is the story of her campaign, which has ended in success, the "palace letters" having been released.

The palace concerned is Buckingham Palace, from where the Queen's Secretary corresponded with John Kerr, the GG (he was actually Sir John but as almost everyone involved in the tawdry affair was a fellow knight, and because the letters would make anyone a republican, I am omitting honorifics). All told, 212 letters were exchanged over three years.

The crisis arose because under Australia's eccentric Constitution, there were enough votes in the Senate opposing the Government to prevent the Prime Minister from passing a Budget, the "supply" that, from time to time, we hear about in NZ, where Governments sometimes

might have to rely on support from coalition partners for “confidence and supply”. Officialdom had always presented the crisis as a fluky moment when the GG had no choice. He was, after all, the Queen’s representative, and the Queen was a ceremonial figure who never dipped into partisan politics. In reality she was very much involved in helping an antipodean Kerr to oust his PM.

Kerr’s problem was that rather than the dispassionate semi-regal figure, stuffed with gravitas, that he was meant to be, he was a needy and bitter man who did not care for the PM. Gough Whitlam’s sin was rooted in his being not just Labor, but a very smart and progressive leader. The constitutional crisis was real enough, but there were alternatives that were never looked at. Shockingly, Kerr never told Whitlam what he was planning.

The letters reveal that Kerr had told Prince Charles two months before the dismissal about his choices. Worried that if Whitlam got to know of the intrigue, he could fire Kerr, Charles opined that “surely the Queen does not have to accept” Whitlam’s advice. At another point Kerr referred directly to Secretary “Charteris’ advice to me on dismissal”.

Queen Elizabeth and Kerr had an ally in the National Archives of Australia, which ostensibly exists in order to help researchers like Hocking access public information, but which did all it could to block her. She does not ask why, but readers might. Were the archivists under instruction from successor Governments? Would not a later Labor PM have helped achieve the transparency and accountability that govern-

ments always pledge?

And what about the Palace? Malcolm Turnbull, a recent Liberal PM, has provided a foreword. He was chosen as a republican with a background as the defence lawyer who won another epic fight against opaque officialdom in the notorious “Spycatcher” case. Turnbull remarks that the Queen’s motive was to not provide a precedent for future access. From what’s reported here, it’s more likely that she had the same motive as official Australia. She would look bad.

No Mention Of Wider Imperial Interest

In the small worlds of capital cities like Canberra it is not surprising that senior judges became entwined in Kerr’s intrigue, but there is no mention in Hocking’s palace-centric account of a wider imperial interest. As discussed in “A Secret Australia”, reviewed below, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was upset over Whitlam’s moves to disentangle Australia from US military policy.

He was looking critically at the Pine Gap US spy base and had found out that the US was spying on his Government. The US warned that if Whitlam persisted with his announced intention of naming names in Parliament, they would stop sharing info with Australia. That was on Monday, November 10. On Tuesday, November 11, Whitlam was fired.

For a complete account of events, we need more background. Whitlam’s choice of Kerr as GG in 1973 had surprised some within Labor (ALP). As Guy Rundle puts it in his chapter in “A Secret Australia”, “Kerr had been heavily involved with CIA

fronts... for decades. Kerr had made clear his fervent anti-communism and his belief that the Cold War was an epochal struggle between good and evil. He was also of the belief that the Left of the ALP was bound up with communist currents...”.

In the context of the letters, it is surprising to find that, in their Introduction to “A Secret Australia”, the editors had quoted a US Embassy cable reported by WikiLeaks. It depicted a very different Whitlam to the one that is in the public record. The Yanks were praising him. “Whitlam’s forthright defence of US joint facilities was the clearest public statement he has yet made. It was effective and most welcome”.

That cable was sent in February 1975, so, where are we? Did Whitlam change his mind about foreign policy issues in the nine months between this endorsement of the US and his November wariness? He seemed to have travelled a way leftwards (it is confusing, and if readers of “A Secret Australia” do not read Rundle’s chapter they will be left with the idea that Whitlam was a leading Cold Warrior, having been singled out by the editors. He was certainly not that in November 1975).

Absence Of Context

None of this is discussed by Hocking, for whom the villains are exclusively Brits and Aussies. Including the US State Department in the prosecution’s case could have provided a fuller explanation of why Whitlam had to go. Anyway, after Kerr deposed Whitlam and invited Liberal Malcolm Fraser to take over, Parliament, with its Labor majority, passed a motion of no confidence in the new outfit, but Kerr hid so he could not be told about it, and did not emerge until after he had dissolved Parliament.

In these circumstances, the immediate optics looked bad for Labor and at the general election that followed Fraser won a big majority. Soon Kerr was himself fired, leading him to declare that, compared to Fraser, Whitlam was a good bloke. Kerr was subsequently appointed as Ambassador to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), where, in the face of a public outcry, he lasted one day. In 1983 none other than Gough Whitlam became Oz’s



Governor-General John Kerr, left, with PM Gough Whitlam

UNESCO rep. Kerr was to spend most of his time after that in the UK, where his allegiance lay.

Murray Horton's obituaries of Gough Whitlam and his successor, Malcolm Fraser, are in Peace Researcher 49, June 2015, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwcB6Aysm_HHSFY1VDA0blc1ZU0/view?pli=1. John Kerr died in 1991 - PR never dignified him with an obituary. For fans of Netflix's The Crown, please note that it has never mentioned the role of the British monarchy in the overthrow of a democratically elected Australian government. Ed ■

A SECRET AUSTRALIA

edited by Felicity Ruby and Peter Cronau

Monash University Publishing 2020

A secret Australia is "revealed by the WikiLeaks exposes" the subtitle continues. This set of essays is based on the work of Julian Assange. A good deal of the content is about Assange the man. He's hugely praised here. Assange was a journalist, not a hacker. That's the

central assertion. He broke no laws, but he did provide a great service for researchers by exposing the machinations of the Australian state. Assange came up with the "dropbox", whereby researchers can protect their anonymity as they probe.

The contributors share a deep dislike, often a contempt, for the Australian federal Government, which hides behind ever more secrecy. Censorship is tight, and in the tense atmosphere that prevails, journalists often feel the need to self-censor. As a Five Eyes partner, NZ gets a couple of mentions. Nicky Hager alerted us to the role of the Lange government, the one which, having publicly made a big fuss about being nuclear free, went on undisturbed as part of the US-led surveillance partners, a reality that "should not be acknowledged in public".

Detailed Look At Clandestine Involvements

Most of the book is a detailed look at the clandestine involvement of the Government with outside forces, almost always in league with America. The UK appears a few times. Assange's fate remains unclear, but surely, whatever the truth might be, the business needs to be resolved. His prolonged detention is a human rights issue as much as a legal one.

Sometimes he has done himself no favours. When Trump ran for President Assange made supporting re-



Julian Assange

marks which alienated public support for him. He did so, it says here, because he thought a new person might be more sympathetic to his predicament than the Democratic lot. Hillary Clinton is portrayed as the chief tormentor. Perhaps Assange is politically and socially naive. Yet to talk with the poisonous Sean Hannity of Fox TV, as he did, was a serious misjudgement.

The political picture is as clear as the world of imperial power is murky. The Oz state - and its influential media allies - have done nothing to help the man or his cause as they cringe before the American leviathan. Would it play out the same dismal way if there were to be a New Zealand Assange? All that we know from experience is unfortunately, that, yes, it would. ■

OWEN WILKES Interest Never Fades

By Murray Horton

Owen Wilkes, internationally renowned peace researcher and Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) founder, killed himself in 2005, aged 65 (*Peace Researcher* 31, October 2005, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr31.pdf>, was devoted to obituaries of Owen). And yet, 16 years later, I'm still learning more about him and gaining insights into his life and character. In late 2020 I was contacted, out of the blue, by an octogenarian Kiwi expat

in Oslo, who had been a good friend of Owen's in Scandinavia in the 70s and 80s and then for most of the rest of Owen's life.

In 1978, I and my then partner (Christine Bird, a fellow ABC founder) accompanied Owen on a "spy trip" through Norway's northernmost province, the one bordering the former Soviet Union, which gave me my first glimpse of the sort of domes with which I've become so familiar at the Waihopai spy base during the last 30 plus years.

We met this expat Kiwi whilst in Oslo. Although we were strangers, he immediately recognised us as New Zealanders the second we stepped off the train at his station. Why? Be-

cause of the distinctive shabbiness of our dress. I hadn't heard from him in decades. In 2020 he went to the trouble of contacting an NZ national news Website to get my e-mail address.

He told me that he had a small collection of Owen's letters and other material about him, and as he was decluttering and couldn't think of any Scandinavian home for them, would I like them? I was happy to do so. Reading them brought back vivid memories from more than 40 years ago, none more so than in connection with that "spy trip".

Owen thrived in Scandinavia, and particularly loved his 18 months in Norway, paying Norwegians the



Owen Wilkes on his bike, Norway, late 1970s

highest accolade of being "good jokers". All up, he lived six years in Scandinavia, most of it in Sweden, where he worked for the world-famous Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). He applied his unique talents to researching in both countries e.g., he identified the entire security police staff by the simple expedient of ringing every block of particular extension numbers.

In 1978, Christine Bird and I did our Big OE, part of which included crossing the former Soviet Union on the Trans-Siberian Express from the Pacific coast and staying with Owen in his Stockholm apartment. In this most sophisticated of northern European cities, he still dressed and acted like The Wild Man of Borneo (when I inquired about toilet paper,

he told me that he ripped pages out of the phonebook). It was quite a sight to visit the SIPRI office full of oh so proper Swedes and there was Owen working away at his desk, naked except for shorts.

We met up with him for a reason, which was to accompany him on a "spy" trip through Norway's northernmost Finnmark province, which was chokka with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) military bases and lots of Waihopai-like spy bases, the first time I ever saw those distinctive domes. Norway was then one of only two NATO members with a land border with the Soviet Union (the other one was Turkey).

Mad Norwegian Adventure

Off we went, the three of us, on this

mad adventure, travelling by boat, train, bus and hitchhiking. We slept in a tent wherever we could pitch it. Bird and I went by bus right up to the Soviet border; Owen got the deeply suspicious driver to drop off him beforehand so that he could walk up and check out a spy base in the border zone (photography was strictly forbidden near any of these bases, even at Oslo Airport, because it was also a Norwegian Air Force base). From memory, he told the bus driver that he was a bird watcher (he had his ever-present binoculars to prove it).

He told us that if he hadn't rejoined us within a couple of days, it would mean that he had been arrested and to ring the office in Oslo to let them know. Right on time he turned up. We duly delivered the rolls of film back to the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) and they were used in a book co-authored by Owen and Nils Petter Gleditsch, the PRIO Director. The book, "Uncle Sam's Rabbits" (a pun on the rabbit ear aerials used at some of the listening post spy bases) caused such a sensation in Norway that both authors were charged, tried, convicted and fined for offences under the Official Secrets Act.

Much more excitement was to come, not long after, in Sweden. Security agents swooped on Owen as he was returning from a bike trip around islands between Sweden and Finland, he was held incommunicado for several days amid sensational headlines about a Soviet spy being arrested (this was the sort of stuff that gave his poor old Mum palpitations back in Christchurch). He was eventually released and charged with offences under Sweden's Official Secrets Act (after his death, NZ media coverage mistakenly said that he was convicted of espionage offences. That means spying for a foreign country. He wasn't charged with any such offence, let alone convicted).

Forced Arctic River In Shorts To Covertly Enter Soviet Union

This was at the height of the Cold War, when neutral Sweden was being particularly paranoid about Soviet spies (not helped when a Soviet Whisky class submarine got embarrassingly stuck in Stockholm Harbour, the famous "Whisky On The Rocks" episode). Owen's trial was very high profile, attracting interna-

tional media attention. At first, he was convicted and sentenced to six months' prison. He never served a day of that, because he appealed, and the sentence was suspended but he was fined heavily and ordered expelled from Sweden for ten years (he used to joke that he should have appealed for it to be increased to 20 years).

The 2020 package of material from Oslo added one vital detail I didn't know about that "spy trip" we did with him. The Kiwi expat wrote to a work mate of Owen's, after his death: "He once even crossed the Norwegian-Soviet border in the high north, wading across an icy river in his shorts and was there several hours – only a few people know about this. It doesn't bear thinking about what could have happened to him, or so-called international relations, if he'd been jumped on by the vodka-sodden Soviet frontier guards. As unshaven as Owen. He would have managed though..."

No wonder that bus driver was so suspicious of him. There is great irony in the fact that both the Norwegian and Swedish security agencies suspected Owen of being some sort of a Soviet spy and both prosecuted him; yet if he'd been caught on his covert visit to the Soviet Union, he would have doubtless been presented to the world as a Western spy.

A 1981 letter that Owen wrote to his Oslo mate shed some light on his arrest and detention for several days by the Swedish Security Service (SAPO). "Overall, it wasn't such bad fun. I had a clear conscience all along and I wasn't scared that SAPO would try and plant evidence or anything like that... So, I slept well at night, found the interrogations intellectually stimulating, read several novels. Getting out was fun too..."

I can personally testify as to how much Owen enjoyed being locked up. We were among a group of people arrested inside the US military transport base at Christchurch Airport during a 1988 protest (the base is still there). This is from my 2005 *Peace Researcher* obituary of Owen, cited above: "It was a weekend, so we were bailed after a few hours to appear later in the week".

"But that didn't suit Owen, he had things to do and didn't want to be mucking around with inconvenient

court appearances. So, he refused bail and opted to stay locked up for 24 hours so that the cops had to produce him at the next day's court hearing (which was more convenient for him), where he duly got bail".

"He told me that he'd found some old *Readers' Digests* in the cells and had had a wonderful uninterrupted time reading their Rightwing conspiracy theories about how the KGB was behind the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul 11. In the meantime, I was left to deal with his then partner, who was frantic about how come he'd ended up in custody, as that hadn't been part of their South Island holiday plans. In the end, we fought the good fight in court, were convicted and got a small fine each".

Getting To Read His Swedish Security File

A letter to his Oslo mate at the turn of the century says that he learned that Swedish Police files on him would be among those now available to the people who were the subjects of them. He wrote, from NZ, asking for access to their files on him from 1978-81. He got a reply saying he could have access to 1025 pages and that he had two months to do so. Owen had been planning a Scandinavian trip with his partner, May Bass, and this was the icing on the cake for him ("she is going to find something else to do while I am poring through the archives in Stockholm").

When I last saw Owen, in 2002, he told that me that the file showed that the Swedish authorities were absolutely convinced that he was a Soviet spy and there was circumstantial evidence of which he had been unaware – for instance, he had been monitoring a whole lot of radio frequencies broadcasting from the Soviet Union, and in the case of one, he had apparently stumbled onto the means of communication between the KGB (former Soviet spy agency) and their agent in Sweden. He had no idea but this reinforced the Swedish spooks' idea that he was a Soviet spy, rather than an insatiably curious peace researcher.

By contrast, to this day, the NZ Security Intelligence Service has refused to release anything but a fraction of its file on him (see my "Owen Wilkes' SIS File. A Bit More Released, A Decade After First Smid-

gen", in *Peace Researcher* 57, June 2019, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR57.pdf>).

The SIS says it holds six volumes on Owen. It still deems the great majority of that too sensitive to be released, even to his one remaining blood relative – his younger brother.

In 1982, after six years of high drama in Scandinavia, he returned home in a blaze of publicity and went around the country on an extremely successful speaking tour. Christchurch academic, Professor Bill Willmott, nominated him for the 1982 Nobel Peace Prize (funnily enough, he didn't win it. It was never likely that the Scandinavians would ever award their homegrown prize to a peace activist who had been convicted for "spying" on them).

A copy of Willmott's nomination letter is among the material I was sent. After his involuntary return, Owen never lived overseas again, but he continued to be of ongoing interest to Scandinavian media. A 1983 Norwegian article reported on Owen from where he was living in the Karamea district. It was titled: "'Spy' Yesterday, Farmer Today".

Extreme Adventurer; Renouncing Peace Movement

Owen wasn't a big fan of Sweden but he absolutely loved Norway. It gave him full scope for the extreme adventures that he loved, whether on foot, in the water, on skis or on a bike. His letters describing some of his adventures are wonderful examples of travel writing, although not for the fainthearted reader. This is his description of what happened when he boarded a coastal ferry after one such jaunt through days of unrelenting rain.

".. I noticed the people were looking rather strangely at me, which I assumed was just because of the way I went squilch-squelch when I walked, and the way a little rivulet would wend its way out from under my chair when I sat down. Then I chanced to look in a mirror, and discovered that my skin had gone all soft and wrinkly and puffy, so that I looked like a cadaver that had been simmered in caustic soda solution". He would have fitted right in to any movie about the zombie apocalypse.

His letters shed light on various fas-

cinating aspects of his life and personality. In the 90s he basically and publicly renounced the peace movement (I refer you to my 2005 *Peace Researcher* obituary, cited above. See the subheadings "Leaving The Peace Movement" and "Writer Of Crank Letters"). A 1993 letter to his Oslo mate gives a small taste of this.

It lists his disagreements with "Greenpeas (*not a typo. MH*) ...on quite a few issues. Some of their campaigns are just great, but some of them are pretty bloody stupid, I reckon. And it is only recently that they've started going screwy" (he then details six areas of disagreement). "Grumble, grumble, it's no wonder I am getting offside with the peace movement around these parts, is it... Anyway, I am sort of getting out of the peace movement".

Another 1993 letter to Oslo (the only

handwritten one) is a fascinating, hilarious and white-knuckle account of how – after the unexpected death of his father in Christchurch - he and his brother tried to get their bedridden mother moved by small plane from Christchurch to the brother's district of Karamea. A classic Canterbury norwester put paid to that and they had to land at a rural airstrip (after the sheep had been chased off it). The journey had to be finished by ambulance and took 26 hours. Owen's parents died within a few months of each other, in 1993. I knew both of them and Becky and I attended both funerals.

Owen was a depressive, which played a role in his 2005 suicide. That same 1993 handwritten letter concluded with this: "There's an election coming up in 3 weeks, but I feel quite detached. Basically, I think we're all totally doomed + the civilisation is into its final orgy of

environmental destruction before the end. Rather than trying to improve the future by changing the present, I plan on documenting the past, just in case civilisation is re-established in some distant future + its people are in a mood to learn from our past. Hence my archaeology. It's a choice between archaeology or alcoholism, I reckon".

Pleasure And Sadness

Owen Wilkes was a fascinating and simultaneously infuriating man. He's been dead for 16 years and this quite unexpected package of material goes back more than 40 years. But that passage of time only reinforces for me what a loss he is, both to the progressive movement nationally and globally, but also as a person, an indomitable adventurer, and as a friend and colleague. It was with both pleasure and sadness that I read through this material. It brought back so many memories. ■

THE DAY TRUMP CAME IN HANDY AT ABC HQ

By Murray Horton

The January 2021 day that the world was fixated on the mob of Nazi halfwits storming the US Capitol in Washington DC, we had a more pressing domestic preoccupation. But rest assured that Donald Trump played a vital role at ABC HQ too. Let me explain. Two days previously I was trimming our grapevine when I noticed streaks of slime low down on the house's exterior back wall (thank goodness for unrepaired earthquake cracks, eh. I knew they'd serve a useful purpose some day). Slime had not been a previ-

ous feature of our exterior décor. Further examination established the streaks were wet, which led to the conclusion that we had a leaking pipe inside the wall.

The day it was all happening in Washington, our plumber came here, just back from his Christmas holiday at an alpine resort town. I consider us very lucky to get a plumber, or any tradesperson, in the first week of January. He's been keeping us dry and out of the old proverbial for around 20 years. It

PEACE RESEARCHER WELCOMES YOUR FEEDBACK

Peace Researcher is published by the Anti-Bases Campaign. The Editor is Murray Horton; the Layout Editor is Becky Horton. It covers a range of peace issues with emphasis on foreign military bases and intelligence topics. Contributed articles will be considered for publication based on subject matter and space requirements. We are particularly interested in reports of original research on peace topics in Aotearoa and the wider region of Australasia and the Pacific. We welcome your feedback and constructive suggestions on how we can improve.

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quickly became a worst-case scenario. He couldn't locate the leak by going under the house or by cutting a hole in the bathroom's interior wall.

So, he had to cut a big hole in the exterior wall, which is made of roughcast plaster. And there was our leaking hot water pipe, which had been discharging water for a long time judging by the wetness of the floor under the bath. How did the pipe get punctured? When the back of the house was rebuilt during major renovations in 1998, the pipe was put too close to a screw in the wooden wall frame. Over many years, the hot water in the pipe caused it to expand and contract and repeatedly rub up against the screw. 18,000 earthquakes in the last ten years probably didn't help either.

Once the plumber had replaced the length of leaking pipe, he had to leave the hole open so that our insurance company could inspect it. He asked if we had any plywood for a temporary cover? No, but I do have a stash of past and present Waihopai spy base protest placards in the garage. What's more, they're on recycled sheets of a waterproof material that had been Green Party election billboards in a previous life (an Anti-Bases Campaign Committee colleague who is in the Greens supplied them).

I found one old placard of the two Waihopai spy base domes, with

Trump's face on one and Jacinda's on the other. It was produced by the incomparable Ian Dalziel who, in addition to producing his signature cover graphics for *Peace Researcher*, has supplied ABC with a steady stream of original big posters for Waihopai protests.

Donald Trump stayed covering a hole in our back wall for the best part of six months. Don't worry, he was facing the wall, so we didn't have to look at him. I can't think of a more fitting use for him. If anything, it let him off rather too lightly. After all, he models himself on Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini (he even

bears an uncanny resemblance to him).

Mussolini ended up hung upside down in a public square after Italian partisans had shot him; Trumpolini got to stare into a hole in our wall. It was a saga finding tradesmen to do a small job but the hole eventually got plastered and painted just before the May 2021 Canterbury deluge. As for Trump – he was no longer needed. I had the pleasure of sawing him up and stuffing him into the red bin, as that material is not recyclable. Let's hope that the real life Trump isn't, either. ■



Plugging the hole at ABC HQ. Placard graphic by Ian Dalziel

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