

Journal of the Anti-Bases Campaign

June 2022

Number 63

WAIHOPAI



**The domes have gone... But the spying continues...
Decommision the whole base.**

In this issue:

Five Eyes; Spies; Geopolitics; Solomons & China; Ukraine War; Guantánamo; Peter Thiel; Owen Wilkes Book

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WAIHOPAI

Domes & Dishes Gone But Spying Carries On

By Murray Horton

For nearly all of its 30 plus years of existence, the Waihopai spy base has been synonymous with the two giant white domes that each covered a satellite interception dish (the purpose of the domes was to conceal the direction in which the dishes were pointing, thus concealing which satellites they were spying on at any given time. The Government Communications Security Bureau – GCSB – once tried, preposterously, to say that their purpose was to keep the satellite dishes out of the weather). The first dome was built in 1989, the second in 1998 (one each under Labour and National, demonstrating the craven bipartisan accord on NZ’s intelligence relationship with its four bigger brothers in Five Eyes).

“This Is Just About A Change In Technology”

Well, no more. In November 2021 Andrew Little, the Minister for the Intelligence Agencies, announced that the domes and dishes would be decommissioned and dismantled in 2022. He said “...the GCSB no longer needed the radomes, as they yielded less and less intelligence. ‘There’s other forms of signals intelligence gathering that they can do now, online and what have you, that doesn’t necessitate a technology that’s represented in those domes”.

“The radomes had provided less than 0.5% of the intelligence used in reports by the GCSB in the past year. The Waihopai base itself will continue to be used, as will a GCSB base at Tangimoana, in Manawatū. ‘I don’t know what proportion of intelligence they would have gathered 30 years ago when they were established, but I was surprised to hear that is all I get from them at the moment,’ Little said. ‘There’s a lot of data and intelligence processing that happens down there, so (the base is) not just serving the needs of the domes and the dishes in it”.

“Little had visited the radomes himself: ‘You go in there and your heart sinks because you think you’re going to see some big, whizz bang technology and it’s not at all, it’s very simple’. The GCSB received a further \$150 million funding from the Government in the 2019 and 2020 Budgets, Little said, roughly half of which was to acquire new spying capabilities”.

“He said it was ‘hard to be specific’ about the type of capabilities the GCSB was now using or was seeking, but the agency by law had authority ‘to get access to information infrastructures, and that’s what they do’. Little said New Zealand’s Five Eyes partners – the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia – had been accepting and supportive of the decision to dismantle the domes”.

“You can conclude that if the GCSB was only gathering half a per cent of their intelligence through this means, then it wasn’t a huge contributor to the broader Five Eyes relationship’. GCSB Director-General Andrew Hampton said the dishes had become ‘virtually obsolete’ and would have required significant investment to continue operating.”

“Changes in global telecommunications and information technology mean the interception of satellite communications from Waihopai has declined over the years’, Hampton said in a statement. ‘More modern methods collect more targeted communications, and these other forms of intelligence collection are now more effective and efficient ... than the type of satellite communication interception undertaken at Waihopai”.

Little concluded: “There’s always going to be people who challenge the need for security or intelligence agencies ... so I’m not sure that discourse will go away. But the reality is, this is just about a change in technology” (*Stuff*, 11/11/21, Thomas Manch, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/126952320/waihopai-spy-domes-to-be-dismantled-due-to-irrelevance>).

Published by

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Waihopai domes being removed, 2022

That same day (11/11/21) we put out a brief but to the point statement: “Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) is not surprised that Waihopai’s radomes and satellite interception dishes will be dismantled. They’re 1980s’ technology, dating back to the era of landlines, fax machines and video cassette recorders. Since the 1980s ABC has consistently called for Waihopai to be closed. Not to be made a more modernised, efficient spy base, using different spying methods, which is what Andrew Little has announced. So, Waihopai will still be a spy base, albeit without its most conspicuous physical features that stick out like dogs’ balls. Meaning that ABC still continues to call for the closure of Waihopai”.

“Made Us Complicit”

The announcement that the domes would be going led to the biggest flurry of mainstream media coverage of Waihopai in many years, not to mention coverage of Anti-Bases Campaign – ABC - (they loved the Kiwi vernacular of “dogs’ balls”). *Stuff* devoted a critical editorial to the subject (13/11/21, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300453524/waihopai-domes-dismantling-the-end-of-a-spying-era>). It’s worth reproducing in full.

“The white domes at the Waihopai Valley spy base must almost have iconic Kiwiana status. They are as instantly recognisable as a pua shell house or the giant L&P bottle in Paeroa. The obvious irony is that

domes that assisted spying are among the most easily identified structures in the country. No-one could ever miss the top-secret base”.

“Technically known as ‘radomes’, a word combining dome and radar, the white, mushroom-like domes have been features of the Marlborough landscape for more than 30 years. They owe their existence to the Fourth Labour Government, which authorised the building of a spy base in 1987. Waihopai became operational two years later”.

“But the domes have become redundant technology, gathering less than 0.5% of the intelligence used in Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) reports over the past year. Intelligence gathering has gone online and New Zealand has been scrambling to keep up. A 2019 Treasury report said the GCSB was five years behind our spying partners in a move to the online landscape”.

“As veteran protester Murray Horton put it, the domes are technology from a time of landlines, fax machines and VCRs. Horton has led annual summer protest pilgrimages to Waihopai and will continue to do so even after the base has gone fully digital. News that the radomes and dishes will be dismantled and removed in 2022 has produced a weird mix of nostalgia and frustration”.

“We should be careful not to lay the nostalgia on too thick. As quaint as they appear, the domes have been a key part of a surveillance network for three decades, a network that New Zealanders have been consistently under-informed about. Hence the frustration. Activists have argued persuasively that the spy base’s intelligence gathering for the Five Eyes network, which shares information with the UK, US, Canada and Australia, made us complicit in the activities of those countries”.

“That became an acute concern during US military actions in the years after 9/11. CIA (sic*) whistle blower Edward Snowden’s release of classified intelligence documents in 2013 made the extent of Waihopai’s role in the spying network clearer. The domes also gave physical form to that which is increasingly shadowy or invisible, and at least created a presence for opposition to focus on, and march to”. **Edward Snowden was an employee and subcontractor of the US National Security Agency (NSA), not the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). Ed.*

“The most striking moment in the history of resistance to Waihopai came in 2008 when three men, inspired by Christian pacifism, cut through fences in the middle of the night and deflated the white domes (sic*) with sickles. It was a protest action in the tradition of the Swords into Ploughshares movement that attacked military installations in the name of peace. It was unnerving to

see that the domes could collapse like balloons after a child's birthday party. A co-director of a documentary about the attack said it showed that 'security is a facade in most cases'. **They deflated one dome, not both. Ed.*

"One of the chief frustrations that protesters have had about Waihopai over the years is that it spies on behalf of others, primarily the US, rather than for the benefit of New Zealanders. This is an understandable position, sheeted home by the disastrous intelligence failure that led to the March 15, 2019, terror attacks in Christchurch. In that instance, security really was a facade. Were the white domes to remain among the vineyards and farmland outside Blenheim, they would stand as a permanent reminder of that surveillance failure".

Rebutting The GCSB Spin

The media also gave a forum to GCSB Director-General, Andrew Hampton, to gloss over what Waihopai and Five Eyes do (*Stuff*, 13/11/21, Thomas Manch, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300453599/the-death-of-the-domes-gcsb-spy-chief-on-the-changing-nature-of-electronic-spying>). ABC's Warren Thomson was moved to write a rebuttal (13/11/21, <http://www.convergence.org.nz/abc/updates/update-2021-11-13.html>):

- "The difference in using Hampton's dismissive 'subject to a global surveillance system' (a grossly generalised attack on his critics) and the actual reality of GCSB being 'part of a global surveillance system' is immense".
- "Regarding Five Eyes spying, the appalling nature of it was not taken from what 'Snowden said' but from the thousands of *actual NSA documents* that he released".
- "While Hampton says there is no mass surveillance, former GCSB boss *Bruce Ferguson actually said on TV that there was* (refuting comments by John Key). I agree the term 'mass surveillance' can be bent to almost any cause, but the fact remains that the Waihopai dishes collected massive amounts of data which were then sifted through for particular purposes. (Note that throughout the Five Eyes agencies the legal/ethical usage and



Waihopai Domebusters.
From left: Sam Land, Adrian Leason, Peter Murnane

disposal of data collected 'unintentionally' is a constant theme of critical oversight reports)".

- "You report Hampton as dismissing the idea that 'we were somehow tasked by the US and others'; this is the same man who not long ago pleaded the GCSB were blindsided prior to the Christchurch mass shooting event because *they were too pre-occupied with following the priorities of their Five eyes partners*".
- "It would be good to see more investigation into how the GCSB will now carry out its spying tasks; including whether the planned new Pacific cable will have a lead through a Five Eyes base like all the other cables are reputed to do".

And for the first time in many a long year I did a TV interview at home, for a TV3 weekly current affairs show. Times have changed – the fellow who turned up wasn't a TV3 cameraman but a contractor. I did the interview with the locked down Auckland reporter, talking to an out of shot phone. The cameraman (who had never heard of Waihopai or ABC) found it all very interesting. He told me: "As I was going out of the office the boss said this was a covid interview. So, I was expecting an anti-vaxxer nutter" (TV3, *News-hub Nation*, 16/11/21, <https://hi-in.facebook.com/NewshubNationNZ/videos/newshub-nation-the-waihopai-spy-base-through-the-decades/260493386113984/>).

2022 Protest Had To Be Cancelled

Of course, ABC had our annual Waihopai protest planned for Saturday January 29 (2022) and this was going to be our last chance to say "good riddance" to what had provided the dramatic backdrop to three decades of protests. We had a

good programme of speakers lined up, both to speak at the base gate in the morning and at a Blenheim public meeting that afternoon. The speakers were to be Green MP, Teanau Tuinono; Sonya Smith from Rocket Lab Monitor, Mahia (to talk about the campaign against NZ's newest US military base); and May Bass, a leading figure in the very earliest Waihopai spy base protests in the late 80s, specifically the 1988 women's camp.

Alas, it was not to be. ABC had to cancel it at very short notice, because of covid restrictions. The Government didn't impose a lock-down but there were stringent restrictions. We could have gone ahead but decided not to, in the public interest (and did not receive one single objection to our decision, even from people who planned to take part and whose travel and accommodation arrangements were upended just a few days out from the scheduled event).

We even got a 100% refund of the money we'd paid for the ABC Committee's Blenheim accommodation. In turn, ABC reimbursed our biggest Waihopai donor, and forwarded the other equal size donation to the bank account which provides my income, with that donor's blessing – the first such donation that ABC has ever been able to make in the 30 plus years of that account's existence.

In the case of two of our planned speakers (Teanau and Sonya) it was a case of second time unlucky. ABC had booked them to come to Christchurch in September 2021 to speak at our planned public meeting on Rocket Lab (covid forced its cancellation, to be replaced by a Webinar which attracted a much bigger audience than a physical public meeting would have done).

Waihopai 2022 was our first cancellation since protests started there in 1988, So, that became the mainstream media story, in the *Marlborough Express* and on *Stuff* (24/1/22, Jennifer Eder, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/127577728/covid19-waihopai-spy-base-protest-cancelled-as-nz-moves-into-re-d>).

Ironically, the flurry of media coverage before the scheduled protest (the domes-demise announcement) and after it (cancellation) was probably more than what we would have got at the actual protest. And the latter got all tangled up with uniquely covid-related issues. The young reporter (whom I've known since she was a journalism student at the University of Canterbury) rang just as I was going out the door to get my booster shot. She asked me if she could include that detail, as "we tend to think that protesters are anti-vaxxers". Not this one. So, if you read her article (link above) you will see the views of both me and the ABC Committee on vaccines and vaccine passes.

Due to circumstances beyond our control, we didn't get to have one more protest at the domes before they went. Decommissioning and dismantling of the two domes and satellite dishes started at the end of March 2022 and was scheduled to take six weeks (*Stuff*, 5/4/22, Morgane Solignac, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300557548/virtually-obs-olete--waihopai-spy-domes-dismantled>).

We could fill an issue of *Peace Researcher* with stories and pictures of the domes. They have been the focus of both international high drama (the 2008 deflation of one of them, by sickle, by the three Dome-busters) to good old laconic Kiwi

humour (two examples: Waihopai Valley winemaker Olly Oliver put out a special limited issue of Big Balls wine in 2003, as his contribution to the campaign against his overbearing neighbour. And, one other year, a bullshit throwing contest with the domes as irresistible targets. The winner was a minister of religion, thus proving that men of the cloth are champion bullshitters).

Campaign Continues To Close The Spy Base

So, no more eyesores which stick out like dogs' balls. But the base will carry on its Five Eyes' spying operations by other means. Some people have said to ABC that we've "won". But we haven't been campaigning for just the domes to go, but for the whole spy base to be closed. For years there has been another, less conspicuous satellite dish (the torus dish). Plus, most electronic spying these days concentrates on tapping fibre optic cables and the Internet. Satellite communications are far less important.

New Zealanders are told that Waihopai/the GCSB/Five Eyes are vital to protect our national security. But they have done absolutely nothing to protect us against the biggest threat to NZ's national security since WW2, namely the virus. The hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars wasted on Waihopai and the GCSB in any given year would be much better spent on public health.

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 com-

mitted 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.

Helen Clark was the Prime Minister who ordered the NZ military into Afghanistan. Her reaction to the Taliban victory in 2021 was to call it "a catastrophic failure of intelligence in Western foreign policy". 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.

If Five Eyes is probably useless in something as major as the Afghanistan fiasco, why is New Zealand still in it? The spies are not even any good at spying. 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 an American 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. And NZ needs to get out of Five Eyes and have a genuinely independent defence and foreign policy. ■



ABC's 2021 Waihopai protest. *Marlborough Express*, 31/1/21

NZ BECOMES FURTHER ENMESHED IN US EMPIRE The Politics & Economics Of Five Eyes

By Murray Horton

It has become apparent that New Zealand is getting more entangled in the US empire than ever before. Don't be fooled that NZ and America's longest war – Afghanistan – is over and ended in abject defeat by the Taliban and withdrawal in August 2021. Or that NZ was not invited to join the new AUKUS pact between the US, UK and Australia, to provide the latter with nuclear powered (but not nuclear armed) submarines. NZ's nuclear free policy might rule out any such subs using our waters but NZ, under this Labour government, has expressed keenness to be involved with other aspects of AUKUS (hopefully, not with the hypersonic missiles that AUKUS announced as its latest project).

The Waihopai spy base has been NZ's most important service for the US empire for decades. In 2021 the Government announced that it would be dismantling and decommissioning Waihopai's two most unmissable features, namely the giant white domes that covered the satellite interception dishes within. Both dishes and domes were declared obsolete 20th Century relics that were no longer fit for purpose for 21st Century spying. They were removed in 2022. But the Government has no intention of dismantling the spy base itself; instead, it will be modernised to use more efficient (and less glaringly conspicuous) methods of spying.

All of this, from NZ's involvement in Afghanistan to operating Waihopai on behalf of the US National Security Agency (NSA), is governed by NZ's decades-long membership of Five Eyes, the electronic spying



Graphic by Ian Dalziel

agreement between the US, UK, Canada, Australia and NZ (originally it was referred to by its formal title, the UKUSA Agreement; Five Eyes is a more recent name). But it is much more than that – Five Eyes is a de facto geopolitical bloc.

“The Price Of The Club”

John Key explicitly cited it as the justification for NZ's involvement in the latter years of the Iraq War: “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” (*New Zealand Herald*, 21/1/15, Audrey Young¹).

More recently, NZ's Five Eyes partners have tried to make it an actual geopolitical bloc, issuing statements about China's various misdeeds e.g., in Hong Kong, and pressured NZ to sign on. In some cases, the

Government has done so; in others it has asserted the increasingly threadbare claim that NZ has an independent foreign policy.

“We are uncomfortable with expanding the remit of the Five Eyes’, (Foreign Affairs Minister) 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’” (*Stuff*, 20/4/21, Henry Cooke²).

But that sort of thing is merely a skirmish, a question of emphasis. NZ is in Five Eyes, boots and all. And the US, under Joe Biden, is keen to use blocs like Five Eyes as part of his “Indo-Pacific” strategy, the central policy plank of which is to contain China (whilst simultaneously confronting Russia on the other side of the world). When he took

office Biden said “America’s back!” Yes, it is - back to sabre-rattling and warmongering. And it wants its traditional allies (or satellites, as the West used to disparagingly call the Soviet Union’s allies during the Cold War) all on board and on message.

US Grants Perks To NZ Capitalists Because Of Five Eyes

To sweeten the deal, the US is prepared to make Five Eyes membership an attractive proposition. So, Five Eyes has been expanded from intelligence and political ties to also now be explicitly about money and access to markets. The message from Washington is clear – be in our “club” and we’ll make it worth your while. This was spelled out in a fascinating article entitled “NZ Investors Won Carve-Out From US Foreign Financing Rules” (*Newsroom*, Sam Sachdeva, 25/1/22³).

“New Zealanders will now jump through fewer hoops to invest in American businesses and real estate, after the Government secured a temporary exemption to the country’s foreign investment screening rules. The US decision represents another step towards more tightly binding together Five Eyes nations, with New Zealand’s intelligence-sharing relationship and defence co-operation cited as key factors for the decision... The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, an interagency organisation which scrutinises the national security implications of investments into the country, announced earlier this month (January 2022) that New Zealand had been added to its list of ‘excepted foreign states’”.

“In 2020, the Committee’s remit expanded beyond ‘control’ transactions, where a foreign investor would take controlling interest in a US business, to cover investments in more sensitive companies, as well as the purchase of real estate near sensitive US government facilities...While Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom secured exceptions from those expanded controls at the time, as well as a new requirement for mandatory filing, New Zealand did not, placing an extra burden on Kiwi investors....”.

“In a fact sheet outlining the rationale for the change of heart, the US Treasury Department cited New Zealand’s ‘intelligence-sharing relationship with the United States and its collective defence arrangement

and cooperation with the United States’ as among the factors which earned it an exemption.... While the addition of New Zealand showed some willingness to expand the benefits of the carve-outs to new investors, the fact the group remained restricted to Five Eyes members did not provide any clear sense of whether it would offer an exemption to countries outside of the intelligence pact”.

So, there you have it. If fighting American wars in other people’s countries is the price of belonging to the Five Eyes club, then the US is prepared to extend exclusive economic benefits to its junior Five Eyes allies to make it more palatable. Older New Zealanders will remember the infamous “guns for butter” phrase of Sir Keith Holyoake, Prime Minister during NZ’s involvement in the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 70s. It means sending our soldiers to fight in US wars in order to, theoretically, gain trade access.

NZ has never succeeded in getting a free trade agreement with the US - Donald Trump scuppered the former Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) as soon as he took office in 2017 and that was the closest NZ has ever got to the “holy grail”. The Biden Administration is prepared to offer an economic sweetener to NZ as reward for being the most loyal, albeit most junior, of the Five Eyes.

Rocket Lab & Five Eyes

Of course, the newest US base in NZ is that of Rocket Lab (which operates out of both Auckland and the Mahia Peninsula). I have written several *Peace Researcher* articles in recent years about Rocket Lab (most recently in issue 61, June 2021, “Rocket Lab. Campaign Against It Blasts Off”⁴). The Anti-Bases Campaign has consistently made the point that it is a US facility for a privately-owned American company, operating for the US military and spies on NZ soil.

Despite the best (worst?) efforts by Rocket Lab’s NZ political and media apologists to polish this turd, Rocket Lab itself makes no secret about what it is, what it does and who it serves. Nor is it shy to play the Five Eyes card. “In a 2008 profile published in *Metro* magazine, (Chief Executive Officer and founder) Peter Beck ruled out military work when

discussing if there were payloads Rocket Lab wouldn’t carry”.

“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, but we’re about science, we’re not about killing people’, Beck is quoted as saying. His views have evolved, and he now believes military intelligence helps keep Kiwis safe”.

“...Beck had a very different reply from 2008 when asked if he had any qualms about sending US spy satellites into space, given the intelligence they collect can be used in military operations. ‘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” (*Press*, 28/7/20, George Block⁵).

Rocket Lab & “Classified Defence & Intelligence Business”

Since I last wrote about Rocket Lab (June 2021), there has been no shortage of new developments. That same month it debuted on the Nasdaq stock exchange in New York, valued at \$US5.2 billion. In September 2021 it was reported that “Rocket Lab shares jumped nearly 9% to \$US15.29 (for a \$US6.5 billion market cap) in early trading on the Nasdaq after the company finally confirmed a major tranche of funding from the US military and entry into an inner-circle of companies approved for security and defence missions...The Kiwi-American firm secured \$US24.35 million (\$NZ34m) from the US Air Force’s new Space Force division to develop the upper stage of its Neutron rocket”.

“Rocket Lab said in a statement: ‘The agreement signifies Rocket Lab’s commitment to becoming a launch provider for the National Security Space Launch programme, which launches the United States’ most critical missions’... Founder and CEO Peter Beck said: ‘We’re dedicated to building a next-generation rocket that will transform space

access for constellations through to the most critical missions in support of national security, and it's an honour to be partnering with the US Space Force to develop Neutron”.

“Rocket Lab, which won a key R&D (research and development) contract with US Department of Defense agency DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) at a key time in its young life, has long had close ties to the US military which, along with NASA, has been one of its two biggest customers. And in an investor presentation before its Nasdaq listing, Rocket Lab said Department of Defense space systems spending represented a [US]\$968 million opportunity over ten years”.

“In a reference to Rocket Lab's new Launch Complex II within NASA's Wallops Island facility in Virginia, it said ‘a secure facility will be completed this year (2021) to support classified Department of Defense and Intelligence Community business’” (*NZ Herald*, 28/9/21, Chris Keall⁶). Rocket Lab's new launch facility at Wallops Island was the subject of a detailed article (*Mashable*, 5/3/22, Elisha Sauers, “A Little Known US Spaceport Shoots Into The Big Rocket League”⁷).

And the fact that Rocket Lab is an American company becomes more and more apparent. “Rocket Lab's centre of gravity has shifted further away from New Zealand and towards North America after it announced it would buy United States space solar tech company SolAero for \$US80 million (\$NZ118 million). Rocket Lab will take on 425 staff as a result of the acquisition, which is expected to be complete by the end of March (2022)”.

“That will take Rocket Lab's total number of staff to more than 1100, of whom spokeswoman Morgan Bailey confirmed 525 were currently based in New Zealand. Rocket Lab, which is already headquartered in the US and listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange, will manufacture and launch its next line of larger Neutron rockets in the US” (*Stuff*, 14/12/21, Tom Pullar-Strecker⁸).

In February 2022 Rocket Lab announced that it will build a giant production and mission control complex in Colorado. This will be its fourth major facility in the US – the others are in California, New Mexico and

Virginia (from where it will exclusively launch its larger Neutron rockets). It has also expanded its facilities in both Auckland and Mahia.

NZ Government & Rocket Lab Join US Drive To Mine Moon

The Government's infatuation with Rocket Lab is taking NZ into some literally unearthly and legally dubious places. In mid-2021 NZ signed the Artemis Accords, which promotes the exploitation of the Moon and other space resources. “The legal status of space resources is contested. The world's main space agreement, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, prohibits the ‘national appropriation’ of the Moon and other celestial bodies by any means. Some academics argue this rules out Moon mining for private profit. Others say it only precludes claims to land, not its resources”.

“This uncertainty aside, in 2015 the US Congress passed a law allowing American companies to own and sell natural resources mined from space. In April 2020, the Trump Administration declared that the US doesn't view space as a ‘global commons’, denouncing the 1979 Moon Agreement, which sought to protect the Moon's resources as ‘the common heritage’ of mankind (although few states have signed up to it)”.

“Announced shortly after Trump's declaration, the Artemis Accords – which are advanced directly with ‘like-minded’ nations, rather than through the UN – seek to shape in-

ternational law in line with this worldview, asserting that the extraction of space resources is not ‘inherently’ national appropriation under the Outer Space Treaty” (*Spinoff*, 3/6/21, Ollie Neas⁹).

Bypassing UN

“The New Zealand Space Agency believes its participation in the Artemis Accords – an international agreement to send people back to the Moon – will significantly boost the space sector. The Government signed up to the NASA accords in 2021, and New Zealand will play an important role in the project when Rocket Lab launches the CAPSTONE satellite to lunar orbit from Mahia Peninsula, likely in March (2022)”.

“NASA's CAPSTONE, or Cislunar Autonomous Positioning System Technology Operations and Navigation Experiment satellite, will test the orbit planned to be used by a small space station that would act as a lunar gateway. The Space Agency noted that signing the Accords presented some risk to international relationships”.

“The Accords may be viewed by some nations as an attempt to bypass the UN Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space process and the UN treaty-making process”, the Agency said” (*Stuff*, 6/1/22, Ben Strang¹⁰).

The reference to “some countries” is telling – neither Russia nor China has signed the Artemis Accords. But



Ron Currie

little old NZ has, jumping on board a Trumpian US outer space resource grab (one which has not been reversed by the Biden Administration), with a US company standing to financially benefit from its involvement using its NZ launch site.

"There are some obvious reasons that New Zealand might want to side with the United States in this debate. Our relationship with the superpower is critical for our space sector, particularly Rocket Lab, which has numerous US government contracts" (*North & South*, December 2021, "The Dark Side Of The Moon: Is New Zealand Lending Support To An Aggressive American Push To Commercialise Outer Space?", Kate Evans¹¹). So, there you have it. And the answer to the question posed in the subtitle of that *North & South* article is: "yes".

ABC Webinar On Rocket Lab & Five Eyes

As I detailed in my June 2021 *Peace Researcher* article on Rocket Lab, there is now a campaign against it. As part of the January 2021 Waihopai spy base protest, ABC hosted a well-attended Blenheim public meeting. The three speakers were Ollie Neas, the journalist who has been writing critical analyses on Rocket Lab for years, Nicky Hager on Five Eyes and Green MP Teanau Tuiono.

This meeting was so successful and so well received by the good number of people present that ABC decided to host a Christchurch public meeting in September 2021 featuring those same three speakers, plus Sonya Smith from Rocket Lab Monitor in Mahia¹². Alas, the ever-changing covid situation ruled out a physical meeting but ABC replaced it with a Webinar, featuring all four of those speakers, plus me, which drew many more attendees – including from overseas – than we would have got at a Christchurch public meeting. Sadly, it is not available online, as the speakers felt that they could speak more freely if it was not recorded.

ABC looked to take that further with Sonya Smith and Teanau Tuiono among the speakers at the Blenheim public meeting which was to be part of the scheduled January 2022 Waihopai spy base protest. But covid buggered things up again, and the whole event had to be cancelled, for the first time since 1988,

at just a few days' notice.

NSO Spyware & Five Eyes

There's more to Five Eyes than Waihopai and Rocket Lab. Its tentacles reach into all sorts of areas. For example, the notorious Israeli Pegasus spyware sold to governments by the company NSO. It has been used by some of the worst abusers of human rights to spy on journalists, dissidents and political opponents, with all sorts of dire consequences, including murder. NSO is such an outrageous outfit (most recently it has been caught spying on its own Jewish citizens within Israel) that the Biden Administration put it on a blacklist in 2022 – a very rare US move against any Israeli entity. Moves were announced to sell it to a US venture capital firm.

"The plan outlines cancelling or restricting most of the company's former clients, effectively bringing the company's revenues to zero. Instead of the current 37 clients, the company will reduce its sales to only five clients: the Five Eyes Anglo-sphere intelligence alliance of New Zealand, the United States, Australia, Great Britain and Canada. The company would initially focus on defensive cyber products as part of its rebranding effort" (*Haaretz*, 25/1/22, Sagi Cohen¹³).

NZ Has To Get Out Of Five Eyes If It Is To Have Independent Foreign Policy

Five Eyes will only continue to get more important in the geopolitical game playing – indeed there is talk of it being expanded to include Japan and Israel (in 2022 NZ signed up to an intelligence-sharing deal with Japan). What is NZ doing in it? If you are judged by the company you keep, then it doesn't reflect well on us. More and more, NZ is being sucked into the vortex that is the US empire, an empire that is increasingly using Five Eyes as yet another weapon in its quest to retain global domination. It is well beyond time for NZ to get out of it. There is no possibility of us having an "independent foreign policy" until that happens.

What's More, Five Eyes Doesn't Even Do What It's Supposed To

Helen Clark was the Labour Prime Minister who ordered the NZ military into Afghanistan. Her reaction to the Taliban victory in 2021 was to call it "a catastrophic failure of intelligence in Western foreign policy" (*News-*

hub, 16/8/21¹⁴).

Yet, NZ is in the white Western world's self-proclaimed elite intelligence club, namely Five Eyes. Which proved to be absolutely useless in seeing what was going on in Afghanistan, a country which had been an adventure playground for Western spies for 20 years. So, why is New Zealand in Five Eyes, what use is it to us (or anyone else, for that matter)? Time for NZ to get out, time for Five Eyes to become four eyes.

Weblinks:

- ¹ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/prime-minister-john-key-isis-fight-price-of-the-club/BVF6YYQPFFVFGQFGLP5NZWC4NA/>
- ² <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300281578/jacinda-ardern-says-new-zealands-new-stance-on-five-eyes-isnt-a-backdown-to-china>
- ³ <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/nz-investors-win-carve-out-from-us-foreign-financing-rules>
- ⁴ <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR61.pdf>
- ⁵ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/300063842/rocket-lab-peter-beck-defends-spy-satellite-work-exdirector-speaks-of-leaving>
- ⁶ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/rocket-lab-shares-jump-as-us-military-funding-confirmed/H7IBEHJ4HMNE734JKWVC74NJ6E/>
- ⁷ <https://mashable.com/article/space-rocket-lab-neutron>
- ⁸ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/127276549/most-rocket-lab-staff-set-to-be-based-outside-nz-by-early-next-year>
- ⁹ <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/03-06-2021/how-nzs-new-deal-with-nasa-could-pave-the-way-for-moon-mining>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/innovation/127435183/government-officials-expect-nz-moon-launch-to-create-huge-opportunities-in-space-sector>
- ¹¹ <https://northandsouth.co.nz/2022/01/26/new-zealand-moon-artemis-accords/>
- ¹² <https://rocketlabmonitor.com/>
- ¹³ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/.premium-u-s-venture-capital-firm-in-talks-to-buy-israel-s-infamous-spyware-maker-nso-1.10565909>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/world/2021/08/helen-clark-condemns-taliban-takeover-of-afghanistan-as-catastrophic-failure-of-intelligence-by-the-west.html> ■

AOTEAROA/ NEW ZEALAND

Spook Budgets

In the Government's 2022 Budget the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) has scored \$234.5 million. This is more than was spent in 2021 by the spooks, but much less than the whacking great \$248 million actually budgeted in 2021. The reason the actual spending for 2021 is less than the total budgeted by around \$63 million needs some explanation. Most likely the GCSB is involved in a major uncompleted project – perhaps related to changes at Waihopai?

The forecast budget for 2023/4 is down at \$214 million and even less for 2024/5 at \$190.5 million. Whether annual reductions will really happen we must wait and see. For the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) the given total for expenditure in 2021/22 was \$90 million. The budget allocation for 2022/23 has been increased by \$18 million to \$108.7 million.

A History Of SIS Ineptitude And Prejudice

In the past, NZ governments depended upon “national security” being carried out by a poorly trained bunch, often ex-colonial police and soldiers, who spent most of their time cutting bits out of newspapers or tracking citizens who someone thought had been acting suspiciously. Recording that Warren Thomson had sent a “derogatory letter” about the Security Intelligence Service to the Christchurch *Press* was clearly an essential activity if this country was to be saved from communism or other unimaginable threats (such preoccupations in Australia caused one senior Minister there to label the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation [ASIO] as “a bunch of stumblebums”).

But while it is tempting to dwell on the comedic side of SIS activities from many decades ago, for some NZ citizens there was a real, undeserved, whammy. The cover story in

the May 2022 *North and South* describes how a group of Wellington schoolmates were spied on by the SIS for many years and how the careers of some of these men were severely affected by Red scare innuendo and gossip.

“The Forever Files” details the lifelong surveillance of a GP, academics, and prominent Wellington lawyers because they opposed Government policy. “... in our State's misplaced zealotry, its security agency behaved exactly as did the ideologues it was purporting to vanquish: it suppressed loyal dissent; surveilled innocent citizens; and accused civil servants of disloyalty based on little more than speculation and gossip”. Writer Nicola Saker, whose father was one of the victims, says that the friends had no idea they were being watched, or what they were accused of, or why.

Some of the article is based on the late Dorian Saker's SIS files obtained by his daughter. The files came with a letter from current SIS Director Rebecca Kitteridge, asking Saker to bear in mind that the files are old and “written in a different era”, suggesting strongly that the SIS of the 2020s no longer follows the incompetent and prejudicial practices of the past. The SIS Director declined a request by one victim's family for an official apology.

It is true that personnel these days are much better educated and trained than the officers of the past. But the agency was spying on people like former Green MP Keith Locke well into this century and the occasional cockups or questionable actions turned up by investigative journalists or even the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security are enough to suggest that the spies have too many secrets and we need much greater transparency to truly protect democratic liberties and human rights.

SIS Using Information Extracted By Torture

In February 2022 Thomas Manch reported that the SIS had twice received intelligence that originated from suspected torture or severe mistreatment, and kept it for use due to active national security threats. (*Stuff*, 2/2/22, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/127658082/sis-twice-received-intelligence-from-suspected-case-of-torture-or-severe-mistreatment>).

The Minister of Spooks, Andrew Little, decided the information, which came from third parties not thought to be responsible for the suspected torture or mistreatment, should be retained and used by the SIS because it came via a third party not involved in the torture. So, the SIS will have to be careful in future that when it uses information from torture victims, it does not get it directly from the human rights abusers.

SIS Director-General Rebecca Kitteridge, responding to an Official Information Act request from bloggers *No Right Turn* said there had been two cases of “risk category 1” (substantial likelihood torture involved) human rights risk reviews put to the Minister in the past three years. Both were given the okay by Little. There were also 80 other human rights risk reviews of lesser categories completed by the agency.

In December 2021 the intelligence agencies produced new policy on how to manage possible human rights abuses related to its intelligence gathering. The final policy was classified, and signed off by Little despite the recommendation of Brendan Horsley, the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, that it be made public (*Stuff*, *ibid.*). Prior to the policy being finalised, Horsley said in his 2021 *Annual Report* that he had concerns about aspects of SIS policy, including “the terms employed in risk thresholds; specific criteria and definitions for overseas bodies; the handling of reports likely obtained by torture”.

Green Party human rights spokesperson, Golriz Ghahraman, in a media response to the revelation about the use of the torture-derived information, said the use of such material was “unconscionable”, and was legitimising of the use of torture by third party actors. *Peace Researcher (PR)* is totally in agreement. Golriz also said there was considerable evidence that intelligence produced through torture was unreliable (the US Senate agrees; see my Guantánamo article elsewhere in this issue).

The following letter by this writer, in response to the content above, was published in the Christchurch *Press*: “Your article (February 3) reporting how Andrew Little justified the SIS twice receiving intelligence extracted by torture needs a little more

background. In 2019 the intelligence Inspector-General (IG) released a report of four years' investigation which said our SIS and Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) had many times received information obtained from tortured prisoners, but the enquiry covered only Afghanistan-related matters between 2002 and 2009".

"The SIS even 'provided questions for the CIA' (IG) to put to one prisoner who was waterboarded 183 times. The IG noted there was an unspoken rule to 'not ask direct questions about the operations of Five Eyes counterparts'. Golriz Ghahraman – an experienced international human rights lawyer - is right to describe these connections to Five Eyes atrocities as 'unconscionable'".

SIS Police Boundary Unclear

Brendan Horsley, the Inspector-General for Intelligence and Security (IGIS), says it is not always clear-cut when the SIS should tip off Police when it detects crime while carrying out surveillance. Horsley looked at several incidents where the issue has arisen, the most notorious being the case 30 years ago of the agency finding evidence a notorious sex offender was raping his daughter, but not telling Police.

"The Service had (and still has) discretion on whether to provide Police with information on crime discovered in the course of intelligence operations," Horsley concluded (*RNZ*, 20/12/21). He believes there is good reason for this discretion because Police action could disrupt intelligence collection and potentially prejudice national security.

What he doesn't suggest is that senior Police officials could have more input into these cases rather than leaving it to the spooks to decide what is a "national security" issue (or even better – abolish the SIS and let the Police do it all!). In two cases the SIS revealed information unofficially, which meant Police cannot use the information as evidence. In another two cases, the Police were not notified at all.

"The SIS has a lower bar to clear to get a warrant for surveillance, but to balance that lacks the enforcement powers of the Police - so if the SIS was forced to tell Police things, that would not be good," Horsley said (*ibid.*). Horsley made recommenda-

tions to the SIS to clarify their proceedings, but the SIS seems to have been left to make its own decisions about when, or if, it will inform the Police.

SIS Huge Expansion In Data Gathering With No Ethical Guidelines

In the past year, the IGIS found, the SIS total data holding "rapidly expanded" to multiple times more than its previous collection (*Newsroom*, 1/4/22). Meanwhile, Marc Daalder reports in the *Newsroom* article, that the SIS "... says data (from other agencies) is becoming more important to its work, but it doesn't have a data ethics framework to guide decision-making after more than 18 months of policy work".

Furthermore, "leading data ethics experts say the SIS should put principles for the ethical use of data in place sooner rather than later". University of Auckland statistician Andrew Sporle questioned the SIS approach to transparency and engagement and Tim Dare, a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Auckland who advises Government ministries on data ethics, said he was "sceptical" about social licence as a guiding concept (*ibid.*). However, Andrew Little, the Minister responsible for the SIS, backed the agency (surprise, surprise!).

One of the recommendations from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the March 15, 2019, terror attack was that the spies find their own leads to investigate "terrorism" rather than relying on leads from the public or other agencies. This has given the SIS a convenient excuse for vastly expanding its' data collection (the questions remain whether it has the personnel to manage this amount of data and whether it will thus better protect us from "terrorists").

An SIS spokesperson told Daalder the Service had to make use of new data tools as they became available to keep up its work. "The amount and type of information relevant to our work has *increased exponentially in recent years* (*PR* emphasis). NZSIS must increasingly make use of data processing and assisted decision making to assist us in processing this data". Who decides the algorithms? And we note that Sporle remains concerned that the SIS hasn't learned the lessons from past privacy ethics debacles. He

said he hoped it won't take something going wrong for the agency to take data ethics seriously.

SIS Use Of Surveillance Cameras

PR has previously noted, and raised questions about, the extensive employment of CCTV (closed circuit television) footage by a range of organisations to make their premises more secure. Recent ram-raids in Auckland will increase the use of such equipment. But it is an open question how much use of CCTV by Police and our spies will impinge on human rights/privacy issues.

Marc Daalder's report (above) notes that: "A 2021 report from Horsley revealed that the SIS has 'round-the-clock' access to a network of CCTV cameras. While the report found they were used in a targeted and lawful manner, it raised questions about the legality of the arrangement with the network's owner and said no privacy impact assessment had been completed before Horsley began his investigation".

PR wonders how far we can assume that authorities in this country can be relied on to adhere to democratic standards. When the UK and the USA elect people so obviously deficient in ethical and moral standards to lead the country, we can never be truly certain that the Government in this country will always pay heed to human rights priorities.

SIS Finds A Spy

The Security Intelligence Service says it has found a person in New Zealand who is working for a foreign state's intelligence services. In its *Annual Report*, the SIS says the individual is a New Zealand citizen, but did not specify which country s/he is working for. Canterbury University's Professor Anne-Marie Brady, who frequently criticises Chinese meddling in this country, said the report highlights two cases, which she said have the hallmarks of China.

One case involves diaspora communities, the largest of which in New Zealand is Chinese and the second case study seems to meet the pattern of China because it is about forming personal relationships with a range of individuals in New Zealand who hold senior and influential positions. "The target of our investigation uses overt and covert means to collect identifying information about these individuals and pass it

to the foreign state's embassy in New Zealand," the SIS report says (RNZ, 27/3/21).

Hampton Interview A Journalistic Failure

Andrew Hampton, the GCSB Director-General, recently added to his public relations efforts through an interview (read: social chat) with journo Audrey Young (NZ Herald, 27/3/22) which carefully avoided any questions relating to core GCSB operations or matters of real public concern. We learn that Hampton mislaid his phone on an overseas trip (not a good start for a spy boss), that he lives on a five-acre block and likes horses and chooks, and that in the six years he has run the spy organisation there has been a big emphasis on expanding the diversity of the GCSB workforce – which is also looking for people with “neurological” diversity. The GCSB has grown from about 300 people when he started to about 500 fulltime equivalents now, a massive personnel increase.

As is his normal promotional approach, Hampton emphasised his organisation's cyber security role which, through the Bureau's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), involves “helping to protect information and communication infrastructure for Government agencies and nationally significant organisations from attack or exploitation”. Hampton successfully makes his point that the NCSC has disrupted many cyber threats and the GCSB recently won an industry award for its work in establishing standards in cloud providers.

But he backs off taking real responsibility – the word “helping” is cute – given that this country has had several serious episodes of commercial or other hacking. He excuses the GCSB by saying the scope of the NCSC is limited and the NCSC “can't be the country's firewall”. The question about who exactly then is supposed to protect us from cyber-attacks didn't seem to occur to the interviewer. Defence against cyber-attack is an incredibly difficult function, but we should expect Hampton to front up on this one.

He agrees that he is New Zealand's man in the room in Five Eyes meetings with the US, UK, Canada and Australia. He “... can hardly reveal the agenda of their meetings but as well as areas for cooperation it is



GCSB Director Andrew Hampton at Waihopai

likely to include China's relationships with Pacific countries and whether China has progressed its bid to find a base for its navy in the Pacific” (Herald, ibid.).

Which should have brought us to the most pressing question about the GCSB at the moment, which is why the spies did not warn the Government, and their Five Eyes allies, about the controversial emerging Solomon Islands/China new agreement, given that Hampton and his crew are directly responsible for monitoring this part of the world.

As the interview brought up the fact that the GCSB's work in 2021 also involved providing intelligence for mass evacuations as Kabul in Afghanistan fell to the Taliban, some acute questioning about that shambles might also have been anticipated. But the interviewer was too nice to actually question him about such primary failures on the part of the GCSB. Never mind. We should all be pleased we have a nice Ashburton boy running our secret multimillion dollar empire!

Govt. Demonstrates Loyalty To Five Eyes

At the end of March 2022 PM Ardern said that Cabinet had agreed that nine Defence Force staff would head to Europe to join partner countries in the gathering of intelligence on the ongoing invasion of Ukraine by Russia, for three months. Seven of these would go to the UK, with some working directly on the war and others relieving UK staff of their existing duties to allow them to focus on Ukraine. Two officers would be working between UK and Belgium, the headquarters of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation).

Defence Force “open-source intelligence capabilities” in New Zealand, up to about ten staff, would also be made available to assist the UK and European countries. The intelligence gathered by New Zealand staffers would be passed on to Ukraine's military. The PM said “it was not unusual” for New Zealand to contribute to intelligence efforts, then cited Operation Gallant Phoenix, a huge multinational intelligence operation started in 2013 with the aim of tracking the flow of foreign terrorist fighters in and out of Iraq and Syria.

Since 2014, New Zealand has deployed staff to the associated intelligence gathering centre staffed by numerous countries in Jordan that is supposed to be working to combat Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Operation Gallant Phoenix is now made up of a large number of countries and a variety of agencies, including law enforcement, military and civilian personnel (Stuff, 28/3/22). But, over time, it has evolved into a platform where partners collect and share information and intelligence about a wide range of potential and existing threats.

According to the *Canadian News* (24/3/21) however, the objective is “... to manage to identify and centralise all the traces left by jihadists of all stripes, everywhere in the world, in order to pursue them no matter what”. *CN* goes on to say that this operation “piloted by the United States under the rule of the Pentagon”, remained completely confidential for many years. In June 2021 Cabinet extended the mandate for the Operation Gallant Phoenix deployment for two years until June 2023, the number of deployed personnel then being “fewer than

ten” (media release from Government Ministers Williams and He-nare).

Ardern’s statement does not clarify the total contribution of GCSB and Defence Force personnel to Five Eyes operations in Europe and the Middle East, and presumably the new staff deployment actually doubles the number of personnel now working with Five Eyes associates in Europe and the Middle East. It is hard to see how such an intelligence commitment has any bearing on direct NZ security interests; much of the work of our spooks still seems devoted to Five Eyes priorities.

And, surely, throwing resources into support of NATO, even allowing for the tragic situation in Ukraine, requires a little more public discussion? Personnel working directly with NATO HQ in Brussels means this country is again cooperating with forces which incorporate nuclear strikes as a key element of their “defence” strategy. Is this what the NZ population really wants?

The Lessons Of Afghanistan

As the first NZ personnel head for Europe, it is timely to revisit Nicky Hager’s critique of our last commitment to the UKUSA axis: “When the New Zealand Parliament voted in support of military action in Afghanistan on 3 October 2001, the resolution was specific about the mandate: tracking down those responsible for the September 11 attacks and bringing Osama bin Laden to justice”.

“Four days later the US invasion of Afghanistan began. But it didn’t just target people responsible for the September 11 attack. It was mostly targeted at the Taliban, who had nothing to do with September 11... The rationale for sending the NZSAS (Special Air Service) to Afghanistan had ceased to exist before they even touched the ground at their new Kandahar base. But the New Zealand Defence Force stayed for another 20 years”.

“The whole mission was deeply flawed from the beginning— and increasingly doomed to fail. The public was told the peacekeepers were unloading food and supplies as part of UN aid to Kabul residents. It took a leaked military report to find out that the ‘peacekeepers’ had been working in a British Air Force unit that was ‘supporting OGA (other Government agency) activity non-

stop’. OGA meant CIA (US Central Intelligence Agency) operations in Afghanistan”.

Moreover, a former senior defence official said to Nicky in 2011: “The chances are ... concerns were withheld from the Ministers so as not to compromise the opportunity to serve alongside the US forces”. What might the future costs be from the Government’s rush to send intelligence personnel to work alongside our Five Eyes buddies? (See Nicky Hager, *Spinoff*, 2/9/21).

Police Warrantless Seizure Of Weapons

In 2021 Police seized around 1400 firearms and made more than 1100 arrests as part of an operation investigating and disrupting the illegal supply of firearms to gangs and organised crime groups (*Stuff* cites the number of arrests as 1161, which seems an extraordinary figure). “Those at the centre of these raids, their relatives, lawyers and politicians have raised concerns over how they are being conducted and whether Police are abusing these powers”. And “hundreds of guns have been taken under warrantless home searches, which are carried out when there is suspicion an offence punishable by imprisonment has been, or is being, committed” (*Stuff*, 15/1/22).

Police Minister Poto Williams told *Stuff* the operation had been “highly successful” and Police had “never been more active in tackling organised crime”. The Search and Surveillance Act 2012 allows Police to conduct warrantless searches if they suspect a gun licence owner is of danger to themselves or the community. Former *New Zealand Herald* and *Stuff* columnist Rachel Stewart found herself on the wrong side of the new gun laws when, in June 2021, her .22 rifle was confiscated following a tweet she made. Police went to her home without a warrant and handed her documentation telling her she was unfit to hold a licence, confiscating her gun and ammunition (*Stuff*, 15/1/22).

On New Year’s Eve 2021, Police used the Search and Surveillance Act to conduct a warrantless search of the Christchurch home of anti-Government, pro-gun pastor Carl Bromley to seize his gun and ammunition. Police said they had received concerns about a person’s wellbeing. *Stuff* reported that, with

no warrant required by using section 18 of the Act, officers “ransacked” his home and took his rifle, 500 rounds of ammunition and firearms parts. At the time of writing Bromley had not yet received his gun back from Police.

Bromley said he had made no threat with his firearms, felt Police violated his privacy and were overly forceful. He questioned whether the search was lawful. Christchurch criminal lawyer Anselm Williams said firearms law changes had not made it easier for Police to conduct warrantless searches, but Police were taking more interest in gun owners since the 2019 terror attack. “There is no requirement that the court even know that a search is going to be conducted or has been conducted”.

Under current law, a Police officer in charge of a search can seek permission from an issuing officer either in person, over the phone, or by email. An issuing officer is authorised by the Attorney-General, who can approve any Justice of the Peace, community magistrate, registrar, deputy registrar or other person to act as an issuing officer. Given that Bromley is described by the *Stuff* writer as an “anti-Government, pro-gun pastor” it is tempting for *PR* to consider him the kind of person Police and SIS should be targeting, but warrantless searches are a worry.

Secret Hearings For Military Espionage

In the first case of espionage prosecuted under the Crimes Act 1961 in this country, a New Zealand soldier’s defence lawyers have argued they should have access to highly-classified information held by the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service. At a pre-trial hearing at the end of March 2022 the judge proceeded with legal arguments behind closed doors, citing national security interests (*RNZ*, 30/3/22).

In 2021, the judge considered applications by the Crown to suppress aspects of evidence raised in the case likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand and ordered the name of the foreign country at the centre of the case, along with the identities of some expert witnesses and the nature of their work, be kept secret.

The prosecution says that the soldier had been contacted by a per-

son he believed was an agent for a foreign country in December 2019. He did not report the contact, as is required under military orders. Instead, it is alleged the soldier began copying material “with intent to communicate information to a person acting on behalf of a foreign country”. Amongst other items, maps and images of the Linton and Trentham bases, and Kauri Point ammunition depot, were obtained. In December 2019 he was arrested.

Thomas Manch (*Stuff*, 30/3/22) reported that “the soldier was also accused of being a member of far-right outfits Dominion Movement and Action Zealandia since 2017. Both groups have espoused a white supremacist, ethno-nationalist ideology similar to that which motivated the Christchurch mosques terrorist”. Which makes the case even more mysterious.

At the time of writing, the state of proceedings is unknown to *PR*. But we all need to follow this case; apart from the quixotic elements of a white extremist hocking off plans for what we presume are pretty modest military establishments, the powers of the authorities to over-ride established procedure and hold secret hearings needs to be a matter of concern.

USA

CIA: The Bad Old Days Are Here Again

The *Intercept* (9/3/22) recently reported US-trained officers have attempted at least nine coups, and succeeded in at least eight, across five West African countries since 2008, including Burkina Faso three times; Guinea, Mali three times; Mauritania and The Gambia. The African Union is condemning a wave of coups in Africa, where military forces have seized power over the past 18 months in Mali, Chad, Guinea, Sudan and, most recently, in January 2022, Burkina Faso.

Several were led by US-trained officers as part of a growing US military presence in the region under the guise of counterterrorism, which is a new imperial influence that supplements the history of French colonialism, says Brittany Meché, an assistant professor at Williams College in Massachusetts USA (*Democracy*

Now! Website, 8/2/22).

In *PR* 61 (June 2021, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR61.pdf>) we reported that MI6 (UK external intelligence agency) and the CIA were directly or indirectly responsible for a number of renditions and assassinations in East Africa. The little-known activities of our Five Eyes partners across Africa are something that deserve a lot more attention.

CIA Secretly Spying On Americans

Two Democrat Senators serving on the Senate Intelligence Committee have revealed the CIA has a secret, undisclosed data repository that includes information collected about Americans. The Senators alleged the CIA had long hidden details about the programme from the public and Congress, but gave little further information about the CIA programme (*Huffington Post*, 11/2/22).

The programme is said to operate “outside the statutory framework that Congress and the public believe govern this collection” (*ibid.*). According to Senators Wyden and Heinrich’s letter, the CIA’s bulk collection programme operates outside of laws passed and reformed by Congress, but carries on under the authority of Executive Order 12333, a document that broadly governs intelligence community activity and was first signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981.

The spy agencies’ incredibly extensive collection of foreign communications often incidentally snares American messages and data. Intelligence agencies are required to take steps to protect US information, including redacting the names of any Americans from reports unless they are deemed relevant to an investigation. Senators Ron Wyden of Oregon and Martin Heinrich of New Mexico expressed concern over how transparent the processing and storage of collateral collection data was.

“These reports raise serious questions about the kinds of information the CIA is vacuuming up in bulk and how the agency exploits that information to spy on Americans,” Patrick Toomey, a lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement. “The CIA conducts these sweeping surveillance activities without any court approval, and with

few, if any, safeguards imposed by Congress”.

Wyden has been a long-time critic of US spy secrecy. In 2013, he asked the incumbent Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, if the National Security Agency (NSA) collected “any type of data at all on millions or hundreds of millions of Americans?”. Clapper initially responded: “No.” Then later he said: “Not wittingly.” After a little more time, and Edward Snowden’s revelations about how the US spooks really did use their collected information, Clapper apologised in a letter to the Senate Intelligence Committee, saying that his response to Wyden was “clearly erroneous” (*Huffington Post*, *ibid.*). Over the last decade, little has changed.

Calls Increasing For Release Of CIA Torture Report

The CIA has also been under pressure recently to allow more public information on its 2001-09 torture programme to be released. “The persistent refusal to release the full Senate torture report has left a black hole at the centre of one of the most shameful episodes in US history,” according to the *Guardian* newspaper (29/1/22, reprint of November 2021 article).

In a recent United States Supreme Court hearing, even the Rightwing judge appointed by Trump, Amy Barrett, labelled activities by the CIA under their “War on Terror” rendition programme as “torture”. By using the word, Barrett effectively acknowledged that, what was done by the CIA to at least 39 detainees, was a crime under US law (see my article on Guantánamo Bay elsewhere in this issue).

Keep An Open Mind?

In February 2022, a raid by US special forces resulted in the death of the top Islamic State leader in Syria. The Pentagon and US President Joe Biden said the deceased, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, blew himself up alongside his wife and two children. A week later, US military officials said there “could have been more civilian casualties than initially thought” in the raid. They couldn’t rule out the possibility that other bodies were hidden in the collapse (of the building) and not seen by the troops.

However, they reiterated that they believed any such deaths were

"I am here because I stole something that was never mine to take – precious human life. For that I was compensated and given a medal. I couldn't keep living in a world I which people pretended that things weren't happening that were. Please your honor forgive me for taking papers instead of human lives."

Daniel Hale
July 27, 2021

STANDWITHDANIELHALE.ORG

From Daniel Hale's statement in court

caused by the militant's suicide bomb and were not at the hands of American forces (*Stuff*, 11/2/22). *PR* can't rule out the possibility that the Islamic militants did blow themselves up, as well as other civilians in the building. But a long history of coverups of what really happened in operations of this type means we should keep an open mind - over whether the Pentagon is lying again.

Drone War Secrets Whistle-Blower Jailed

At the end of July 2021, a former US Air Force officer was sentenced to nearly four years in prison for admittedly leaking classified information to the press about the Pentagon's drone programme. Daniel Hale 33, faced charges of theft and four violations of the US Espionage Act before pleading guilty in March 2021 to a single count of breaking the law by retaining and sharing national defence information.

In a letter filed in Federal Court in Alexandria, Virginia, Hale said that he leaked the material after becoming traumatised by witnessing and participating in US drone strikes that killed innocent civilians. "I came to believe that the policy of drone assassination was being used to mislead the public that it keeps us safe," wrote Hale, who served in the Air Force during the Obama Presidency from 2009 to 2013. "I only could do that which I ought to do before God and my own conscience," he added in the 11-page letter written from jail ahead of the sentencing hearing (*Huffington Post*, 30/8/21).

"He committed the offence to bring attention to what he believed to be immoral Government conduct committed under the cloak of secrecy and contrary to public statements of then-President Obama regarding the alleged precision of the United

States military's drone programme," his defence lawyers Todd Richman and Cadence Mertz wrote.

In the letter, handwritten while he was held awaiting sentence, Hale outlined what led him to break the law. He described his regret and horror as he saw gruesome videos of Afghans killed in part because his work helped track them down. He said when he deployed to Afghanistan in 2012, his job was to track down cellphone signals linked to people believed to be enemy combatants.

"Not a day goes by that I don't question the justification for my actions," Hale wrote. In the letter he wrote that his guilt is compounded by the clinical nature of the drone strike programme, in which Afghan targets are killed going about their daily lives — at times with innocent civilians killed as collateral damage — rather than on a traditional battlefield (*Huffington Post*, *ibid.*).

John Kiriakou, a former CIA counterterrorism officer, then whistleblower, said in January 2022 that, in spite of the judge recommending a low security prison, Hale had been sent to a maximum security location designed to hold terrorists and would spend most of his four year sentence in isolation in spite of being extremely fragile mentally (*Consortium News*, 26/1/22). *PR* wonders whether GCSB and NZ Defence Force officers seconded to similar duties suffer the same sort of crisis of conscience.

Spooks Proclaiming Ukraine Success

American (and British) Five Eyes agencies are emphasising how their predictions of a Russian assault on Ukraine were accurate. Historically the agencies have been less than

successful at identifying shock events before they happen (one of the key reasons for their existence) and have seized this moment to promote their importance.

One of the more outstanding recent intelligence failures was the surprise Russian seizure of Crimea in 2014. And the prestige of Five Eyes was further damaged in 2021 after the abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan, where the idea of a Taliban takeover had been barely mentioned or discussed until suddenly the Islamic extremist movement was occupying the streets of Kabul.

The intelligence agencies also seem to have been slow to recognise the determination of Ukrainians to take the Russians on, and the chaotic rush to get weapons into the hands of defenders stems from an intelligence/defence analysis that did not foresee the capability to withstand Moscow's offensive. US officials have said they shared information about the location of the Russian warship *Moskva* with Ukraine prior to its sinking in April 2022.

However, the Pentagon has avoided questions about whether the US provided information to Ukraine that helped military leaders target Russian generals. The White House got upset at a *New York Times* article that was headlined "US Intelligence Is Helping Ukraine Kill Russian Generals, Officials Say". The reason the *Times* knows the US is helping the Ukrainians "target" or "kill" Russian generals is that "senior American officials" have told them so, according to the *NYT* story (*Politico*, 5/5/22).

A recent US government statement said Ukraine: "makes the decisions" when it comes to how they use US intelligence. "We provide (Ukrainians) what we believe to be relevant and timely information about Russian units that could allow them to adjust and execute their self-defence to the best of their ability", (*Guardian*, 7/5/22). This more careful and less boastful statement followed recent criticism by some former senior spooks that too much information was being made public.

US White Supremacy Group Recruiting Ex-Soldiers

The *Guardian* (9/2/22) reported that 20% of white militants recruited by the extreme Rightwing group Patriot Front had current or former links to the US military. Group members and

applicants have expressed an open admiration for Nazi ideologies. One applicant, who claimed to be a former Marine, also said he currently worked for the Department of Homeland Security.

In October 2021 a US House of Representatives panel met to discuss veterans being increasingly targeted for recruitment by extremist groups. "They provide them with a tribe, a simplistic view of the world and its problems, actionable solutions and a sense of purpose, and then they feed these vulnerable individuals a concoction of lies and an unrelenting narrative of political and social grievance," a retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel told the panel.

But the number of terrorist incidents which can be related to ex-military personnel, although rising, is still not hugely significant. An investigation in 2022 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found that, in 2020, 6.4% of all domestic terror attacks and plots were committed by active-duty or reserve personnel, up from 1.5% in 2019 and none in 2018.

Gun Deaths Surge In US

A report from the American Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found that the rate of gun-related homicides reached its highest level in 25 years during the covid-19 pandemic, with firearm homicides going up nearly 35% from 2019 to 2020. The vast majority of homicides (79%) and most suicides (53%) involved a gun in 2020.

In 2020 there were a total of 45,222 firearm deaths in the US, an increase of 14% or 5,155 firearm deaths from 2019. During the covid-19 pandemic, multiple factors may have contributed to a higher rate of gun deaths in low-income, Black, and Native communities, the CDC said, including disruptions to services and education, mental stress, social isolation, job loss and housing instability (*Huffington Post*, 10/5/22).

AUSTRALIA

Police Officers Lie To Obtain Warrants

A veteran Police officer, who was formerly a director of the Police union, faces charges including conspiracy to pervert the course of justice,

perjury and intimidating witnesses as a result of a secret Victorian Police anti-corruption investigation (*Age*, 1/2/22). Four other Police officers with long service records have been suspended.

The investigation has revealed that at least 15 people were convicted after unlawful arrests. Among the allegations are that officers lied under oath to obtain search warrants, meaning Police raids were conducted based on concocted information. One man who served his jail term before being notified that his charges may have been tainted is likely to have his conviction quashed and be eligible for compensation. The news article also reports that "a small network of Police sought to undermine the anti-corruption inquiry" and a detective sergeant from Professional Standards Command is accused of working secretly to leak information to the inquiry's targets (*ibid.*).

The Full Story

An NZ TV channel currently runs a series about the Australian SAS (Special Air Service) which gives a rather different story to the one continuing to play out over the Tasman. Australia is still trying to respond to the results of the Brereton Inquiry, a long-running inquiry into alleged war crimes by Australian special forces in Afghanistan. Recently a new office of special investigator was established to consider evidence ahead of potential prosecutions (*Guardian*, 19/4/22).

The Brereton Inquiry concluded that around 25 Australian SAS personnel in Afghanistan were involved in cruel treatment of civilians and the unlawful deaths of about 40 others. The operational activities were regarded as so unacceptable that in 2021 the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, Angus Campbell, wrote to the Governor-General requesting that he revoke the meritorious unit citation for Special Operations Task Groups who served in Afghanistan between 2007 and 2013. Recently, the Minister of Defence has overruled this decision.

Also, as *PR* has previously reported, an Australian Victoria Cross (VC) winner who was regarded as a hero for his SAS achievements continues a court case against former comrades who accuse him of war crimes in Afghanistan. The case has involved some testimony from NZ personnel. There have been serious

questions raised about the activities of some of our special forces' soldiers in Afghanistan, but it should be noted that there was clearly also a reluctance to work with the Australians because of their attitudes to the local population.

In the case of the VC winner, an SAS witness told the court Mr Roberts-Smith grabbed an Afghan man, forced him to kneel in front of another Australian soldier and ordered him to shoot the Afghan. The same witness also told the court he later saw Mr Roberts-Smith "frog-marching" another Afghan man, throwing him to the ground and firing "three to five rounds" into his back (*Age*, 3/2/22).

Data Breaches By Oz Spooks Unmanageable

Unlawful or erroneous handling of agency data by Australia's intelligence personnel at the Criminal Intelligence Commission has got so bad that the agency stopped reporting the problems. The *Melbourne Age* reported that data breaches at Canberra's central criminal intelligence agency have risen by more than 50% in a year, with employees sending documents to the wrong email addresses, sharing passwords and accidentally mishandling classified information (30/12/21). Over a third of the incidents at the Commission, a key crime-fighting organisation, were considered "medium" or "high" security risk.

The agency stopped reporting breaches three years ago and the significance of the problems only emerged when the Australian Opposition forced questions to be raised in a Senate estimates process. The Department of Home Affairs, counter-espionage agency ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) and the Australian Federal Police have also downgraded their reporting on internal breaches in recent years.

Aussie Militarisation At Full Steam

An extra \$A40 billion will be spent on increasing Canberra's military forces between 2024 and 2040, even though the misogynistic coal industry cheerleader Morrison has finally been rolled. The new Government is committed to AUKUS and unlikely to radically alter current strategy, although Labor/Labour governments have a history of procrastinating over military spending.



The plan is for the Army, Navy and Air Force to be given “cutting edge capabilities” (read: better ways of killing) and each will expand by about one third of current forces. This would mean defence personnel would number about 80,000 front-line people by 2040 (*Age*, 9/3/22).

The estimated cost presumably does not include a number of other huge costs, for example, money to be spent on bases, both in Australia and in other places like Papua New Guinea. A new base to cater for the newest boys’ toys – nuclear-powered submarines at \$A116 billion dollars – will be built at either Newcastle, Port Kembla or Brisbane.

The bill for this base and associated costs would be about \$A10 billion (*Age*, 7/3/22) with some current conventional submarines arriving from 2024 and the nuke powered ones from 2040 – if, which on past experience is unlikely - they meet the proposed schedules. *PR* reminds readers that a previous issue reported a number of defence experts predicting that the nuclear-powered underwater war machines would be (a) over budget (b) late to arrive and (c) extremely vulnerable to the kinds of anti-submarine systems that will be deployed in the 2040s.

UK

UK Spies Liable For Torture Data Questions

UK intelligence services who allegedly asked the CIA to put questions to a detainee who was being tortured in “black sites” were subject to the law of England and Wales and

not that of the countries in which he was being held, a UK Court of Appeal ruled in March 2022. Previously in the High Court it was ruled that what was applicable was only the law of the various places where the claimant’s ill-treatment occurred (CIA bases in Thailand, Lithuania, Poland, Afghanistan, Morocco and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba). But the Appeal Court reversed this decision, making spooks who sent questions to the CIA now liable for prosecution.

The justices concluded that the complainant could reasonably have expected during the 20 years in which he had been detained, that the conduct of any country’s security services having to do with him would be governed by the law of the country concerned and the intelligence agencies should have reasonably expected that their conduct would be subject to English law (*Guardian*, 16/3/22).

As it has been established by the NZ Inspector-General of Spooks that agents from this country submitted questions for detainees who were being tortured, *PR* wonders what would happen if a similar case was brought to court in New Zealand (see also my article “Guantánamo: The Brutal Truth About The Atrocities Of Our Five Eyes Partners”, elsewhere in this issue).

Nasty Undercover Behaviour

At the end of February 2022 reports emerged that the BBC was battling UK government censorship to broadcast a story report that a named MI5 agent with “dangerous, extremist and misogynist beliefs” used his status to abuse, control and coerce a former partner, the

High Court heard (*Guardian*, 1/3/22). The case was partly heard in a closed court because the Government representatives say evidence disclosure could breach the agent’s rights. The BBC argued that the man is a danger to society and the report needs to be made public. The *Guardian* summarised the case using partly redacted submissions as following:

“The BBC wants to broadcast a programme about an individual ‘X’. The programme is to include the allegations that X is a dangerous extremist and misogynist who physically and psychologically abused two former partners; that X is also a covert human intelligence source (CHIS) ... for the Security Service (‘MI5’); that X told one of these women that he worked for MI5 in order to terrorise and control her; and that MI5 should have known about X’s behaviour and realised that it was inappropriate to use him as a CHIS” (ibid.).

More Bad Special Forces Stuff

British soldiers and Ministry of Defence officials were aware of – and failed to properly investigate – a series of alleged massacres of 33 Afghan men by SAS soldiers at the peak of the Afghanistan conflict about a decade ago, a UK High Court has been told (*Guardian*, 9/11/21). Claims of war crimes were made by lawyers for an Afghan who had four male relatives killed in a special forces’ night raid. The lawyers raised questions as to whether the British military had concealed what happened. The soldiers involved said they acted in self-defence against men who carried assault rifles and grenades, but the family deny they possessed any weapons.

A lawyer representing Saifullah Yar, the complainant, told the High Court that there had been allegations of “patterns of unlawful killings and a cover-up” as he sought to obtain further records relating to alleged SAS executions of “fighting-age males”. A number of other killings took place in the weeks following the raid on the Yar compound. A British Army officer wrote of his concerns in a statement written in March 2011: “During these operations it was said that all fighting age males are killed on target regardless of the threat they posed. This included those not holding weapons...” (ibid.).

Update On US Killer Driver

The United States has agreed that the wife of a US spy who used diplomatic immunity to avoid facing charges over the death of a British teenager will face the English justice system. Anne Sacoolas, as reported in previous editions of *PR*, is charged with causing death by dangerous driving. She was driving on the wrong side of the road in August 2019 when she hit the motorbike of young local Harry Dunn. The 19-year-old later died in hospital.

Sacoolas fled the UK with the help of various officials, citing diplomatic immunity, despite being under investigation. Her husband worked at a US spy base in Northamptonshire and she herself has been reported as a CIA agent. The Dunn family said it was the first time the US had ever allowed any of its' Government agents to be put on trial (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 14/12/21).

The military base where Sacoolas was stationed, RAF Croughton, is actually populated by over a thousand US personnel, and is probably one of the most important US intelligence-gathering centres outside of the US. Duncan Campbell (*Canary*, Independent Media, 9/8/20) has commented that: "The facility at RAF Croughton has been identified as a relay centre for CIA clandestine and agent communications" and that it has a direct link to Government Communications Headquarters (GC HQ). We are unlikely to learn anything about the work of the American couple in court proceedings, or Washington would never have agreed to let the case be heard in the UK.

British Embassy Guard Charged With Spying For Russia

A former security guard at the British Embassy in Berlin has been charged with spying for Russia after being extradited back to the UK, British Police have announced (*Guardian*, 6/4/22). David Smith, 57, a British national who was living in Potsdam, is charged with nine offences under the Official Secrets Act 1911, which Scotland Yard said related "to the collection and communication of information useful to the Russian state". The alleged offences took place between October 2020 and August 2021.

Lars Findsen ►

REST OF THE WORLD

Denmark's Spooks Helped US Spy On German Officials

"Denmark's secret services helped the US National Security Agency (NSA) spy on European officials, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, under the Barack Obama Administration, according to reports by multiple European news outlets" (*Politico*, 31/5/21). Edward Snowden first reported the American NSA spying on its European allies in 2013, but now a new investigation details support for Washington spooks from the Defence Intelligence Service (FE) in Denmark around 2012-15.

Media reports describe a system of Danish-American cooperation used to surveil and stock data from underwater Internet cables, and that former Chancellor Merkel was one of a number of top German officials that were spied on. Probably, senior Government officials from Norway, France and Sweden were also under surveillance. Media reports state that a data centre was built for the specific purpose of spying on allies at a Danish intelligence facility on the island of Amager, south of Copenhagen.

Danish Intelligence Chief In Prison

Lars Findsen, Denmark's Defence Intelligence Service (FE) chief - the equivalent of the US's CIA Director - was held in custody for several weeks, after he was one of four FE and PET (Danish Security and Intelligence Service - the Police equivalent of the FBI) employees arrested in December 2021 (*Covert Action*, 17/2/22).

Findsen was charged with violating

Criminal Code §109 - "disclosing highly classified information from the intelligence services" - an act of "treason" punishable by 12 years' imprisonment. He told the court he was not guilty and that the whole case was completely insane. *Covert Action* suggests the jailing of Findsen is possibly to cover up US spy programmes. He was released from pre-trial custody in February 2022.

Chinese Media Manipulation

On 24 July, 2021, a Facebook post on an account named Wilson Edwards claimed to have witnessed or learned of US efforts to politicise the World Health Organisation's covid-19 investigations from within. The Facebook post was picked up widely by Chinese State media, including the *Global Times*, the *People's Daily* - which headlined its story as "US Attempts To Overturn Report, Leveraging WHO Into Political Tool" - *China Daily*, and CGTN in multiple languages.

"Edwards" cited unnamed WHO sources and "fellow researchers" complaining of having endured "enormous pressure and even intimidation from the US side as well as certain media outlets. The WHO sources told me the US is so obsessed with attacking China on the origin-tracing issue that it is reluctant to open its eyes to the data and findings" (see *Washington Post/Guardian*, 11/8/21).

Swiss diplomats seeing the social media posts investigated and found that "Wilson Edwards" did not exist. Shortly afterwards Chinese State media articles quoting this Swiss biologist were quietly deleted. A timely reminder for us all - as the Ukraine war tragically rumbles on and we try to figure out how much of what we read in the media is true. ■



GUANTÁNAMO

The Brutal Truth About The Atrocities Of Our Five Eyes Partners

By Warren Thomson

It is the atrocity that no-one talks about. It is a saga of brutality that is barely believable. And it was carried on for years by American spooks, closely supported by their British cronies. And New Zealand's intelligence agencies cannot escape some of the blame for the actions of their Five Eyes partners.

In January 2022, the US approved the release of five of the remaining 39 men still at Guantánamo. Ten others, including the alleged mastermind of the September 11, 2001 attacks, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, known as "KSM", are awaiting trial by a military commission. Almost 800 men and boys - all Muslim - have been locked up for varied periods since January 2002 in the notorious prison camp at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba.

They have been treated with appalling cruelty. This writer was unable to read some of their testimony because of its horrific nature. While a handful of these prisoners were awful people, the majority of Guantánamo Bay prisoners were released with no conviction. Most had been "rendered" through secret US bases where they were tortured even before arriving in Cuba.

Details of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) activities were confirmed in a 2014 US Senate report that concluded that the interrogation techniques were more brutal than originally disclosed. Moreover, the CIA misled the White House and public about its torture of detainees captured overseas after al-Qaeda's September 11, 2001 attacks on the US.

Gina Haspel, Director of the CIA from 2018 to 2021, was chief of a CIA black base in Thailand in 2002. "Haspel's involvement in torture was confirmed in August 2018 when a Freedom of Information lawsuit by the George Washington University-based National Security Archive brought to light CIA cables either authorised by, or written by, Haspel while base chief at the Thailand black site. The cables describe acts of deliberate physical torture of detainees, including waterboarding and confinement" (*Wikipedia*). Haspel destroyed video tapes which showed victims being tortured.

Systematic Torture In A Legal Black Hole

Guantánamo was designed to be a legal black hole. At the end of October 2021, Majid Khan, a former al-Qaeda courier held in Guantánamo,

became the first person to speak openly in a courtroom about the torture he suffered at CIA black sites. Khan's description of being waterboarded, held in the nude and chained to the ceiling to the point that he began to hallucinate was so overpowering that seven of the eight members of his military jury wrote a letter pleading for clemency for him, saying his treatment was a "stain on the moral fibre of America" (*Guardian*, 29/1/22).

Another victim, Prisoner 345, tells us: "My name is Sami. I'm a journalist who was wrongly detained in Guantánamo Bay for six years. They made us watch as they dropped the Quran into toilet buckets. They tortured us until close to death, but they never let us die. During my time at Guantánamo, I met around 90% of the inmates there. And I can tell you that none of them had ever been a threat to the US. They were young men, Afghan farmers, Uighur refugees escaping persecution in China, and others were humanitarian workers" (from *Reprieve Website*, retrieved 20/1/22. Reprieve is a UK organisation that works to free political prisoners).

Other reports have shown that a significant number of detainees were victims of a CIA bounty system, where people in places like Afghanistan were paid reward money for identifying "terrorists". Dobbing in someone that you didn't like, on very little evidence, for payment, meant hundreds of innocents were dispatched to suffer years of appalling cruelty. We should keep in mind that *in most cases* the Americans failed to find Guantánamo detainee links to terror groups.

Recently US authorities recommended releasing an inmate with significant mental health issues from Guantánamo and repatriating him to Saudi Arabia (*Guardian*, 6/2/22). Suspected of being al-Qaeda's intended 20th hijacker for the September 11, 2001 attacks, Mohammed al-Qahtani was tortured by interrogators before being incarcerated in the Cuba hellhole where he has been detained *for nearly two decades* even though the US government dropped its case against him in 2008 due to the abuse he experienced at the prison.

Court Battles

Until recently, efforts by prisoners to



receive justice have been mostly blocked by the courts, especially the American courts. For example, at the beginning of March 2022, the United States Supreme Court ruled that two former CIA contractors cannot be questioned in a criminal investigation in Poland over their role in interrogating Abu Zubaydah, a suspected high-ranking al-Qaeda figure who was repeatedly subjected to waterboarding. The court cited “State-secrets privilege” (*Al Jazeera*, 3/3/22, from Reuters). *Peace Researcher* notes another example of an accused not able to properly defend himself because evidence is withheld to protect the spooks.

But more cases have begun to reach civil courts, as distinct from American military tribunals, and in February 2022, Abu Zubaydah won the right to proceed with a case in a claim for complicity in torture against the UK government. “The (UK) Court of Appeal has today allowed an appeal brought by Abu Zubaydah, a detainee at the US military prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cu-

ba, in a claim for complicity in torture against the UK government. The claimant alleges that from 2002-06 he was arbitrarily detained at secret US ‘black site’ prisons located in six different countries (‘the Six Countries’), where he was subjected to extreme mistreatment and torture by the CIA”.

“He contends that from 2002 the UK security and intelligence services were aware that he was being arbitrarily detained, mistreated, and tortured, in CIA ‘black sites’ but nonetheless sent questions to the US intelligence agencies to be used in their interrogations of him for the purpose of attempting to elicit information of interest to the UK intelligence services” (Matrix Chambers [British lawyers] Website, 16/3/22).

NZ Spy Agencies Involved In This Dirty Business

New Zealand spy agencies, the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB), as far as we know, have not been directly im-

plicated in any CIA rendition programme or torture. But the agencies’ Inspector General found (in a very geographically and time of operation limited investigation) that there had been occasions when our spies supplied questions for detainees under interrogation, and that hundreds of pages of information extracted by torture had been accessed, particularly by the SIS, in the process of their investigative activities. We know that part of GCSB operations involves helping Five Eyes mates to track persons of interest.

Most of all, we now know what atrocities the security agencies of our Five Eyes partners are willing to engage in, with total disregard for judicial or ethical norms, in pursuit of objectives that are controversial. There is no excuse. There is no justification to continue to work alongside agencies that have been carrying out some of the most inhumane and unacceptable brutality of this century. Let’s get out of Five Eyes now! ■

PACIFIC GEOPOLITICS IN THE RAW Bullying, Hysterical Hypocrisy

By Murray Horton

As far as the Pacific’s Western countries have been concerned, there has always been the attempt to whip up alarm about “outsiders” muscling into “our backyard”. During his 1975-84 time in power, New Zealand’s Prime Minister Rob Muldoon used to commandeer prime time on TV to issue dire warnings about the Soviet Union being able to move its Pacific Fleet thousands of kilometres south from Vladivostok to Vietnam’s Cam Ranh Bay, and, hence, that much closer to “us”. Didn’t happen. There were some beat-up stories about Soviet submarines in “our” Pacific. A few years later there was preposterous alarm about Gaddafi’s Libya getting a toe hold in the Pacific. Nothing came of that, either.

Indeed, the only Pacific military Power to attack New Zealand in the second half of the 20th Century was not Russia or China or Vietnam. No, it was France, which bombed the *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland, killing one crew member, getting most of the killers out of the Pacific by submarine, and bullying NZ to release the two killers imprisoned here. That’s right, the only actual violence – an act of terrorism, if not war – came from “our side” in the Pacific, one which maintains a considerable military presence in the Pacific to this day. Oh dear, how embarrassing. But let’s not let the facts get in the way of a good story.

Solomons: Same Old Yellow Peril Script

Now it’s happening again, except the villain has changed in the script. China has started throwing its weight around in the South China Sea, bullying neighbours like the Philippines (which calls it the West Philippines Sea). In 2022 China has been portrayed as suddenly leapfrogging so much closer to home (stop me if this sounds familiar) by signing a security agreement with the Solomon Islands. This has sent Australia, New Zealand and the US into a frenzy about China getting a military base in the Solomons (des-

pite the assurances of that country’s Prime Minister that no such thing will happen).

Relations with China are a controversial subject within the Solomons, which established ties with China in 2019, leading to Taiwan severing diplomatic relations after decades. This didn’t go down well with one particular province, which wanted ties to continue with Taiwan and which has separatist yearnings. This all culminated in major riots in late 2021 in the Solomons’ capital, Honiara – riots featuring people from that province and aimed at the city’s Chinatown.

There was major property damage, the local cops couldn’t handle it, and Australia and New Zealand sent police and troops (aided by Papua New Guinea and Fiji). This was the most recent iteration of the 2003-17 Australian and NZ security presence in the Solomons to deal with long term and serious internal unrest. The regional assumption had always been – if the natives get restless, send in the soldiers and cops from the white countries because it’s “our backyard” after all.

But the 2022 China/Solomons security agreement puts a cat among



those colonial pigeons. Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said that his government preferred that Chinese police take over that Australasian role of training the local cops and providing an on the ground security presence in the event of an emergency, including protecting Chinese citizens and assets (who were targeted in the 2021 riots). The white big boys weren't taking this lying down – much spleen was vented by media, “experts” and politicians in Australia, NZ and the US. The US warned of a “response” if China built a base in the Solomons; Australia sent its two top spy chiefs to lean on Sogavare.

AUKUS

That had the entirely predictable result of getting his back up. “We find it very insulting to be branded as unfit to manage our sovereign affairs, or (to) have other motives in pursuing our national interests” (*ABC News*, 29/3/22). Sogavare had the bad manners to remind Australia of its own deception when, in 2021, it broke a contract to buy French submarines and, instead, signed up with the US and UK to form the AUKUS Treaty, which will build eight nuclear-powered (but not nuclear-armed) submarines for Australia.

“Sogavare said the ‘Western media’ had accused Solomon Islands and China of showing a lack of transparency about the agreement. But Sogavare said he had first ‘learned of the AUKUS Treaty in the media. One would expect that as a member of the Pacific family, Solomon Islands and members of the Pacific should have been consulted to ensure that this AUKUS Treaty is transparent, since it will affect the Pacific family by allowing nuclear submarines in Pacific waters’ Sogavare said”.

“Oh, but I realise ... that Australia is

a sovereign country, and that it can enter into any treaty that it wants to, transparently or not – which is exactly what they did with (the) AUKUS Treaty’. Sogavare added: ‘When Australia signed up to AUKUS we did not become theatrical and hysterical on the implications this would have for us. We respected Australia’s decision. And I’m glad to say that Australia, United States of America and Japan respected our sovereignty to enter into this security agreement with China as well, based on trust and mutual respect’” (*Guardian*, 29/4/22, “Solomon Islands PM Suggests Australia’s Reaction To China Security Deal Is Hysterical And Hypocritical”).

Precisely. I couldn’t have put it better myself. Australia is the last country to be lecturing anyone about honesty and honourable behaviour. Prime Minister Scott Morrison went behind the backs of the French, in order to instead do a deal with the US and UK. It led to the most extraordinary diplomatic bust up between those countries – France recalled its Ambassadors from both Australia and the US (it is America’s oldest ally, dating back to the American Revolution); President Macron called Morrison a “liar”. When Morrison was voted out a few months later, France’s outgoing Foreign Minister said: “I can’t stop myself from saying that the defeat of Morrison suits me very well”.

Nuclear free New Zealand was not invited to join AUKUS (nor was fellow Five Eyes member, Canada) but the Ardern government has had a FOMO (fear of missing out) reaction and said NZ would like to get involved with other aspects of AUKUS, such as artificial intelligence. AUKUS is rapidly proving its’ about much more than a few nuclear subs – in April 2022 it announced that its

three members would work together to develop hypersonic missiles to counter Russia and China, which already have them.

In May 2022 Scott Morrison’s Government was resoundingly voted out of office but there’s no reason to believe that Anthony Albanese’s Government will be any different when it comes to foreign policy. He is committed to AUKUS, he attacked the Morrison government for what he called a “massive foreign policy failure” vis a vis the Solomons/China agreement. He promised to create a training school in Australia to train the militaries from various Pacific nations. He and Morrison competed on who would be tougher towards China.

The last time that an Australian Labor government offered a markedly different foreign policy was the 1972-75 one led by Gough Whitlam – and we all know what happened to that (my obituaries of Whitlam, and his Tory successor Malcolm Fraser, are in *Peace Researcher* 49, June 2015, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwcB6Aysm_HHSFY1VDA0blc1ZU0/view?pli=1&resourcekey=0-QgCDkmNSG1qPymohrMglA).

Both Whitlam and Albanese had themselves sworn in as Prime Minister immediately after their respective election wins, but the contrast could not be starker. Whitlam wanted to get stuck into his radically different foreign policy; Albanese wanted to immediately scurry off to Tokyo to meet Joe Biden and reassure him of Australia’s continued loyalty as a good and obedient servant. The Australian Labor Party has never questioned the American alliance since Whitlam.

Drop The “Our Backyard” Colonial Crap

“We are ‘gravely concerned’ about the Solomon Islands’ security deal with China. How about we offer something better. We say we’re worried because the Pacific is our own ‘backyard’. The phrase is meant to signal a shared Pacific identity but, to the Pacific, the expression sounds colonial. Russia calls Ukraine its ‘backyard’. If you are opposed to Russia meddling in Ukraine, where Russia spuriously claims a ‘security concern’ about Ukraine joining NATO, then consistency demands you must also respect the Solomons’ right to make its own decisions. We’ve not invad-

ing the country – but we are trying to boss it around”.

“We didn't like it when the Five Eyes intelligence network demanded we sign its statement condemning China for human rights abuses. Since the network attacked our independence from China for refusing to sign, our diplomatic ties to the US and Australia have weakened, not strengthened. Likewise, our public condemnation of the Solomons' deal with China will push the Solomons further away, not bring it closer...We would be more effective if we asked why the Solomons would do a security deal with China in the first place”.

“If we listened, it would be clear that what's important to Solomon Islands is security, not geopolitics. Recent riots in Honiara were about jobs. Too many unemployed young people with nothing to do, sick of watching imported Chinese workers get the jobs. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force couldn't cope, despite support from New Zealand and Australian police. So, the Government turned to China”.

“Security matters in the Pacific. Transnational crime, such as drug production and people trafficking, is serious in the region. Trafficking of methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine is on the rise. Why doesn't New Zealand double its aid to the Solomons to grow new businesses, and more jobs in legitimate industries? Why not help the country negotiate better contracts with China that insist on local labour instead of shipping in Chinese workers? We need to out-compete China. Not just yell ‘Get Off My Lawn’ at them” (*Stuff*, 1/4/22, Josie Pagani, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128224030/stop-telling-pacific-countries-what-to-do>).

Foreign Bases & Wars: US Undisputed Champ

The hypocrisy of Australia, New Zealand and the US is quite breathtaking. I'm not going to argue any case for China to have a base in the Solomons, or anywhere else in the Pacific for that matter. The Pacific should be true to its name and be pacific, with no foreign bases. Let's do some basic fact checking – China has one foreign military base in the world (in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa). The US has nearly 800 bases in 70 foreign countries and territories (including Djibouti).

The Pacific is full of US bases, from South Korea and Japan to Australia, which, for example, hosts US Marines in Darwin and the vital war-fighting spy base at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs. That's not counting the bases on US Pacific soil like Hawaii, Guam, and California. It no longer has bases in the Philippines but has the run of the place.

Australia is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to upgrade Papua New Guinea's main Navy base on Manus Island, which will then be used by the Australian and US Navies. On Anzac Day 2022 Australia's then Defence Minister, Peter Dutton, said: “The only way you can preserve peace is to prepare for war, and be strong as a country. Not to cower, not to be on bended knee and be weak. That's the reality”.

“The Chinese, through their actions, through their words, are on a very deliberate course at the moment, and we have to stand up with countries to stare down any act of aggression ... to make sure we can keep peace in our region and for our country” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 25/4/22, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/reality-of-our-time-dutton-warns-australians-to-prepare-for-war-20220425-p5afuy.html>). How's that for Warmongering 101?

I haven't mentioned actual wars, because it's such a blindingly obvious fact. The US has been involved in wars continuously in the 21st Century (Iraq and Afghanistan being only the most spectacular examples). That carries on an unbroken tradition dating back to World War 2, when it succeeded Britain as the world's pre-eminent white, Western empire.

And how many wars has China

fought in the 21st Century? I can only think of a few deadly fisticuffs on the contested border with India. In the 20th Century, it fought wars in Korea and Vietnam and subjugated Tibet. The Chinese security apparatus is used for internal repression in places from Hong Kong to Xinjiang. The US security apparatus is, likewise, used for internal repression across the whole country. Ask any young Black male motorist.

What's Good For The Goose Is Good For The Gander

Let's look at a comparative example much closer to home. In 2011 Christchurch was flattened by a killer earthquake, one of a sequence of 18,000 that shook the city for years. In the immediate aftermath of that killer quake, hundreds of Australian cops were flown to Christchurch and patrolled the streets (minus their usual guns) for weeks. It was the first deployment of Aussie cops to NZ in the history of the two countries.

It was a huge emergency and my stricken home town needed as much help as it could get (there was also a huge NZ military mobilisation, with help from the militaries of other countries, such as Australia and Singapore). It was a disaster on a global scale and NZ exercised its sovereign right to ask its friends for help, for which we were truly grateful. It was all hands to the pump.

Now, imagine if China, or the Solomons, for that matter, had objected to NZ inviting Australian cops to help in our emergency. They would have been told to mind their own bloody business. We could have justifiably called such a response “hysterical and hypocritical”. What's good for the goose is good for the gander. ■



THIEL NOT WANTED IN NZ

By Warren Thomson

Instant New Zealand Citizenship

Peter Thiel is the American tech billionaire who made his money creating software for spy agencies and who was secretly granted New Zealand citizenship by the previous National government. This wasn't made public until years after the event, along with the fact that he got it after having spent only 12 days in NZ. In the decade since then, Thiel has emerged as one of the billionaires in Donald Trump's inner circle.

The best article on Thiel's NZ connection (he is the prime example of a "boltholer", having purchased here what is referred to by the 1% as "apocalypse insurance") is Matt Nipper's "Citizen Thiel" in the *New Zealand Herald*, February 2018 (<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/indepth/national/how-peter-thiel-got-new-zealand-citizenship/>).

He is the subject of a 2021 book ("The Contrarian: Peter Thiel And Silicon Valley's Pursuit Of Power", by Max Chafkin), which Jeremy Agar reviewed in *Foreign Control Watchdog* 159, April 2022, <http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/59/10.html>). Here's an extract: "Besides his existence as one of the world's richest people, Thiel is known in NZ from having become a citizen soon after having had a chat with John Key and buying a chunk of land beside Lake Hawea".

"He also had a Queenstown house, dubbed the "Plasma Screen House"

by locals as it resembled a giant flat screen TV. It seems that Thiel rarely if ever stayed there but he did add a panic room (the Queenstown place was in the news recently because of legal squabbles over the terms of sale. And there are current plans for a flash hotel beside Hawea, which will generate plenty of controversy)".

"So, Thiel was not your typical immigrant. The usual requirement for investing migrants to be granted citizenship is an average 1350-day residence. Thiel got his papers in 12 days, Key having recognised a soul mate, and agreeing that California was the obvious place to swear dedication to Aotearoa, Thiel having taken the oath of citizenship in a secret ceremony in the NZ Consulate in Santa Monica. And 'that', Chafkin notes, 'was effectively the end of his courtship of the country'".

"Thiel in fact has over a dozen houses in every continent except Antarctica. Chafkin tells of one he had built after he lost interest in NZ. In Hawaii his new \$US27,000,000 bach was in a secluded area with a high wall separating it from the road. Chafkin suggests that Thiel 'ignored' NZ soon after his meeting with Key because Ardern (bad) and Trump (good) won elections. He cites an article which thought that the Godzone venture had been prompted by Thiel's wish to turn NZ 'into the libertarian utopia of his dreams'. It appealed as being stable, boring, remote, small and - he would have supposed - homogeneous".

Spyware; Funding Republican Candidates

Thiel has been mentioned in previous issues of *PR* for activities which should make him an undesirable in this country; among them his connection with nasty spyware, and lat-

terly, his massive financial backing of very Rightwing US political candidates. Israeli Pegasus software, capable of reliably cracking the encrypted communications of iPhone and Android smartphones, has been recently in the news for its illegal use hacking the mobile phones of the Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, and the Defence Minister, Margarita Robles, as well as Catalan activists (*Guardian*, 2/5/22).

But American companies have been trying to produce a similar app; one which can infiltrate a mobile phone without the owner knowing. One such company is Boldend, and, according to the *New York Times* (28/1/22), a major Boldend investor is Founders Fund, which is a company run by Peter Thiel. Boldend revealed in January 2021 that it could hack WhatsApp, the popular messaging service owned by Facebook, (Thiel is a director of Facebook) although apparently it lost this capability after a WhatsApp update (*NYT*, *ibid*).

Pegasus, made by an Israeli company, NSO Group, has been used to track terrorists and drug cartels. It has also been used against human rights activists, journalists and dissidents. Mexico used the spyware to target journalists and dissidents. Saudi Arabia used it against women's rights activists and associates of Jamal Khashoggi. Who Thiel expects any new Boldend spyware to track is anyone's guess, although we know from previous episodes that he has tried to peddle software that allows employers to spy on their workers.

Politico reported (15/11/21) that the tech billionaire and Trump backer has bought a \$US13 million mansion in an expensive Washington DC neighbourhood. He is known for his speech praising Trump at the 2016 Republican convention and, more recently, Thiel has become a major player in two top US Senate races. He gave separate \$US10 million donations to a pair of Super Political Action Committees (Super PACs) to help elect Trump-backed candidates in swing states Ohio and Arizona, which, according to *Politico*, instantly transformed two novice politicians into major contenders.

NZ Plans Hit Roadblock

This man, whom one biographer described as having authoritarian views similar to a dictator, (*Politico*, *ibid*.)

ARE YOU A NEW ZEALAND CITIZEN? USE THIS HANDY TOOL TO FIND OUT

START HERE

WERE YOU BORN IN THE COOK ISLANDS, NIUE OR TOKELAU?

YES NO

ARE YOU A SAMOAN CITIZEN?

YES NO

WAS AT LEAST ONE OF YOUR PARENTS A NEW ZEALAND CITIZEN WHEN YOU WERE BORN?

YES NO

HAVE YOU BEEN LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND, THE COOK ISLANDS, NIUE OR TOKELAU AS A RESIDENT FOR AT LEAST THE LAST FIVE YEARS? (IT USED TO BE THREE YEARS, BUT WTF WERE WE THINKING?!? THREE YEARS IS WAY TOO SHORT).

YES NO

* FROM THE NZ GOVERNMENT IMMIGRATION WEBSITE

YOU ARE NOT A NEW ZEA... OMG! PETER? PETER THIEL? IS THAT YOU???

YES NO

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU ARE AN INSTANT NEW ZEALAND CITIZEN!

is not a person that most New Zealanders would see as a fitting citizen of this country. But he has not had things all his own way. His proposal for a huge luxurious lodge complex in the Wanaka region has been rejected, at least for now, after Council planners said there would be

“unacceptable” adverse effects on the environment.

Senior planner Sarah Gathercole said the proposed lodge “is of a scale well in excess of what could be reasonably anticipated” (*Guardian*, 3/5/22). Likely he will just find

a way to use some of his vast fortune to get around any restrictions. But wouldn't it be wonderful if he took the rebuff so badly that he sold up his NZ assets and never came back (or, more accurately, never came here at all)! ■

UKRAINE WAR Brute Strength And Ignorance

By Murray Horton

Murderer & Imperialist

Let's start with the obvious: Vladimir Putin (pronounced poo tin) is a would-be tyrant, who takes a ruthless approach to squashing any domestic opposition, intimidating, beating and imprisoning anyone who dares to speak up. More than that, he is a murderer, firstly at the individual level with his choice of lethal nerve agents as the murder weapon and, secondly, at the international level, with missiles, rockets, bombs and shells.

Plus, Putin threatens global mass murder by putting the nuclear card on the table. Mind you, when agents from “our side” e.g., Israel's Mossad, murder individuals in third party countries, that is shrugged off as “ruthless efficiency” in “a secret war”. I'm not going to comment on the actual fighting in Ukraine, because that tragedy is still unfolding, and is a fluid situation, with resulting seismic shifts in European geopolitics such as Finland and Sweden abandoning non-alignment to apply to join NATO.

All I will say is that if he wants to be remembered in the same terms as his Tsarist predecessors - Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, (Vlad the Conqueror?) – he'd better make sure he does a better job of the conquering side of things than he has heretofore demonstrated in Ukraine. What was originally predicted to be a pushover has instead encountered major pushback from David against Goliath.

Obviously, Putin expected things to

go as per the 1968 script when the Soviet Union sent the tanks into Warsaw Pact ally Czechoslovakia, encountered only non-violent resistance, very quickly overthrew the vaguely liberal Government and had the country's arrested leader flown to Moscow in handcuffs. That scenario has very definitely not been repeated in Ukraine, which has successfully fought back very hard, and taken the war to the Russians inside Russia and on the Black Sea.

So much so, in fact, that the US and NATO now see the chance to not only bleed and weaken Russia but to defeat it and perhaps even get rid of Putin in the process. The last time Russia did so badly in a war was in Afghanistan but at least the Soviet Union lasted a decade before accepting reality and getting out. Putin should have learned the lesson that the US so painfully learned in Vietnam – that Small can very definitely defeat Big.

Putin is an imperialist who, echoing his mate Trump, wants to Make Russia Great Again. Or, indeed, to bring the Soviet Union back from the dead. He apparently has designs not only on Ukraine, but also on Moldova, its' pocket handkerchief-sized next-door neighbour, which already has Russian troops on its soil in a breakaway region. His talk of protecting Russian-speaking peoples outside Russia proper is eerily reminiscent of Hitler, who started off by saying he wanted to protect German-speakers in countries like Czechoslovakia.

Russia has always been the world's biggest land empire, bigger even than its land empire rivals, China and the US (by contrast, little old NZ is the furthest flung outpost of Britain, one of the world's great sea empires). Even shorn of the various soviet socialist republics that made up the Soviet Union, Russia is still easily the biggest country in the world. Not only that, it is also easily

the biggest country in Asia. It stretches so far east that it has a land border with North Korea; a sea border just north of Japan, and a sea border just a few kilometres west of the US (Alaska).

I've experienced the sheer immensity of it for myself when my then partner and I took the Trans-Siberian Express from the Pacific to Scandinavia in 1978. We were in the biggest country in Asia, very close to the borders of China and Mongolia, and yet it felt completely European, so totally had it been colonised. The only place we saw Asian faces was among the Red Army conscripts we glimpsed in passing. The train's reading material described China in “yellow peril” terms.

When I was on the other side of that border i.e., in China in 1973, it was during the Sino-Soviet dispute over ideology and territory. There had been a brief border war in 1969 and the Chinese were very concerned about the possibility of a Russian nuclear attack. They took our group (an NZ student delegation) into a rabbit warren of tunnels they'd built under Beijing to deal with that eventuality. Russia's Far East includes nearly a million square kilometres stolen by the Tsars from the Chinese Empire in the 19th Century.

Turning A Blind Eye To “Our Side's” War Crimes

What disappoints me the most is that Russia has sunk to the level of the US in terms of invading and destroying sovereign countries, murdering and terrorising civilians in the process. The US had made an art form of that, from Korea to Vietnam and Iraq to Afghanistan. Except that the US mass murder and terrorism was hyped up by the Western media as “shock and awe”. The US was flattening cities in Iraq and Syria as recently as 2017, using horrific weapons like white phosphorus which inflict hideous burns. The US was “mistakenly” killing Afghan civil-



ians as recently as its last day in that country in August 2021.

People have a short memory when they describe Ukraine as being the first war in Europe since WW2. Have they forgotten the numerous wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 90s? The Russians stayed out of that but NATO and the US bombed Serbia, including "accidentally" bombing the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing people in the process. That was under "good old boy" Bill Clinton. When there is talk about "war crimes", it needs to be realised that war (all war) is a crime by definition. What else would you call mass murder? Oh, I know, "fighting for our country and freedom", as we're told with a straight face every Anzac Day. Atrocities committed in the course of war simply add insult to injury.

Coincidentally, Madeleine Albright, Clinton's Secretary of State, died during the early stages of the Ukraine War. TV news rescreened the infamous interview where she was asked if the death of 500,000 Iraqi children because of US-led sanctions on Saddam's Iraq during the 90s was worth the price? She answered "yes", it was worth the price. I don't recall any Western leaders calling her a mass murderer or a war criminal. And her obituaries stressed how she was the central figure driving NATO's eastwards expansion. Ukraine is paying the price today, as the meat in the sandwich between Russia and NATO.

Putin's war on Ukraine is indefensible and he is as much of a war criminal as Assad or Kissinger or Bush (or even Obama, who authorised

more drone strike kills than any other President). But what is happening in Ukraine has a lot longer history than simply Putin waking up with a hangover and saying "I feel like invading someone today".

Putin's Russia has previous form in flattening cities, bombing schools and hospitals, etc. Hence the subtitle of this article – brute strength and ignorance. The modus operandi of the Russian military seems to be that if they can't actually win any battles or capture any territory, they'll destroy as much of their enemy's country as possible.

The Second Chechen War led to its capital, Grozny, having the unwanted title as the most destroyed city on Earth. How ironic that Chechens are now Putin's cannon fodder in Ukraine. Putin and his fellow mass murderer, Assad, flattened cities like Aleppo in Syria, including hospitals. He has sent the troops in before to former Soviet republics, from Georgia to Belarus and, most recently, Kazakhstan.

And, of course, into Ukraine, in 2014, where they have been ever since, in Crimea and the Donbas region. Russia and Ukraine have a tortured history – one of Stalin's many, many horrendous crimes against humanity was to deliberately impose a mass famine on Ukraine in the early 1930s which led to millions starving to death. One result was that when the Nazis invaded Ukraine a decade later, some Ukrainians welcomed them as liberators.

Explanation, Not Justification

This is not to justify Putin's war of

aggression and terrorism on Ukraine but to explain how we got to where we are now. When the Soviet Union and its ossified brand of so-called communism collapsed 30+ years ago, that was the perfect opportunity for the West to step in and lend a helping hand to build a functioning democratic capitalist country - as the victorious Allies did with the Marshall Plan in Germany and Japan after WW2.

But, no, the "winner" West decided to humiliate the "loser" Russia, to rub its face in the shit and to join the systematic looting of the resulting gangster economy - which is where the "oligarchs" came from (funnily enough, the likes of Bezos, Musk and Gates are not called oligarchs. Their New Zealand counterparts are approvingly called "rich listers" by the corporate media here).

They hadn't learned from the past - after WW1, the victorious Allies bankrupted and humiliated Germany. The result? Hitler. 1990s' Russia morphed from being led by international laughing stock Boozy Boris Yeltsin to being taken very seriously indeed under Vladimir Putin, a KGB killer with a big chip on his shoulder. Nobody's laughing at Russia now.

NATO is front and centre in the Ukraine War. But it should have ceased to exist in the 1990s as the Warsaw Pact did, when "we won" the Cold War. There was no further reason for its existence. But, no, it kept going and it kept expanding, looking for wars to fight to justify its existence - the former Yugoslavia, Libya, Afghanistan. Getting further and further away from Europe and the "North Atlantic".

It has set out to be a global geopolitical bloc - even NZ has some sort of non-NATO-member-but-ally status. "While New Zealand is not a member of NATO, it is one of a few countries referred to as 'partners across the globe' that contribute to NATO-led defence operations" (*Newshub*, 8/4/22¹). New Zealand is getting sucked further in by providing lethal military aid to Ukraine. We just can't resist getting involved in a good old European war.

NATO relentlessly set out to confront, contain and provoke Russia, a country with traumatic memories of invasion from the West, pushing right up to its borders, poking and prodding the paranoid bear until it

lashed out and Ukraine is paying the price. Politicians, generals and arms dealers need an enemy to justify their continued existence - Russia fits the bill admirably.

Occasionally the Western media now mentions in passing that the West broke its promise to Gorbachev to not expand NATO eastwards by "one inch"- that was the terms on which he removed Russian troops from Germany, allowing its peaceful reunification, one of the highlights of 20th Century history (see, for example, the *Times*, 19/2/22²). But Russia was lied to and betrayed, and Putin is not one to forget or let go of a grudge.

Useful Historical Reminders

I am old enough to remember when the boot was on the other foot, namely the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, where the US went ballistic (pun intended), threatening nuclear war because it wouldn't tolerate Russian missiles 90 miles off the coast of Florida. The West trumpets that Russia backed down and withdrew its Cuban missiles.

It does not trumpet that, as part of the deal, the US secretly agreed to withdraw nuclear missiles from Turkey, a NATO member with a land border with the then Soviet Union. Russia has always consistently said - do not use our neighbours to threaten us. The US has codified that same principle since 1823 via the Monroe Doctrine, which declares all of South and Central America off-limits to any rival imperialists.

And history shows us that Russia does get out of some places that it has militarily conquered if it gets what it wants. I've been to two of them in my European travels. The Red Army liberated Norway's northernmost territory and then pulled out (there is even a statue thanking the Red Army up there). Read this 2019 statement³ from the King of Norway to mark the 75th anniversary of that liberation. "I will repeat what is written on the memorial to fallen Soviet soldiers on the Western Cemetery in Oslo: 'Norway thanks you'. This is carved in stone".

"Six thousand Soviet soldiers lost their lives in the final battles of the north. Some 100,000 Russian prisoners of war were sent to camps in Norway, and 13,000 died here. 'Norway will never forget the Soviet

Army's war effort', said the King. 'We know the losses and sacrifices it required. The many soldiers who took part on the Soviet side are also our heroes. The events of 75 years ago give strength and inspiration to relations between our neighbouring countries, which for centuries have been characterised by peace'".

That 2019 wreath laying ceremony in far northern Norway, a key NATO member with a land border with Russia, was attended by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the same right-hand man of Putin who is now routinely denounced in the Western media. And the Red Army liberated Austria, jointly occupied it for ten years, then left in 1955 when Austria promised to be perpetually neutral (which it still is). Ukraine may survive as an independent nation if it promises to stay out of NATO and adopts neutrality.

There are all sorts of lessons to be learned from the Ukraine War. One that will resonate with Anti-Bases Campaign members is the critical and negative role that foreign bases play in geopolitics. A major motivation for Russia to annex Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 was the fear of losing Sevastopol, the base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet (Russia also has a naval base and an air force base in Syria, which gives it a motivation to get involved in that country's wars on the side of Assad). Mention of Syria brings up another fascinating example of realpolitik in Ukraine.

"Perhaps the main factor in Israel's official reluctance to criticise Putin harshly is Russia's support of the regime in Syria, where both Russian and Iranian forces are present. Israel negotiated an understanding with the Russian military that enables Israeli forces to deconflict with Russian forces and strike Iranian targets in Syria. Israel views the Russian presence there as a check on Iran's influence and therefore an important protection for Israeli security" (Council on Foreign Relations, 8/4/22⁴). This despite the fact that Israel is a staunch US ally and that Ukraine has a Jewish President.

Atrocities Propaganda

As the cliché says, truth is the first victim of war. Take the case of the Ukrainian defenders of Snake Island, who at the beginning of the war, were called upon to surrender. They responded: "Russian warship,

go fuck yourself", a phrase that echoed around the world. It was reported that the Russian warship then opened fire and killed them all. It was a great story of what murderous bastards the Russians are. The Ukrainians were declared posthumous heroes. Except, embarrassingly, it quickly emerged that they had run out of ammunition and had, in fact, chosen surrender over death and had become prisoners of war.

Even the language used to describe Ukrainian defeats is a study in propaganda. Their defeated soldiers are "evacuated" to positions behind Russian lines or into Russia itself. By contrast, I think back to when German tanks hove into view during my Dear Old Dad's ill-fated stint in the North African desert during WW2. He wasn't "evacuated", he "surrendered" and was "captured" - then he was shipped off ("evacuated"?) to an Italian prisoner of war camp. Let's cut the bullshit language.

Stories of atrocities need to be taken with a grain of salt. Here's a cautionary tale. When Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait in 1990, the world recoiled in horror that his soldiers had tipped babies out of incubators at a hospital, leaving them to die. "The Nayirah testimony was false testimony given before the United States Congressional Human Rights Caucus on October 10, 1990, by a 15-year-old girl who was publicly identified at the time by her first name, Nayirah. The testimony was widely publicised, and was cited numerous times by United States Senators and President George Bush Senior



Viktor Medvedchuk, pro-Russian leader of Ukraine's biggest Opposition party

in their rationale to support Kuwait in the Gulf War”.

“In 1992, it was revealed that Nayirah's last name was al Sabah and that she was the daughter of Saud al Sabah, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United States. Furthermore, it was revealed that her testimony was organised as part of the Citizens for a Free Kuwait public relations campaign, which was run by the American public relations firm Hill & Knowlton for the Kuwaiti government. Following this, al Sabah's testimony has come to be regarded as a classic example of modern atrocity propaganda” (*Wikipedia*).

Zelenskyy & The American Agenda

There are aspects of the whole Ukraine tragedy that have not been highlighted by the Western media. Ironically, *Time* (which is not noted as a Russian propaganda publication) has shone a light onto a couple of them. Simon Shuster's “The Road To War” (*Time*, 14&21/2/22⁵.) puts the individualistic American spin on to Russian war motives – namely, that Vladimir Putin has a Ukrainian goddaughter whom he adores and whose father, Viktor Medvedchuk, was leader of the biggest opposition party in Ukraine. The article offers considerably more substantive reasons for Putin's hostility.

“The leading voice for Russia's interests in Ukraine. Medvedchuk's political party is the biggest opposition force in Parliament, with millions of supporters. Over the past year, that party has come under attack. Medvedchuk was charged with treason in May (2021) and placed under house arrest in Kyiv...Short of war, one of the best ways that Putin has to influence Ukraine is through Medvedchuk and his political party. So, it should not be surprising that Russia's military standoff with the West has escalated in step with the crackdown on his friend”.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected Ukraine's President in 2019. “But Medvedchuk's faction came in second place, making it the biggest opposition force in the country. ‘Millions of citizens voted for us’, Medvedchuk told me. ‘Putin gave a promise to protect them’. Medvedchuk's TV channels worked to weaken the new Government. ‘They were eating into the electoral base, just destroying Zelenskyy’ says the President's first National

Security Adviser, Oleksandr Danyliuk. The networks were especially relentless in attacking the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and its failure to secure vaccine supplies from Western allies”.

“When Russia released its own vaccine in August 2020, Medvedchuk, his wife and their daughter Daria were among the first to get it. They then flew to Moscow to talk to Putin. It was the first public meeting the Russian leader had with anyone – unmasked, on camera, and without social distancing – since the pandemic began. Their talks that day resulted in a deal for Russia to supply Ukraine with millions of doses of its vaccine, and to allow Ukrainian labs to produce it free of charge”

“When Medvedchuk brought this deal to Kyiv, the Government rejected it. So did the US State Department, which accused Russia of using its vaccine as a tool of political influence. But as the death toll mounted in Ukraine – and no vaccine shipments arrived from the West – voters turned away from Zelenskyy in droves. By the fall of 2020, his approval ratings fell well below 40%, compared with over 70% a year earlier. In some polls taken that December (2020), Medvedchuk's party was in the lead”.

“Zelenskyy grew especially concerned about the party's television channels, which he condemned as messengers of Russian propaganda. When he decided to take those channels off the air last February (2021), it was not only a defensive move, says Danyliuk, his former Security Adviser. It was also conceived as a welcome gift to the Biden Administration, which had made the decision to go after international corruption a pillar of its foreign policy. As Danyliuk put it, the decision to go after Putin's friend ‘was calculated to fit in with the US agenda”.

“... Last February (2021), days after the Inauguration of President Joe Biden, America's allies in Kyiv decided to get tough on Medvedchuk. The Ukrainian government started by taking his TV channels off the air, depriving Russia of its propaganda outlets in the country. The US Embassy applauded the move. About two weeks later, on Feb 19, 2021, Ukraine announced that it had seized the assets of Medvedchuk's

family. Among the most important, it said, was a pipeline bringing Russian oil to Europe, enriching Medvedchuk and his family – including Putin's goddaughter Daria – and helping to bankroll Medvedchuk's political party”.

Using Decrees, Not Courts, Against Domestic Opponents

“...A senior US official tells *Time* that Ukraine has always been a top priority for the Administration. ‘There has been very extensive and almost constant focus on Ukraine from day one’. When the Zelenskyy government decided to go after Medvedchuk, the US welcomed it as part of Ukraine's struggle to ‘counter Russian malign influence’, the official said. The methods used in this struggle have been novel and controversial. Rather than working through the justice system, Zelenskyy has imposed sanctions against Ukrainian tycoons and politicians, freezing their assets by decree”.

“This strategy, which the Government calls ‘de-oligarchisation’ has targeted many of Zelenskyy's domestic opponents and, in particular, their television channels. The US has avoided criticising the crackdown, not wanting to ‘micromanage’ what Ukraine was doing, said the senior US official. But in the case of Medvedchuk, the US Embassy cheered Zelenskyy on”.

“‘We support Ukraine's efforts to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity through sanctions’, the Embassy said in a tweet last February (2021), the day after the sanctions froze Medvedchuk's assets. The party leader was furious. ‘This is political repression’, Medvedchuk told me. ‘All my bank accounts are frozen. I can't manage my assets. I can't even pay my utility bills”.

Those extracts from a long article provide a lot more context for what led up to the Russian invasion and cast serious doubt onto the carefully curated image of Zelenskyy as a democrat. Not to mention the leading role of the US in working to undermine Zelenskyy's opposition. As for Medvedchuk, he disappeared from his Kyiv house arrest shortly after the war began but was captured by Ukrainian forces in April 2022.

Ukraine's Nazis

Now, what about those Nazis? Putin gave as Russia's *casus belli* the

need to “denazify” Ukraine. This is a joke, right? Ukraine has a Jewish President, who presumably is not a Nazi. The blanket use of the word “Nazis” is undoubtedly Russian propaganda. But what could Putin be referring to? As I’ve already mentioned, some Ukrainians did welcome the Nazis as liberators from Stalin’s Soviet Union. Ukrainian collaborators with the German occupiers were led by Stepan Bandera, a Nazi and anti-Semite, who is still revered by a significant number of today’s Ukrainians as a hero of the struggle for an independent Ukraine. But that’s all buried away in the World War 2 past, surely.

In a word, no. Ukraine does have Nazis today, and they are significant players, not only nationally, but globally. Once again, a lengthy *Time* article by Simon Shuster provides fascinating, not to mention spine chilling details about the Azov movement (“Like, Share, Recruit: How A White Supremacist Militia Uses Facebook To Radicalise And Train New Members”, 18&25/1/21⁶).

"Its fighters resemble the other paramilitary units - and there are dozens of them - that have helped defend Ukraine against the Russian military over the past six years. But Azov is much more than a militia. It has its own political party; two publishing houses; summer camps for children; and a vigilante force known as the National Militia, which patrols the streets of Ukrainian cities alongside the police. Unlike its ideological peers in the US and Europe, it also has a military wing with at least two training bases and a vast arsenal of weapons, from drones and armoured vehicles to artillery pieces".

"Outside Ukraine, Azov occupies a central role in a network of extremist groups stretching from California across Europe to **New Zealand**, according to law enforcement officials on three continents.... After the worst such attack in recent years - the massacre of 51 people in **Christchurch**, New Zealand, in 2019 - an arm of the Azov movement helped distribute the terrorist’s raving manifesto, in print and online, seeking to glorify his crimes and inspire others to follow" (emphasis added).

"... The **Christchurch mosque attacker**, who livestreamed the atrocity on Facebook, had been radicalised by far Right material largely on



Azov Battalion

YouTube and Facebook, according to a New Zealand government report released in December 2020. He **had spent time in Ukraine in 2015 and mentioned plans to move to the country permanently**".

"We know that when he was in that part of the world, he was making contact with far-Right groups', says Andrew Little, the Minister responsible for the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service. Little says he does not know if these groups included Azov. But during the attack, **the shooter wore a flak jacket bearing a black sun, the symbol commonly used by the Azov Battalion**" (emphasis added). The Azov Battalion was based in Mariupol, which has been the scene of the heaviest fighting thus far of the Ukraine War.

Mainstream Western media prefers to euphemistically call them “far Right” or “ultra-nationalist” but Shuster’s *Time* article makes clear that they are Nazis and that their malignant and murderous influence stretches all the way from Ukraine around the world, including to Christchurch. Personally, I think the Russians will do the world a favour if they destroy this outfit in the same way that their Red Army predecessors destroyed the original Nazis last century.

No “Winners” In War

To conclude: what Putin did was unforgiveable. Nothing justifies the invasion and attempted conquest of a sovereign nation, inflicting death and destruction in the process. But, as I’ve said, there is plenty to explain why we’re where we are now. As always, the principal victims of

war are civilians, particularly children, who are the innocent parties in it all.

The best outcome we can hope for is for Russia to get out of Ukraine, that the issues between the two neighbours be resolved by diplomacy, and that the US and NATO (and its mates, including New Zealand) butt out. They’re only fanning the flames (and making arms manufacturers rich in the process). The worst-case scenario is that this becomes a stalemate war that drags on years, with accompanying massive death and destruction, as with the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. It has already dragged on since 2014, so I fear that this dramatic 2022 escalation will just make it a larger and more deadly stalemate.

Weblinks:

- 1 <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2022/04/nato-to-help-new-zealand-and-australia-combat-china-s-growing-influence.html>
- 2 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/promises-to-moscow-after-cold-war-come-back-to-haunt-western-powers-b9b0k7dc9#top>
- 3 <https://www.royalcourt.no/nyhet.html?tid=174214&sek=27262>
- 4 <https://www.cfr.org/article/why-israel-has-been-slow-support-ukraine>
- 5 <https://time.com/6144109/russia-ukraine-vladimir-putin-viktor-medvedchuk/>
- 6 <https://time.com/5926750/azov-far-right-movement-facebook/> ■

COUNTERING THE WEAPONISATION OF WORDS, IMAGES & SYMBOLS

The Ukraine Crisis

Compiled with commentary by Dennis Small

"Propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state"¹.

"What is the country with the most war crimes? - Which country is responsible for the most war atrocities against civilians since World War II (WWII)? The United States. By direct military action, the US killed over three million civilians in Indochina, two million in Korea, and 600,000 in the Iraq War thus far"².

"Neither the US nor Russia is a party to the International Criminal Court – and the US punishes other governments for supporting the ICC. Both the US and Russia defy the rulings of the International Court of Justice... Both nations violate treaties at will, including the United Nations (UN) Charter, Kellogg-Briand Pact, and other laws against war"³.

"Now that the Soviet threat has receded (former NATO commander Sir James) Eberle was candid about the role of security pacts like ANZUS within the Western alliance. Such pacts will exist not so much to defend the West from an external threat, he explains, but to serve as platforms for launching forces to ensure our access to key resources in the Third World ... to confront those who do not recognise the norms of civilisation about who should be the haves, and those who should be the have-nots"⁴. Today, NATO's resource war strategy embraces both confrontation with Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, etc., and continued plunder of the poor.

A bit rich for Aussies (& NZ) to complain: "I find it rich that Australia has its nose out of joint over the security pact between the Solomon Islands and China, and claiming the deal

was done in secret... As for the concerns raised by Australia, the US, and NZ about China now having the potential to set up a base because of the deal, isn't that the same argument Russia is making about NATO setting up in Ukraine and China makes about the US having an unofficial base in Taiwan? The answer to these questions is a resounding yes. Naive or not, it is time for imperialism to be consigned to history"⁵.

Australia's then Prime Minister (PM) Scott Morrison declared that a Chinese military base in the Solomon Islands would be a red-line for his country and the US⁶. He said such a base would be "in our region, on our doorstep"⁷. The US warns it would respond. So, war could loom ... Oh, shucks Putin, you silly old guy intervening against the threat of NATO in Ukraine!

Pleasing partners: "Fury, sorrow, frustration. These and many other words display my reaction to the Government sending military equipment to Ukraine. So many thousands of us in the late 70s and early 80s walked and talked peace, culminating in a (Labour) government endorsement of the nuclear free zone movement. Dare I suggest the move to send weaponry is more a need to please our so-called 'partners', Australia and the United States?... As Anzac Day approaches, the rhetoric surrounding wars comes with a huge dose of irony ... wars are continuing, many instigated and upheld by our partners"⁸.

TV1 presenter Wendy Petrie told the channel's audience that the Anzac soldiers died fighting for "freedom"⁹. So, despite all the years since WWI and the historical research done, the myth lives on in our State media that this imperial war between Britain and Germany for world hegemony was actually about democracy!

"No-one listened to us. Listen to us now", Russian President Vladimir Putin¹⁰.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov again gave a blunt dire warning to the West about how the war in Ukraine could escalate into a nuclear war¹¹. He said that NATO's continuing supply of weapons to the Ukrainian regime meant the West and Russia are already at war. But the Biden Administration obviously doesn't care about the nuclear risks and is openly broadcasting its aim

about trying to weaken Russia"¹².

"If we are willing to contemplate nuclear war and the wholesale destruction of our emerging global society, should we not also be willing to contemplate a wholesale restructuring of our societies?"¹³.

"We're approaching the most dangerous point in human history and are now facing the destruction of organised human life on Earth"¹⁴.

What follows – after my fairly fulsome introduction putting things in context – is a series of excerpts from some recent analytical articles and news bulletins (six in total) published online by the leading American peace/anti-nuclear non-government organisation (NGO) – World Beyond War [WBW]¹⁵; and its close associate RootsAction¹⁶. The content of these articles is reproduced in a mixture of both full quotes and my precis. I include some separate comments of mine marked out in each article. Finally, I have a wrap-up extended comment at the end.

The organisations just mentioned above have an ongoing plethora of superb online resource materials, including Web conferencing via Webinars and interactive seminars; video interviews; educational materials; readily accessible articles analysing relevant geopolitics and enjoining appropriate actions, etc., etc. They regularly draw on expert knowledge and experience.

Their programmes, so rich with information and action-oriented projects, can provide the perfect antidote to the endless stream of political Establishment/corporate media crap pouring out about the Ukraine crisis and other Western-engendered crises. All the while, so lamentably, wave on wave of this ongoing warmongering Western rhetoric continues to aggravate potentially dangerous tipping-points into WWII.

"The growing risk of nuclear weapons use puts not just innocent Ukrainians at risk, but threatens the sustainability of the entire planet. War is harming many economically, damaging our natural environment, destroying historical artifacts/art/and centres of culture, displacing millions of people and causing a global refugee crisis, breaking down systems of care, global supply chains, and food systems that might very well cause famine in countries in Af-

rica and other countries – many of which import more than a third of their wheat from Ukraine and Russia”.

“This is on top of the punishments being inflicted on the people of Yemen and Afghanistan¹⁷. *We must act now and say no to all war. We must work to protect our planet from further devastation and destruction. There is nothing good to come of war – not this one and not others*”¹⁸. *Russia out of Ukraine! NATO out of existence!*

WBW Welcomes A New Activist Era

In April 2022, WBW welcomed its new Board President, Kathy Kelly, appointed in March, by featuring her in a Webinar¹⁹. “In the past 30 years, Kathy has lived among ordinary families and children during wars waged by the US and its allies against Iraq, Afghanistan, Gaza, and Lebanon. Her most recent article is entitled: ‘People In Yemen Suffer Atrocities Too’”²⁰.

The silence of the Western media on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, which stems from the barbarism of the Anglo-American axis and its allies, stands as a critical element in a major war crime and human rights violation. Kathy’s approach is encapsulated in a pithy maxim by a fellow activist. “In urging an alternative to war, she quotes Ammon Hennacy, a pacifist anarchist who said: *You can’t be a vegetarian between meals and you can’t be a pacifist between wars*”²¹.

Kathy Kelly is also a coordinator of the Ban Killer Drones campaign, having worked for years to help expose the ugly reality of American operations in countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan. The practice of regular killer drone strikes is institutionalised in the West today as a routine, acceptable form of State terrorism. This practice stands as an ongoing indictment of Western imperial repression of the restless poor even as the pillage continues of their resources.

April 2022 saw the appointment, as well, of WBW Board member and National Coordinator of WBW Aotearoa, New Zealander Liz Remmerswaal, to the position of Vice President alongside new President Kathy Kelly²². Liz is also the NZ Coordinator of the Pacific Peace Network. She was the recipient of the



Sonja Davies Peace Award in 2017.

A Hugely Dangerous Anglo-American Syndrome

Also in April 2022, WBW – besides welcoming its new Board President and Vice President – mounted an inspiring global campaign against the leading agent and manufacturer of killer drone warfare. WBW urged people everywhere to join together to stop the military outrages inflicted on the Earth and its inhabitants by Lockheed Martin, the vampirish transnational corporation (TNC), which “is by far the largest weapons producer in the world. From Ukraine to Yemen, from Palestine to Colombia, from Somalia to Syria, from Afghanistan and West Papua to Ethiopia, no one profits more from war and bloodshed than Lockheed Martin”²³.

This TNC heads the American militarist pack bent on taking us to WWII. It is currently making a killing with its mates out of the war in Ukraine. Lockheed Martin has been integral to the NZ military for many years and plays a big part in servicing infrastructure and logistics. Lockheed Martin is the key corporate in Rocket Lab, another nefarious “space wars” American-owned company, which most ironically enough started up in supposedly “nuclear free” Aotearoa/NZ²⁴. Early on its way, of course, Rocket Lab got a friendly helping-hand from Uncle Sam!

Over the past year or so with the development of the crisis over Ukraine, the potential for stumbling into WWII has only sharply increased. A mistake, miscalculation, confusion, misreading, or misstep in the heat of conflict, or some other blunder could ever so easily result

in all-out war, let alone a deliberately calculated launch of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

NZ State TV And Corporate Media In Mind-Zapped Mode!

NZ’s TV1 has excelled itself in recent months with its “gung-ho” PR spiel and hypocrisy about the US military-industrial complex, NATO²⁵, and the causes of the potentially catastrophic war in the Ukraine. TV1 has long operated as a de facto PR agency for the CIA/Pentagon brigade but it has gone into over-drive in recent times with a continuous warmongering portrayal of the Ukraine War and the international issues swirling around this conflict.

Zombie TV1 reporters regularly give potted updates on the course of this most distressing war. But the outlandish hypocrisy paraded by these reporters reached the high-point of very black comedy on the 30th April. Reporter Simon Mercep and crew actually deemed fit to present a Pentagon spokesperson, John Kirby, apparently choking up with outraged emotion about Russia’s brutality in its invasion of Ukraine²⁶. Kirby accused Putin of the utmost “depravity”!

This was not just another case of the pot calling the kettle black. Here we had a representative of the blood-soaked horror story that is the Pentagon pontificating about the cruelty of an enemy. This is simply surreal! In early 2003, Pentagon spokespeople were revelling in the “shock and awe” pounding Baghdad and other places in Iraq, as the first stage of the illegal US invasion got under way.

The first casualty of war is truth and this syndrome has been evident on

both sides of the Ukraine War but to think that a Pentagon spokesman could be genuinely upset about “collateral damage” except from a self-serving perspective just beggars all belief. US/NATO outrageously instigated this war and now shed crocodile tears over it! Again, it is yet another example of how propagandistic and brain-dead our media are. PR specialist John Kirby, a retired rear admiral and a former front-person for the Obama Administration, was so obviously hamming it up on stage.

Yet, with mind-numbing stupidity and suicidal death wish, the Western corporate and State mainstream media continue to whip up the war in Ukraine with outfits like America's CBS and the UK's BBC to the fore. The end of April 2022 was the cut-off point for my article and by this time events were escalating dangerously in the Ukraine conflict. The world desperately needs genuine peacemaking initiatives to end the horrible human cost and help stabilise the whole region.

As noted in a media reference at the start of my article, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov again warned the West about the mounting nuclear dangers that could explode out of the Ukraine War²⁷. In interviews, Lavrov has signalled plainly that the risk of WWIII is “serious, and real”. Putin similarly signalled that any outside intervention in Ukraine would elicit a “lightning fast response”. But the crazy, evil Biden Administration, which deliberately provoked this crisis, is willing to up the ante in a compounding, horrendously perilous situation instead of engaging in truly meaningful negotiations for peace.

Geopolitical Machinations Go Into Meltdown!

Right from the start, Russia showed its disappointment and anger about NATO's advance into Eastern Europe. Its concerns grew. Finally, the nuclear dangers were very starkly illuminated in President Putin's annual speech to his nation in early 2018²⁸. By this date, Putin felt that Russia was well armed enough to face down the seemingly superior US/NATO nuclear and conventional arsenals.

“For the first time, Putin claimed that Russia had successfully tested nuclear-propulsion engines that would allow nuclear-tipped cruise missiles

and underwater drones to travel for virtually unlimited distances and evade traditional defences”²⁹. Ever since the “Star Wars” fantasies of the Reagan era in the 1980s the US has been trying to develop missile defence systems aimed at destroying incoming Russian missiles. This violent celestial fantasy was around even soon after the end of WWII.

“Technical studies completed during the year,’ the Chief of Staff of the Air Force wrote in his annual report for 1957, ‘confirmed the reasonable expectation that before too long it will be possible to produce devices capable of destroying missiles in flight”³⁰. Then later we had Reagan's “Star Wars” in the 1980s, giving this fantasy a big boost for the military-industrial complex.

The fantasy still flies to some extent. Reagan's “Star Wars”- Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) - is fundamental to the research and development of space weapons a la Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Rocket Lab, etc.³¹ Despite the doctrine of mutual deterrence, nuclear war-fighting strategy and tactics continue to be refined to the hilt according to the technology available.

But all this kind of thing led Russia to innovate in response. President Putin's March 2018 speech laid out progress to date. “Putin made clear that his declaration of Russian prowess was aimed squarely at the US, which he accused of fomenting a new arms race by resisting arms-control negotiations, developing new missile-defence systems, and adopting a more aggressive posture in its nuclear strategy. He said the US had failed to take seriously Russia's strengths”³².

“Putin said that Pentagon plans announced last month (by the Trump Administration) to introduce two new types of nuclear weapons and broaden scenarios for their use ‘provoke great concern”³³. His confrontational speech came amidst “mounting US-Russian tensions, which have been rising since the Ukraine crisis erupted four years ago”³⁴.

Since the heyday of the Reagan era, American posturing on anti-missile systems has evolved to project a more moderate stance. The current spiel is that missile defence is only intended for use in limited situations like a North Korean attack targeting certain US cities. But, in

fact, the fantasy has always persisted – and so have the projects – of developing even more comprehensive and powerful systems capable of at least blowing away as many missiles as possible in all-out war with Russia or China; or as more likely all the time – *war with both countries together!*

The Mind-Blowing Hypocritical Arrogance Of The West

The stinking malicious hypocrisy is evident enough in the simple exercise of imagining the nuclear-armed Russians at America's “backdoor” as in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, let alone the bloody record of US invasions, attacks, and interventions all around the globe! Russia's horrible invasion of Ukraine was blatantly provoked by the US/NATO brigade. And this was done despite all the glaring risks of trying to prise Ukraine out of its long historically embedded position within Russia's orbit of influence and association. Ironically, Kyiv has even been known as “the mother-city of Russia”!

Let Indian author Arundhati Roy set the international background. In rubbishing three Official Reasons given by the Indian government for developing its own nuclear bomb, Roy took up the theme of hypocrisy and dished it out all round. “The three Official Reasons given (for the bomb were): China, Pakistan, and Exposing Western Hypocrisy”³⁵.

After dealing to the first two reasons, she moves on to “the third Official Reason: *Exposing Western Hypocrisy – how much more exposed can they be? Which decent human being on Earth harbours any illusions about it?* (my emphasis). These are people whose histories are spongy with the blood of others. Colonialism, apartheid, slavery, ethnic cleansing, germ warfare, chemical weapons – they virtually invented it all”.

“They have plundered nations, snuffed out civilisations, exterminated entire populations. They stand on the world's stage stark naked but entirely unembarrassed, because they know that they have more money, more food, and bigger bombs than anyone else. They know they can wipe us out in the course of an ordinary working day. Personally, I'd say it is more arrogance than hypocrisy”³⁶.

These days, we see this Western hypocritical arrogance of power paraded on the world stage over the gathering crisis in the Ukraine. The US and its allies have succeeded in burying all their war crimes, and most outrageously those since the launch of the ongoing State terrorist “War on Terror”. But the air is blue with US-orchestrated charges of alleged Russian war crimes, even genocide. And, besides all their parroting of Pentagon/CIA propaganda, the media chime in by doing their very best to enhance the anti-Putin and anti-Russian themes by hyping these up as much as they can. The BBC, CBS, etc., constantly portray to the maximum the suffering of civilians while gloating ghoulishly over the Russian dead and their wrecked equipment.

Imploding “International Rules”!

Meantime, the US-dominated West continues to manipulate the UN and its agencies on charges of Russian atrocities. This parallels what it has done to date in covering up its own illegal mass slaughter and harm of civilians throughout the Middle East and elsewhere. Yes, any alleged Russian war crimes should certainly be investigated, and likewise any perpetrated by the neo-fascist headed Ukrainian forces and the US-contrived puppet Zelenskyy regime. But this totally one-sided version of human rights must cease if any so-called “international rules order” is to gain respect. Past and ongoing Western war crimes and human rights abuses must also be held to proper and due process of law.

In fact, the real underlying mission of the US-contrived globalist programme is to try and replace the UN with NATO, at least for all effective purposes. History makes clear that the UN has long been a burden and constraint for the American foreign policy Establishment. To face down and defeat enemies Russia and China and all its other opponents, the US wants to rule through the military fist and fiat of NATO's power projection and prescriptions for international order as defined according to Washington.

Law Professor Philippe Sands has carefully documented such perfidy in what has been hailed as: “A corroborating account of how the Bush and Blair administrations (were) breaking the law and trying to rewrite the rules...”³⁷. Sands covered a range of issues – from the Anglo-

American protection of the ruthless ex-dictator of Chile, Augusto Pinochet, to the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003; and from the “legal black hole” of “Guantánamo” prison to the “terrorists and torturers” of imperial enforcement³⁸. Such again is the hypocritical arrogance of Anglo-American and European power now being paraded more boldly than ever!

Concocting Capitalist Crap To Camouflage Crimes

On the 9th March 2022, the NZ government passed into law an Act imposing sanctions on Russia³⁹. Parliament unanimously enacted this Bill. Our Government declared that: “New Zealand unequivocally condemns the Putin regime's brutal and intolerable invasion of Ukraine. It is an *unprovoked* (my emphasis), illegal and entirely avoidable tragedy’ Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said”; this allegation was repeated in an e-mail letter from the Minister to me, dated 21 March.

Ever since the Bronze Age, humans have pursued their tribalist politics and self-serving rationalisations for mass violence, however expressed. But it is certainly stunning now in the West with all its sophisticated education and knowledge systems, that the political hard Right rules so comprehensively in the public arena on foreign policy issues. This is so despite the glaring contradictions of fact and the documented record of history to date about the malign, hugely hypocritical politics involved.

When it comes to the real crunch, NZ is very much a servile, gutless vassal state of the Anglo-American empire, subject to its dictates and especially those of the “Five Eyes” intelligence/covert action club. Any posturing on the part of NZ about international principles and human rights is badly compromised as our long complicity in Five Eyes’ war crimes and human rights abuse stands grim testimony.

Make no mistake, our far from internationally progressive Labour government – *as recently so dramatically demonstrated!* – is locking us into the resource wars and final holocaust that capitalist economic global growth must eventually and inevitably ensure⁴⁰. *Most distressingly, there is so little resistance now to what is pretty well a political consensus on the road to Hell as Freud's “death instinct” reigns!*

A hidden agenda driven by the American power elite has been long growing and spreading from deep roots. Douglas Valentine describes “The War On Terror As The Greatest Covert Op Ever”⁴¹. In spouting Pentagon/CIA propaganda on the Ukraine conflict, the mass media have ironically taken this “covert op” to new depths of fake news, lies and disinformation.

“But if one looks behind the suffocating cloak of secrecy, censorship and propaganda that surrounds the Government's unstated policies, an entirely different story emerges about deliberate war crimes against humanity, committed on a massive scale”⁴². From Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan, and from Latin America to Ukraine, Valentine documents these war crimes in damning detail⁴³.

Tribalist Propaganda And Psychological Warfare

“Selling the great American myth is as easy as selling the war on Iraq (*or today on Ukraine!*)...”⁴⁴. Capitalism always promises something better but the “structural violence” at the heart of it means vicious exploitation of the many by the few and the relentless imperial march to more war. “In dirty wars like the ones in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, killing (so-called) ‘High Value’ targets almost always means murdering them while they are at home, or while travelling with their families. Despite the spin, it is official, if unstated, policy, for the killing of a nation's leaders, along with their entire families, (that this policy) has a devastating psychological warfare impact on the rest of society”⁴⁵.

“The mainstream US news media plays along by never citing this central fact of US dirty wars. The killing of civilians is always dismissed as accidental, and is always accompanied by a routine apology from some anonymous US spokesperson, whose facts cannot be challenged because they are classified, and, it is said, to release them might put Americans at risk (of being tried for war crimes). Most of all, killing important leaders along with their families makes it easier to buy their vacated property at 10% of its value – always a perk for American geologists and the US occupation army's corporate camp followers”⁴⁶.

“Though US media treat CIA⁴⁷ and military commanders as honorable

'warriors' doing the hard work necessary to protect America, the truth is that they are no less savage than William the Conqueror or the ISIS militants demonised for atrocities. Both spread terror by killing their enemies, dismembering bodies and inflicting death and cruelty on non-combatants as well. One needs only to see the bodies mutilated by missiles fired from drones or helicopter gunships" (viz. the joy of Prince Harry & co.).

Douglas Valentine, who has systematically and exhaustively researched the surveillance and death squad operations of the CIA's Phoenix Operation in Vietnam, warns that this model of repression has very ominous implications for the implementation of similar repression both internationally and domestically⁴⁸. As some have long asserted, the neo-fascist dimension of America's foreign policy is creeping back into the Homeland as divisions sharpen both overseas and domestically.

Hyping Up The Hypocrisy Of Western Geopolitics

Over many years of monitoring and analysing the NZ mainstream media, just a branch of the Anglo-American set, I have come to gain a most hearty contempt for their self-serving subservience on geopolitics. This media subscribes eagerly to the prescriptive political agenda of the presiding Western power elite. Corporate editors ensure that the conformity of censorship and outright propaganda, overwhelmingly in line with American hegemony, prevails above all considerations of truth, integrity, and honesty. *TV1, TV3, and Prime TV dance nowadays on the Pentagon/CIA's puppet strings!*

Our Government's claim that the

Russian invasion of Ukraine was "unprovoked" is indeed an egregiously outrageous lie! NZ is simply echoing here President Biden in the most grovelling conformity to the US/NATO drive towards the final Holocaust. It is willingly embracing suicidal resource wars on the downward curve of evolutionary overshoot. Both Government and Parliament have affirmed this absurd lie although the NZ Māori Party (Te Paati Māori) to its credit did voice certain reservations given the Western record.

The accusation of "unprovoked" serves to further demonise Putin's government as the evil enemy so necessary for the momentum of the US military-industrial complex while exonerating those brazenly guilty of provoking a most dangerous conflict. If this in no way justifies the loathsome Russian invasion, the real warmongers are still running rampant as a rapidly mounting threat to all of humankind. The causes of this conflict have to be fully accounted for, and all those responsible held to proper account.

As stressed above, one has only to think about how things would be if the roles of the US and Russia were reversed to get a sense of the enormous hypocrisy, predatory militarism, and utter stupidity at work. Like the rest of Five Eyes, NZ is steeped in foreign policy hypocrisy, short-sighted self-interest, and locked on track for WWII in a dead-end heat with both Russia and China in the struggle for global supremacy.

But, again, hypocrisy is very much a long-deeply embedded syndrome in the imperial West, and especially in the Anglo-American axis and its Five Eyes club. Recently, this has been starkly illustrated by the con-

cern expressed by both Australia and NZ about the possibility of a Chinese military base taking shape in the Solomon Islands. Now the Solomon Islands are 3,280km away from Australia, and 3,763km from Aotearoa/NZ, whereas nuclear-armed US/NATO's intention is to drive right up to Russia's border! *If all this were not so horrendously ominous, it would be the stuff of black comedy!!*

William Longhurst, a reporter for State-owned TV1, presented an item around the end of March 2022 which highlighted how NZ PM Jacinda Ardern is "gravely concerned" about the possibility of Chinese forces and ships in our region of the Southwest Pacific⁴⁹. Similarly, Australia's then PM Scott Morrison warned about growing "pressure and threats" in our region, with Ardern adding that there is "no need for such expansion" as shown by the Chinese⁵⁰. *Ditto NATO, eh?!* Gerry Brownlee, the National Party's foreign affairs spokesperson, also weighed in, calling for more relevant action on the part of our Government.

Geopolitical Gaming

Jacinda Ardern & co. have continued to bang on about their concerns regarding the Solomons-China deal in ways that only highlight the absolute hypocrisy shown towards Russia's reaction to the advance of US/NATO and their nuclear weaponry to its very back door. Ironically, NZ PM Ardern is quite unembarrassed by proclaiming that the southwest Pacific is "our backyard" in her criticism of the pact formed between China and the Solomons⁵¹.

So, get this – our Government, its Five Eyes' mates, and the media have rattled on with unashamed angst about the Solomons-China pact for causing concern in our own backyard. Yet in their eminently "double-think" fashion they have dismissed Russia's long-expressed worries about the threatening advance of nuclear-armed NATO against the motherland, a land subject historically to several invasions from the West.

Back in mid-2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin "accused Ukraine's leader of handing over the running of his country to the US and Europe⁵². And, of course, Putin was right on the mark in light of the record to date. "He said he saw little



point in meeting President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to discuss the fighting in eastern Ukraine ... (Since): Key issues for Ukraine are not resolved in Kyiv, but in Washington and to a certain extent in Berlin and Paris⁵³. Zelenskyy, who has been made into a hero by Western propaganda, is just another American puppet ruler, quite prepared to sacrifice his own country and a host of his own people for US/NATO objectives. But naturally the bloody battleground is being fought over in the name of independence, sovereignty, and freedom!

Meanwhile, in an absurd, if unwitting instance of self-satire, the US State Department - a key driver of NATO's warmongering growth - has also indicated its worries about security in the southwest Pacific and beyond with special reference to developments in the Solomons. *American-led efforts to try and surround and contain China are backfiring badly it seems!*

Our PM in her criticism of the Solomons-China deal has said she is concerned that this "new defence pact will lead to an increasing militarisation of the Pacific"⁵⁴. For sure, we need to roll back such militarisation across the Pacific as far as possible but NZ has just celebrated signing a defence pact with Fiji - an agreement so very clearly aimed at China!⁵⁵

Moreover, the PM's recent trip to Singapore and Japan was also targeted at China to a marked degree, loudly signalled by the signing of a new intelligence/security agreement with Japan⁵⁶. All the while, too, US, Japanese, and other Western diplomats have been practically falling over themselves in their rush to get to the Solomons!

The US has openly warned it would "respond" to the establishment of a military base there⁵⁷. So, the geopolitical interactive gaming goes on with all its associated hypocritical posturing... Evidently, the supposedly free, independent and sovereign nation of the Solomon Islands cannot choose its own future⁵⁸.

NZ's ASW Doomsday Pact In The Battle For The Pacific

These days, NZ is beefing up its traditional war-fighting role in the Pacific. In a ground-breaking article in the first series of *Peace Researcher* (PR) - the historic series as we call

it - founder/Editor Keith Burgess revealed to the NZ public the existence of the then top secret Five Eyes agreement, known at the time as the UKUSA Agreement⁵⁹. As Burgess noted, Canada is also a UKUSA/Five Eyes member. His article received some very appreciative international feedback and it was certainly the most important piece published in PR's historic series.

Among the far-reaching tentacles of Five Eyes so far as it involves AotearoaNZ is how this intelligence pact relates to our military role in the Pacific. NZ's small fleet of Lockheed Martin P-3 Orions in the 1980s had surveillance and anti-submarine (ASW) equipment and were tasked with matching duties when on patrol. The aircraft were updated early on in the decade by Boeing with a bespoke "sophisticated and unique system"⁶⁰. They exercised regularly with other Western allies. Burgess went on to explicate this point. "In fact, Ocean Surveillance and ASW has become something of a specialty and a source of national pride to the services"⁶¹. The NZ Ministry of Defence boasted about its success in ASW competitions with the other Five Eyes partners.

In a "Comment: First Strike And Anti-Submarine Warfare: Has New Zealand A Role To Play?", in the same issue of PR, I drew attention to the then National government's brain-numbing praise for the Reagan Administration's nuclear arms build-up⁶². This NZ government actually lavished special praise on the highly controversial super-accurate MX missile, designed as an ultimate first strike weapon and, so, correspondingly known in typical Orwellian "Pentagonese" as the "Peacekeeper"⁶³.

I pointed out the constant bid for super-accurate weaponry is fundamental to nuclear first strike and war-fighting, and that NZ's ASW was an integral, if small, element in a far wider strategy⁶⁴. Although some MX missiles came to be duly stationed, the MX project itself was thankfully scrapped altogether in the end. But the whole enterprise exacted another exorbitant arms cost from the American taxpayer, let alone delivering a further blow to peacemaking as the Pentagon's nuclear war-fighting/first strike strategy carried on.

A longer and more detailed exposition on ASW, "New Zealand's

Doomsday Commitment: Anti-Submarine Warfare"⁶⁵, allowed me to elaborate on this subject. During the 1980s, the looming potential enemy was the Soviet Navy with the US-led ASW forces focused on tracking and being ready to kill Russian submarines as quick as possible in the event of war. In the third decade of the third millennium and beyond, both Chinese and Russian navies will be in the Western firing-line, and vice versa!

The Contradictions And Contortions Of Capitalist Geopolitics Grind On

By the second decade of this millennium, the Orion ASW aircraft were wearing out. In late 2018, Keith Locke observed how: "It is in the Pacific that NZ is getting more directly involved on the side of the Western alliance, and upsetting China, despite China being our main trading partners"⁶⁶.

Locke outlined our increasing military involvement in the US-led war-fighting machine: "We can expect further such integration into US operations as a result of the new equipment now being procured by the NZ Defence Force" with the announcement of the \$2.3 billion purchase of four Boeing-manufactured Poseidon P-8A planes, "optimised to detect and fight submarines - read Chinese submarines. Big play was made of how the surveillance systems, communications platforms and weapons targeting systems on the P8s would be interoperable with similar planes purchased by the US and Australian navies"⁶⁷. *Yes, folks, Doomsday is only a flight away!*

China is now regularly portrayed as a looming threat as well a valued trading partner. The ugly black humour of it all is lost on our mostly very conventional politicians. Yet another irony is that the Defence Department has been playing down at times the ASW capabilities of the new P8 aircraft and this fleet's war-fighting role. For example, a Ministry of Defence report "Advancing Pacific Partnerships 2019" did not mention ASW at all, and instead stressed the positive aspects as the Ministry defined them.

It declared that: "The P-8A will bring enhanced capability to the roles performed by the Orions such as contributing to the international rules-based order through peace and security operations, search and res-

cue, disaster response, resource and border protection, and environmental and marine resource monitoring in New Zealand, the Pacific, and beyond”⁶⁸.

Like Australia, under US tutelage, NZ is starting to hook into drone and other high-tech methods for improved surveillance, again clearly so much directed at China. The report states: “In addition, the Government is also considering options, such as smaller crewed aircraft, Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems and satellites, for an air surveillance capability to complement the P-8As”⁶⁹. Even between the lines in this report, we can see the sub-text of NZ ASW being integrated into the further development of the Five Eyes’ club.

Resurgent NATO Inflaming Five Eyes!

Further afield, NZ is getting closer to NATO. Robert Kaplan, another notorious American war hawk, promoted a future role for NATO in the Pacific when writing back in the early 2000s⁷⁰. NATO was not relevant at the time and so he played up the role of the US Pacific Command (PACOM) in trying to surround and contain China to the strongest degree possible⁷¹. But he hoped for the revival of NATO.

To be sure, Kaplan even wanted a future role for NATO in the Pacific and hoped it could be activated by the new Cold War in this region – “indeed, the re-emergence of NATO as an indispensable war-fighting instrument should be America’s unswerving aim”⁷². Robert Kaplan, like so many of his ilk, thinks that some sort of stability can be maintained even in conditions of growing confrontation⁷³.

With China expanding its diesel and nuclear-powered submarine fleet, Kaplan says that: “The management of risk will become a governing ideology”⁷⁴. Hence the recent advent on the Pacific scene of AUKUS – the new nuclear-powered submarine programme between Australia, United Kingdom and the US! In reality, the so-called “management of risk” just means an escalating interactive dynamic of weapons technology and related strategy.

It can be said that, overall, the general shape of Robert Kaplan’s advocacy for future American and allied militarisation of the Pacific has

come to fruition. After all, Kaplan has been one of the leading lights (or rather agents of darkness!) within the Pentagon’s PR team. He called for a network of allies and hubs/bases to deter China’s expansionism from Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, India, Australia, and NZ, as well as far-flung elsewhere. So, his advocated strategy is like NATO’s in Europe, with the difference that NATO has been advancing on Russia while China is striving to reach out and needs containment.

NZ has obligingly fitted in with the new US/NATO imperatives. It has been an agent in the Western programme to try and undermine Russian society⁷⁵. Besides imposing sanctions on Russia at the behest of its militarist allies, NZ has sent troops to help out with NATO logistics in Europe and is sending military equipment as part of the Western geopolitical attack on Russia⁷⁶. By the end of April 2022, NZ had committed 67 personnel and contributed \$300 million to the anti-Russian cause.

As US-allied history overwhelmingly demonstrates, people are just so much convenient cannon fodder. Defending Ukraine and fostering democracy there is just utter bullshit in the greater geopolitical scheme of things! Meantime, PM Jacinda Ardern is proud to say that NZ is not neutral Switzerland. But the Government’s Five Eyes’ aligned hypocrisy is stark and raw! It has even joined in the campaign to get the International Criminal Court (ICC) to carry out “an investigation into Russian war crimes”⁷⁷. All the while, the bloody war crimes of Five Eyes go on swirling down the drain into the Orwellian memory-hole! Such is the course of Western realpolitik.

Creating The Conditions For War And Growing Conflict

The following excerpts give context and substance to the damningly guilty enterprise of the US/NATO in fomenting the portentous conflict in Eastern Europe, a programme worked up and cultivated over many years; and ever so predictably set from the very start to usher in WWII unless the people of the world can mobilise and intervene in time for peace: (Note: as indicated at the very start of my article the following excerpts are a mixture of full quotes and my precis).

(a) “How The US Started A Cold War With Russia And Left Ukraine To Fight It”

In this WBW article (8/3/22), CODEPINK analysts Medea Benjamin and Nicolas JS Davies point to “the role of the US and NATO in setting the stage for this crisis. *President Biden has called the Russian invasion ‘unprovoked’, but that is far from the truth*” (my emphasis). As Benjamin & Davies expound: In particular in recent times, cease-fire violations had been mounting in Eastern Ukraine, with “most inside the de facto borders of the Donetsk (DPR) and Luhansk (LPR) People’s Republics (comprising much of the Donbass region), consistent with incoming shell-fire by Ukrainian government forces.”

The Anglo-American axis kept citing so many as Russian-perpetrated “false-flag” incidents (faked enemy attacks giving excuses for armed intervention to the fakers), clearly using this ploy in turn as propaganda camouflage for its own purposes. (*My Comment*: “False flag” operations [ops], a type of covert action so long practised by US agencies round the world, suddenly became a trendy mainstream media term applied to alleged Russian “ops” in Donbass. The exact truth was hard to determine in the fog of war).

“In the larger context, though, Ukraine has become an unwitting victim and proxy in the resurgent US Cold War against Russia and China, in which the US has surrounded both countries with military forces and offensive weapons, withdrawn from a whole series of arms control treaties, and refused to negotiate resolutions to national security concerns raised by Russia”.

The US/NATO brigade cavalierly rejected Russia’s reasonable requests, above all the simple demand that NATO would not accept Ukraine as a new member. Although the West had the very sensible and practical option of making a deal to create a neutral buffer state mutually guaranteed by both sides, it instead chose the worst-case scenario for ushering in WWII – *provoke a war right on the rival’s border!*

The neutral buffer state option would have been an eminently good peacekeeping pact for everyone. But Biden and NATO obviously had other ideas. As analysts Benjamin

and Davies so pointedly remark: the US/NATO rejection of Russia's proposals demonstrated the little value that Biden & Co. put on Ukrainian lives. No American lives have been at risk. What is so very obvious is that the US/NATO are prepared to use the Ukrainian people for both strategic and propaganda purposes!

NATO's Nasty Nutty Nabobs And Their Nuclear Strategy

NATO has lived on beyond the Cold War "as a dangerous, out-of-control military alliance dedicated mainly to expanding its sphere of operations and justifying its own existence" (my emphasis). It has expanded from 16 countries in 1991 to a total of 30 countries today, incorporating most of Eastern Europe, at the same time as it has committed aggressive bombings of civilians and other war crimes⁷⁸.

"In 1999, NATO launched an illegal war to militarily carve out an independent Kosovo from the remnants of Yugoslavia. NATO air-strikes during the Kosovo War killed hundreds of civilians, and its leading ally in the war, Kosovo President Hashim Thaci, is now on trial at the Hague for the appalling war crimes he committed under the cover of NATO bombing – including cold-blooded murders of hundreds of prisoners to sell their internal organs on the international transplant market⁷⁹. And a bit later on, the writers observe that: "Far from the North Atlantic, NATO joined the US in its 20-year war in Afghanistan, and then attacked and destroyed Libya in 2011, leaving behind a failed state, a continuing refugee crisis, and violence and chaos across the region"⁸⁰.

To elaborate on some past events: "In 1991, as part of a Soviet agreement to accept the reunification of East and West Germany, Western leaders assured their Soviet counterparts that they would not expand NATO any closer to Russia than the border of a united Germany. US Secretary of State James Baker promised that NATO would not advance 'one inch' beyond the German border. The West's broken promises are spelled out for all to see in 30 declassified documents published on the National Security Archive Website"⁸¹.

"After expanding across Eastern Europe and waging wars in (Yugoslavia), Afghanistan, and Libya, NATO has predictably come full circle to



Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, right, and US Secretary of State James Baker, 1991

once again see Russia as its principal enemy. US nuclear weapons are now based in five NATO countries in Europe: Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Turkey, while France and the UK already have their own nuclear arsenals. US 'missile defence' systems, which could be converted to fire offensive missiles are based in Poland and Romania, including at a base in Poland only 100 miles from the Russian border⁸².

Ramping Up The Nuclear Risks!

"Trump withdrew from the 1988 INF Treaty (Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty) under which both sides agreed not to deploy short-or-intermediate range nuclear missiles in Europe"⁸³. This withdrawal goes along with the fate of the 1972 ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty, the 2015 JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) with Iran, and the 1994 Agreed Framework with North Korea.

Note that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the new UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are being systematically undermined by the policies and actions of the US/NATO brigade. Peoples of the Earth must unite across the planet in opposition to war. The survival of humankind depends on it!⁸⁴.

(b) "The High Stakes Of The US-Russia Confrontation Over Ukraine"

In an earlier article (22/11/21), CODEPINK analysts Medea Benjamin and Nicholas JS Davies set the current conflict in Ukraine in a context that further reveals the perfidy of US/NATO. Benjamin and Davies described how the DPR and LPR,

which declared their independence in the Donbass region "in response to the US-backed coup in Ukraine in 2014, have once again become flashpoints in the intensifying Cold War between the US and Russia".

"The US and NATO appear to be fully supporting a new Government offensive against these Russian-backed enclaves, which could quickly escalate into a full-blown international military conflict. The last time this area became an international tinder-box was in April (2021), when the anti-Russian Government of Ukraine threatened an offensive against Donetsk and Luhansk, and Russia assembled thousands of troops along Ukraine's eastern border on that occasion. Ukraine and NATO blinked and called off the offensive"⁸⁵.

(My Comment: But US Secretary of State Antony Blinken & co. bided their time, sucking Russia into the Ukrainian morass early in 2022 in US/NATO's plan B! Plan A was to incorporate Ukraine into NATO and so position first strike nuclear weapons at will on the Russian border. Plan B is to try and weaken and destabilise Russia itself by undermining Putin's government per war in neighbouring Ukraine. By late April 2022, this US-orchestrated strategy, which includes our own NZ government, was gaining even more traction, pumping as much heavy weaponry into Ukraine as possible, and to Hell with its land and people!).

Writing back in November, 2021, Benjamin and Davies went on to record how Russia had boosted up its Army to a total of 90,000 troops near its border with Ukraine, and

posed the question as to whether Ukraine and NATO would “press ahead at the risk of war with Russia?”⁸⁶. As they expound further: “Since April (2021), the US and its allies have been stepping up their military support for Ukraine. Total military aid to the Ukraine since the US-backed coup in 2014 amounts to \$US2.5 billion. Turkey is supplying Ukraine with the same drones it provided to Azerbaijan for its war with Armenia over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020” – a war which killed at least 6,000 people⁸⁷.

Cranking Up Violent Conflict!

As the authors also pertinently noted at the time: “The ratcheting up of US and NATO support for Government forces in Ukraine's civil war is having ever worsening diplomatic consequences”⁸⁸. And this was despite the fact that the Minsk Accords 2014-15 “include a ban on offensive military operations and a promise of greater autonomy for Donetsk and Luhansk (Russian-speaking self-proclaimed republics) within Ukraine”⁸⁹. But US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on October 18, 2021, “reiterating US support for Ukraine's future membership of NATO, promising further military support and blaming Russia for ‘perpetuating the war in eastern Ukraine’”⁹⁰.

President Joe Biden's openly and unashamedly proclaimed “aggressive” (my emphasis - see also “‘Killer’ Putin To Pay For Meddling, Says Biden”, *Press*, 19/3/21) foreign policy “is now widely acknowledged to have instead brought US relations with Russia and China to all-time lows”⁹¹. His Administration has whipped up geopolitical aggression “designed for domestic consumption” as well in time-honoured fashion (to try and unify America's increasingly splintering society against an array of common enemies).

“What we are watching in Ukraine, Syria, Taiwan, and the South China Sea are the opening salvos of an age of more ideological wars that may well be just as futile, deadly, and self-defeating as the ‘war on terror’ and much more dangerous to the US. A war with Russia or China would risk escalating into WWII. Challenged on their own borders, both Russia and China would have more at stake than the US and be prepared to escalate fast”⁹².

The authors consider one possible scenario: “So what would the US do if it was losing a major war with Russia or China? (*Or both!*?). US nuclear weapons policy has always kept a ‘first strike’ option open in case of precisely this scenario”⁹³. And, of course, the reverse applies in a scenario where either Russia or China were losing a major war with the US, there could be a ready resort to nuclear arms on the part of these rival powers.

“The current \$US1.7 trillion plan for a whole range of new nuclear weapons therefore seems to be a response to the reality that the US cannot expect to defeat Russia and China in conventional wars on their own borders”⁹⁴. But the obvious fact looms that nuclear weapons would pretty well wipe out everyone! “Neither Obama, Trump, nor Biden has dared to present their reasons for risking WWII over Ukraine or Taiwan to the American public because there is no good reason. Risking a nuclear holocaust to appease the military-industrial complex is as insane as destroying the climate and the natural world to appease the fossil fuel industry”⁹⁵.

Constantly Fuelling The War Machine

“Three decades after declaring victory in the Cold War, and after the self-inflicted chaos of the US's ‘Global War on Terror’, US military planners have settled on a new Cold War as the most persuasive pretext to perpetuate their trillion-dollar war machine and their unattainable ambition to dominate the entire planet”⁹⁶. And, so it goes... “*But the very nature of a Cold War is that it involves the threat and use of force, overt and covert, to contest the political allegiances and economic structure of countries across the world*” (my emphasis). And a Cold War can so very easily become a *Hot War!*

“In the old Cold War, each country had a pretty clear sense of its rival's ‘red lines’. What makes the new Cold War and today's world even more dangerous than the world of the 1950s or the 1980s is that recent US leaders have cavalierly jettisoned the bilateral nuclear treaties and vital diplomatic relationships that their grandparents forged to stop the Cold War from turning into a hot one”⁹⁷.

(*My Comment:* Prior to his invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Putin

had already made clear that the imminent threat of US/NATO entering into Ukraine was tantamount to crossing a red line. There was a clear and present danger. The attempted Western march right up to Russia's borders in this land has now hugely inflamed the situation, both for eastern Europe and for the rest of the world. As a consequence, Putin and Lavrov have been continually posting nuclear warnings to their brain-dead, zombie enemies!⁹⁸.)

(c) “With the Threat Of Nuclear War Heightened By The Invasion of Ukraine, Now Is The Time to Stand Up For Peace”

(Joseph Es-sertier, Coordinator of Japan for WBW, 16/3/22).

“All empires will eventually collapse. Someday, maybe soon, the US empire will collapse as well. That empire has been the dominant world power for the last 100 years. Some have called this phenomenon the ‘American Century’. Others say it has been a ‘unipolar’ world in which both the economy and politics have revolved around the US government ...”⁹⁹.

“Having gained global hegemony, the US government and US corporations made plans to maintain and expand this power. Many American elites gained great international prestige, and many wealthy and powerful people became greedy for power. NATO was planned as a means of maintaining their wealth and power ... What is NATO? Noam Chomsky calls it ‘*an intervention force run by the US*’¹⁰⁰ [my emphasis].

“During the Cold War, the US military-industrial complex grew to enormous proportions and many wealthy Americans flocked to the Pentagon's ‘easy money’. The US government, addicted to acquiring wealth through war, developed a new plan to control the world's energy system, including gas pipelines”¹⁰¹. So, they kept NATO going as a capitalist ‘gangster-group’. In line with support for all the other neo-fascist forces that the US has cultivated and protected over decades, today's media pervert the reality of US/NATO defending ‘neo-Nazi forces’ in Ukraine”¹⁰². All in the name of freedom of course!¹⁰³.

(d) RootsAction's Ukraine Crisis Webinar (an online panel discussion)

In a RootsAction interactive video

conference in early February 2022, a panel of peace activists and well experienced experts exchanged views on the nature and implications of the Ukraine crisis. Norman Solomon, the Director of RootsAction, warned how after the defeat of Hillary Clinton by Donald Trump in 2016, the strategy for the American Democrat Party has been to blame the Russians. *Most ominously, we are currently heading to nuclear war! This constitutes the overarching reality of where we are now!*

Katrina van den Heuvel, publisher, part-owner, and former editor of the *Nation* and also – most interestingly enough – a member of the Establishment Council on Foreign Relations, as well as a columnist of the *Washington Post*, observed how NATO expansion had grown during the past couple of decades. The US had bet it could roll over Russia forever. But we now faced the danger of “geo-politicising” the civil war in Ukraine. President Putin is not the aggressor (*at least not in any way until he felt sufficiently provoked into invading Ukraine!*). She expressed disgust at the wars conducted by the so-called “liberal world order”.

Ann Wright, a former US colonel, diplomat, and author, lamented, in turn, the fact how a lot of armchair warriors were driving the current crisis, and how this was all so self-reinforcing. An invited representative of the Russian Military Sciences Academy stressed the threat posed by the continuing build-up of Ukrainian forces vis-a-vis Donbass.

The Bases Of Militarist Belligerence

Acting chairperson of the panel, David Swanson, emphasised correspondingly how military bases have defined the Western international rules-defined order and who dictates the rules. The US has some 750-800 military bases worldwide (including four in NZ!) compared with Russia's couple of dozen. In sync with the reality of this militarist outreach, there was not a single voice for peace in the American mainstream media.

Norman Solomon added that alternative viewpoints have been almost totally excluded. So-called “Russiagate” has driven so much of this. In particular, the Democrats have been deep in pushing this syndrome. Commenting further on this, Katrina van den Heuvel pointed out the general

systematic and pervasive stigmatisation of alternative foreign policy views in US public culture. Ann Wright remarked how all this syndrome reflects the fact that the US is the biggest seller of weapons and so is constantly cultivating markets.

Most importantly, Solomon identified certain taboos operating in the media on crucial issues. There is a reigning silence on America's nuclear first strike strategy, even though there are 400 missiles at ready! Again, there prevails a carefully contrived taboo on the expansion of NATO and the related profits accumulated by the arms companies. Thus, more and more Government funding can be doled out for war against Russia and China.

With reference to the Russian take-over of Crimea in 2014, Ann Wright, who has visited Crimea post-2014, said that people there told her the Crimeans had got badly treated by the Ukrainians. Crimea had been part of Russia and the Soviet Union for 200 years. Russians did not invade Crimea since they were already there. In the take-over of Crimea by Russia, not a shot was fired and a plebiscite confirmed that the majority of people clearly endorsed their new national status.

The panel fittingly came to the consensus that we desperately need a new kind of politics. We are facing the most dangerous world crisis since the Cuban Missile crisis. Ann Wright passionately called for no more wars! More than 100 US NGOs had subscribed to a declaration against NATO's expansion. *But we have to mobilise visibly and on a far wider and greater scale to have any real impact.*¹⁰⁴

(e) “From Moscow to Washington: The Barbarism and Hypocrisy Don't Justify Each Other” (Norman Solomon, 23/3/22)

“Russia's war in Ukraine – like the USA's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – should be understood as barbaric mass slaughter. For all their mutual hostility, the Kremlin and the White House are willing to rely on similar precepts: Might makes right; international law is what you extol when you aren't violating it. And at home, rev up the nationalism to go with the militarism. While the world desperately needs adherence to a single standard of non-aggression and human rights, some convoluted rationales are always available in a quest

to justify the unjustifiable. Ideologies get more twisted than pretzels when some people can't resist the temptation to choose up sides between rival forces of terrible violence”.

We have to be consistent in our principles. We must condemn both “the murderous rampage of Russia's war on Ukraine” and the egregious record of “US hypocrisy” as illustrated by the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq (and we can add Yemen, Libya, etc.). *“Meanwhile, the US spends more than ten times what Russia does for its military”* (my emphasis); and “is now in its 21st year of crossing borders with missiles and bombers, as well as boots on the ground in the name of the ‘War on Terror’”.

“It's important to shed light on the US government's broken promises that NATO would not expand ‘one inch eastward’ after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Expanding NATO to Russia's border was a methodical betrayal of prospects for peaceful cooperation in Europe. What's more, NATO became a far-flung apparatus for waging war – from Yugoslavia in 1999 to Afghanistan a few years later, (and then on) to Libya in 2011”.

“The grim history of NATO since the disappearance of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact military alliance more than 30 years ago is a saga of slick leaders in business suits bent on facilitating vast quantities of arms sales – not only to longtime NATO countries but also to countries in Eastern Europe that gained membership. The US media are on a non-stop detour around mentioning, much less illuminating, how NATO's dedication to avid militarism keeps fattening the profit margins of weapons dealers. *By the time this decade began, the combined annual military spending of NATO countries had hit \$US1 trillion dollars, about 20 times Russia's*” (my emphasis).

All this current chaos and mayhem was entirely predictable. “Consider a prophetic letter to then President Bill Clinton that was released 25 years ago, with NATO expansion on the near horizon. Signed by 50 prominent figures in the foreign policy Establishment – including a half dozen former Senators, former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, and such mainstream luminaries as Susan Eisenhower, Townsend Hoopes, Fred Ikle, Edward Luttwak, Paul Nitze, Richard Pipes, Stansfield Turner, and Paul Warnke – the letter makes

for chilling reading today. *It warned that 'the current US-led effort to expand NATO' was 'a policy error of historic proportions. We believe that NATO expansion will decrease allied security and unsettle European stability'*" (my emphasis).

"The letter went on to emphasise: 'In Russia, NATO expansion, which continues to be opposed across the entire political spectrum, will strengthen the non-democratic opposition, undercut those who favour reform and cooperation with the West, bring the Russians to question the entire Cold War settlement, and galvanise resistance in the Duma to the START II and III Treaties (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks)'".

"In Europe, NATO expansion will draw a new line of division between the 'ins' and the 'outs', foster instability, and ultimately diminish the sense of security of those countries which are not included. That such prescient warnings were ignored was not happenstance. The bipartisan juggernaut of militarism headquartered in Washington was not interested in 'European stability' or a 'sense of security' for all countries in Europe".

My Comment: The same Washington attitude, of course, holds more than ever today as the Biden Administration views Europe as both a present and future battlefield far from the Homeland! It is interesting that several of the signatories of the letter cited above warning President Clinton about the dangers of NATO expansionism were notorious in their heyday for imperial belligerence, i.e. – Edward Luttwak, Paul Nitze, and Richard Pipes.

The latter two are now dead but Luttwak lives on. He is an exemplar of militarist imperial America. However, at least on Ukraine he is realistic enough to acknowledge the necessity of some sort of compromise to prevent a conventional war flaring into a nuclear flashpoint and outright catastrophe¹⁰⁵. The old war hawk is a relative moderate in this case!

He remarks on the option of compromise that: *"All this is anathema for the victory lobby. But its twin goals of driving out the Russians by force and bringing down Putin in the process would only be desirable if nuclear weapons could be uninvented"*¹⁰⁶ (my emphasis). So, this old Cold Warrior is, in a sense, echoing the warnings of President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov.

Luttwak gives his own version of what he sees would be a reasonable compromise between the West and Russia, e.g., suggesting plebiscites in the Donetsk and Luhansk areas¹⁰⁷. In his conclusion, he comments: "As for Russia, the lifting of all sanctions would bring immediate benefits across the country from the re-opening of the McDonalds in Omsk where I once had the best meal the town could offer at 6 a.m., to the resumption of normality for the great number of Russians whose lives have become international whether they know it or not"¹⁰⁸.

Edward Luttwak is indeed a living caricature of US imperialism in general. He has been a consultant strategist to TNCs and the Pentagon, set up a cattle ranch in the Bolivian Amazon, and clearly still confirms McDonalds as a beacon of capitalist globalism and so everlasting peace and

prosperity. Such are the ultimate self-destructive delusions of the American power elite! For humankind to survive, we will need changes that Luttwak & co. are incapable of envisaging!

(f) "From Mosul to Raqqa To Mariupol, Killing Civilians Is A Crime" Medea Benjamin & Nicholas JS Davies (19/4/22)

"Americans have been shocked by the death and destruction of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, filling our screens with bombed buildings and dead bodies lying in the street. But the US and its allies have waged war in country after country for decades, carving swathes of destruction through cities, towns, and villages on a far greater scale than has so far disfigured Ukraine".

"...the US and its allies have dropped over 337,000 bombs and missiles, or 46 per day, on nine countries since 2001 alone. Senior US Defense Intelligence Agency officers told *Newsweek* that the first 24 days of Russia's bombing of Ukraine was less destructive than the first day of US bombing in Iraq in 2003"¹⁰⁹ (my emphasis).

Murdering Civilians

"The US-led campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria bombarded those countries with 120,000 bombs and missiles, the heaviest bombing anywhere in decades. US military officers told Amnesty International that the US assault on Raqqa in Syria was also the heaviest artillery bombardment since the Vietnam War. Mosul in Iraq was the largest city that the US and its allies reduced to rubble in that campaign, with a pre-assault population of 1.5 million".

"About 138,000 houses were damaged or destroyed by bombing and artillery, and an Iraqi Kurdish intelligence report counted at least 40,000 civilians killed. Raqqa, which had a population of 300,000 was gutted even more. A UN assessment mission reported that 70-80% of buildings were destroyed or damaged. Syrian and Kurdish forces in Raqqa reported counting 4,118 civilian bodies. Many more deaths remain uncounted in the rubble of Mosul and Raqqa".

In Iraq, both the Red Cross and UN "documented persistent systematic violations of the Geneva Conventions by US forces, including of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention



that protects civilians from the impacts of war and military occupation". Systematic abuse and torture of prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan has also been similarly recorded. There was widespread killing of civilians by the American occupation forces. "Instead of investigating, the US has actively covered up its war crimes".

Trumping The Courts Of International Justice!

"In 2020, Donald Trump went so far as to impose US sanctions on the most senior International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutors for investigating US war crimes in Afghanistan" (his operatives like John Bolton freely inveighed against the ICC in their efforts to protect American war criminals). "... US contempt for international law and the failure of the global community to hold the US to account are destroying the very rules-based order of international law that US and Western leaders claim to cherish"¹¹⁰).

My Comment: When Russia invaded Ukraine in late February 2022 the NZ media went into overdrive in lockstep mode with their Anglo-American confreres. They have been pumping out a constant stream of war-mongering propaganda ever since. There are stark, glaring contrasts with the kind of propaganda that have been routine over decades for US-instigated and conducted overseas military adventures.

Bombing and murdering civilians has indeed been a very long established Western and especially Anglo-American tradition¹¹¹. The above article by Benjamin and Davies sets the scene well for an examination of some contrasting examples.

Take the US-allied siege of Mosul in 2017, following its capture by ISIS. As Benjamin and Davies make plain, the civilian human cost was high – over 40,000 lives, besides all the injured, traumatised, homeless, refugees, and people otherwise adversely affected. But, never mind, thank goodness, we had our very own State TVNZ to celebrate the city's fall to the US-allied force. TV1 "Presenter Simon Dallow, in commenting on a BBC item about the 'liberation' of Mosul, explained that the American aerial assault had been directed at taking the city as quickly as possible"¹¹².

Further to this human rights out-

rage: "Lamentably, one of the officers (heading the assault on Mosul) was a New Zealander – Brigadier Hugh McAslan"¹¹³.

"Brigadier Hugh McAslan even defended the use of the chemical weapon white phosphorus in the coalition attack on Mosul"¹¹⁴. The Assad regime and its Russian allies have copped a lot of flak for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. There has been both truth and propaganda in such Western allegations. The same kind of allegations are now being made against the Russians in Ukraine. Again, however, similar accusations of cluster bomb use and other weaponry especially harmful to civilians is badly contaminated by the record of Western hypocrisy and practice.

Deserving Victims And Mere "Collateral Damage"

In comparing the sieges of Mosul and Mariupol, the media treatment screams a white racist and perverse geopolitical bias in regard to the human victims and their suffering¹¹⁵. Humanitarian regard for the civilian victims of war should be even-handed and fair across the board with genuine concern for everybody everywhere so tragically afflicted.

There is regular assiduous "bleeding heart" coverage of the horrible fate of so many in Mariupol whereas civilian casualties in Mosul in 2017 amounted to just so much "collateral damage". As TV1 presenter Simon Dallow indicated at the time in the latter case any civilians were simply in the way of getting the bloody job done "as quickly as possible"!

On the other hand, while dwelling at length and detail on the human cost of the Ukraine War, TV1 has again been in warmongering form but this time of course against a Western enemy causing such harm to civilians. The robotic Dallow has been right on the ball during the battle for Mariupol. He has been especially helpful in explaining things to the NZ public like the weaponry used. For instance, he talked on one occasion about the power of the hypersonic missiles, which Russia has demonstrated in Ukraine¹¹⁶.

Dallow proceeded to expound on the new AUKUS Pact – an agreement between Britain, the US and Australia – and its latest decision to not only grow the allied fleet of nuclear-powered submarines – but to

gether develop their own battery of hypersonic missiles like those exhibited in war recently by Russia¹¹⁷. These new missiles could even help counter the Russian takeover of Ukraine. *Ah, so nice then to embrace the latest high-tech barbarism all round!*

Earlier on the 24th March, Simon Dallow had exulted in another weaponised explanatory bout on the destructive power of the Javelin handheld missile launchers that the US/NATO was supplying the Ukrainian armed forces for use against the Russian tanks¹¹⁸. He told us that this anti-tank weapon had become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance¹¹⁹.

So, think about the sheer zombie obscenity of this stuff. We have our State-owned TV actually exulting in the design and manufacture of these kinds of missiles in a world ravaged with growing conflicts and multiplying weapons, and all so very obviously compounding and self-reinforcing in a joint race to Armageddon. It is most important to note that Russia developed its hypersonic missile armoury precisely because the US withdrew from the ABM Treaty. America has been intent on building its "Star Wars" missile defence programme to the greatest extent possible. Again, surely, we see here in all of this the hand of Freud's "death instinct" at work, manifest larger than ever at the 2022 Anzac Day commemorations in NZ, etc.

The Capitalist Cult of Death As Celebrated By The Corporate Media, Etc.

As a former active member of the NZ Nuclear Free Zone Committee and a sometime Co-Editor of its magazine *Peace Researcher* (now published by ABC) back in 1980s, I am hugely saddened and dismayed by the rampant mindless warmongering, short-sightedness, imperial arrogance, and stupidity with which we have ended up today. For some of my generation, given the bloody human record to date and continued capitalist economic growth and exploitation on a small, fragile planet, a dire future has always been clearly sign-posted – *unless humans can wake up and act pre-emptively together in time!* What we have all witnessed and experienced of late is surely sobering to say the very least. As repeatedly emphasised in the WBW/RootsAction excerpts reproduced above, there seems to be a blindly suicidal commitment in the

Western political Establishment and its media cheerleaders.

I have so far discussed the malign geopolitical bias of the media and noted some examples. Since this media syndrome is so pervasive and consistent the examples are endless. But let's start another cursory look with a purported defence of this media by a *Press* opinion piece columnist Cas Carter¹²⁰. Carter is billed as a "writer, public relations and marketing executive"¹²¹. Thus, we have here already an obvious indication that she is writing from a Rightwing, or at least conservative, viewpoint.

According to Cas Carter, the Russian people are getting fed a slew of propaganda from this country's State-controlled organs of public dissemination¹²². "There are many claims Russian State television is reporting that Ukraine and NATO provoked" the Russian invasion, and that this invasion is a response intended to free their neighbour from the grip of Nazis¹²³. In Carter's considered opinion: "It's a reminder how lucky we are to have access to quality reporting from both NZ and international media"¹²⁴.

Cas Carter goes on to say that she has "been saddened by recent claims that our media is biased and even 'bought', and instead contends that "real journalism is fair, accurate and unbiased"¹²⁵. She says of the criticism that: "These allegations (of bias) have mostly been on social media swirling around in a pool of half-truths and misinformation"¹²⁶.

Carter shows no awareness – or instead has an underlying denialist agenda – about the long history of systematic, analytical criticism of the Western – and especially Anglo-American – media, by the likes of Noam Chomsky, Edward Herman, John Pilger, Robert Fisk, Michael Parenti, etc. on foreign policy issues. Such specific criticism of the media narrative stands alongside all the alternative assessments and interpretations of international relations and geopolitics by Leftwing writers stretching back centuries.

In so many cases, this criticism has applied to situations where Western Establishment PR proponents have been keenly pushing fake news and lies. We ourselves have closely examined a lot of this propaganda over many years¹²⁷. The objective

record of Western perfidy is so often evident in damning detail, e.g., NATO's role since the Cold War, and especially relevant in this discussion – the alliance's militarist imperial advances on Russia in Eastern Europe.

It is most ironic, too, that the mainstream media can even on occasion readily disclose their prevailing Rightwing bias regarding such issues, e.g., see "For Peace Or Putin: Is The Western Left Soft On Russia"¹²⁸. The very posing of the question just quoted in the immediate reference cited clearly reflects the dominant geopolitical stance of such media. To be fair to the writer in this particular instance, the *Press* article is reasonable in tone¹²⁹.

On the other hand, as a PR/marketing executive, Cas Carter's own opinion piece is pretty well an unconscious exercise in self-satire!¹³⁰. PR and marketing, in fact, have been at the heart of the capitalist media from the very beginning. In sum, Cas Carter is operating in a PR role for propaganda framed and shaped by the Pentagon and CIA, as seen repeatedly day after day on TV1, TV3, and Prime TV, as well as similarly displayed by our mass print/online media.

Zombie Short-Sighted Interest Rules, Ok?!

With the swing to the hard Right across the Western world in all its various manifestations, and as formerly established verities crumble away, and more and more people feel the bite of increasing insecurity, we tremble on the brink of self-destruction¹³¹. The prestigious *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS)* has recently put its Doomsday Clock just 100 seconds from midnight, the closest this clock has ever been to the final countdown. But our death-ridden politicians and media plough on in their blind, warmongering stupidity.

Anzac Day commemorations in April 2022 in Aotearoa/NZ were rife with the usual tribalist militarism and rampant contradictions, seasoned with the added fillip of alleged parallels with the war in Ukraine. TV1's Daniel Faitaua and TV3's Lisette Reymer were in attendance at the Gallipoli ceremonies in Turkey, hyping up identification with the Ukrainian resistance and the traditional pledges "never to forget".

Of course, so very sadly, in the Anglo-American axis and elsewhere in the West, the lessons we should remember from the experience of WWI are comprehensively rubbished and forgotten. Take former Labour Party leader, former Minister of both Foreign Affairs and also Defence, and current Mayor of Auckland, Phil Goff, who has made no secret about his attachment to American foreign policy.

Goff justified NZ's part in the October 2001 US-led revenge attack on Afghanistan as a fitting response. In October 2001, NZ joined the war on Afghanistan, "Goff defending the use of air strikes as part of the invasion, which the Government stressed were targeted at terrorists and were justified under the UN Charter, stating that they were regrettably necessary"¹³².

The grim reality was that this was yet another of the multitudinous US-allied war crimes! As the leading American Leftwing historian of his time, Howard Zinn, declaimed in a 2001 interview, "in bombing Afghanistan, we are doing great harm"¹³³. He quoted a research study by Professor Marc Herold, who had "studied domestic and foreign press reports and calculated more than 3,700 deaths from our bombings"¹³⁴. Zinn went on to say that: "Some people have said that we're not killing that many people. The Pentagon says it doesn't know how many people we're killing. The truth is, they don't care. In fact, you can't believe the Government"¹³⁵.

In these pithy remarks, Professor Howard Zinn neatly summed up the moral derelictions of the then NZ Foreign Minister Phil Goff and the Helen Clark-headed Labour government in their conformity to US empire-defined militarism. Besides the murderous bombing, there were some shocking atrocities dealt out at the hands of American warlord allies and their imperial masters¹³⁶.

Famed investigative journalist Nicky Hager has systematically documented the deep involvement of NZ in the US-led State terrorist wars on Afghanistan and Iraq¹³⁷. In 2022, Phil Goff might well reflect in his coming retirement on the failure of the US/NATO brigade in Afghanistan, the wrecked society of Iraq as the result of America's 2003 illegal invasion, and most ironically his much-trumpeted success in forging

the NZ-China “free trade” deal, given China’s emergence as a designated Western enemy in the Pacific. *As per normal, the ironies and contradictions are running riot!*

Recapping On The Central Core Of The Current Crisis

Noam Chomsky emphasised in 2016 that come Hell or high water, “the US is committed to ‘strategic primacy’ – that is, insulation from retaliatory strike”¹³⁸. Its nuclear triad – intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and other shorter-range weapons, and its submarine and bomber fleets – are constantly being updated and better primed for the final Holocaust¹³⁹. Chomsky pondered whether China would react more aggressively and, of course, this has proved to be the case in interaction with its potential Western enemies.

He next goes to say that: “The same is true of NATO expansion to the east in violation of verbal promises made to Mikhail Gorbachev when the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was collapsing and he agreed to allow a unified Germany to become part of NATO ...”¹⁴⁰. Of late, in the grip of the Ukraine conflict, there has been a surge of Western disinformation trying to restore the trustworthiness of NATO and fudging the truth of the promises made to Gorbachev. But for a reality check on these pledges see the US’s own archives!¹⁴¹.

Chomsky proceeds to pose the question as to what the US would be doing in Russia’s situation if the roles were reversed¹⁴². He leaves it to our imagination, and then cuts to the chase. “Aside from that, Russia understands as well as China (and US strategists, for that matter) that the US missile defence systems near Russia’s borders are, in effect, a first strike weapon, aimed to establish strategic primacy – immunity from retaliation. Perhaps their mission is utterly unfeasible, as some specialists argue. But the targets can never be confident of that. And Russia’s militant reactions are quite naturally interpreted by NATO as a threat to the West” (as was shown in the reaction to Putin’s annual speech in March 2018¹⁴³).

Lamentably, as Biden & co. have viciously and stupidly demonstrated of late, the West has ignored Russian President Putin’s appeal to listen up. They have instead charged ahead into the fires of Hell. Their ac-

tions are rapidly foreclosing any possibilities for vital international cooperation on nuclear and general disarmament; peacemaking; climate change; other urgent environmental challenges; genuine sustainability; global human well-being, etc.

Conflicts and potential simmering conflicts are spreading and heating up around the planet. For certain, once President Bill Clinton and his Democratic Party coterie chose to forcefully advance NATO into the former Soviet republics against expert foreign policy advice they sealed our fate – *unless somehow the world’s concerned people can turn things around!*

Endless Propaganda Ploys Being Played Out

Again, Chomsky – back in 2016 – pointed out there was “a crisis brewing at the NATO-Russian border. It is no small matter”¹⁴⁴. Tensions grew. “Russia’s concerns are easily understandable. They are outlined by international relations scholar John Mearsheimer in the leading US Establishment journal *Foreign Affairs*. He writes that “the taproot of the current crisis (over Ukraine) is NATO expansion and Washington’s commitment to move Ukraine out of Russia’s orbit and integrate it into the West”, which Putin viewed as “a direct threat to Russia’s core interests”¹⁴⁵.

Mearsheimer asked who could blame Putin, given the fact that the US treats Latin America as its backyard under the touted Monroe Doctrine and any perceived threat to the Western Hemisphere “would have been terminated with extreme prejudice”, to adopt CIA lingo¹⁴⁶. *But our media and political Establishment well know their place in the Five Eyes’ pecking order!*

With the very rare exception, the current prevailing media line has been to avoid to the maximum any proper discussion of Russia’s so very loudly and repeatedly voiced concerns about NATO’s advance – concerns so openly expressed now for several decades. Mainstream TV is particularly bad. Take yet another example from the playbook of TV1 presenter Simon Dallow.

In the same night’s bulletin that he promoted the Javelin anti-tank weapon, he gave an item on the background of the war, referring initially to Putin’s worries about the growth

of NATO¹⁴⁷. But Dallow twisted the contradiction inherent in Western belligerence to just say more or less that NATO states are able to support one another¹⁴⁸. Putin’s concerns were effectively buried. European correspondent Daniel Faitaua then took up his usual warmongering stance¹⁴⁹.

One of the rare more in-depth media items on the question of NATO gave a conservative account of how negotiators were at the time “inching towards a deal that would force Kyiv to renounce its NATO ambitions”¹⁵⁰. NATO, of course, is using the Ukraine conflict to boost its global militarist outreach¹⁵¹.

As well as shunting aside the central issue of NATO expansion, the media and politicians ignore the nuclear first strike strategy inherent in NATO’s advance. Among other propaganda ploys, the crony media are also pushing the idea that the 2014 US-perpetrated coup in Ukraine was actually a democratic election. A Murdoch *Times* article asserted the billionaire “Petro Poroshenko was elected President of Ukraine in May 2014”¹⁵².

This Ukrainian oligarch, “Ukraine’s Chocolate King”, was, in fact, effectively appointed by his US minders, along with a bunch of Americans for close support, including Joe Biden on the board of the oil and gas company Burisma, and Natalie Jaresko – formerly of the US State Department – “who acquired Ukrainian citizenship on the same day as her appointment as Minister of Finance of Ukraine in 2014”¹⁵³.

Naturally, TV1 has caught up with the latest US State Department/Pentagon/CIA prescriptions and is now promoting the 2014 coup as “democratic”. Besides veteran TV1 presenters like Simon Dallow, junior reporters can give potted overviews of the Ukraine crisis. In the course of such an item, Digby Werthmuller mentioned the “democratic” election in Ukraine in 2014!

Grappling With A Hugely Confronting Global Future

The enormous challenges being thrown at humankind by the Ukrainian crisis are daunting indeed. Somehow, the concerned peoples of the world have to rally together in concerted efforts to try and stop this terrible war and its awful human suffering. We must give all the humani-

tarian aid we can muster. At the same time, as said in the UN chiefs' appeal, we must also address the crises of suffering in Yemen and Afghanistan, and other countries in dire need¹⁵⁴.

Nineteen million people are facing hunger this year in Yemen, while "a staggering 96% of Afghanistan's 38 million people do not have enough to eat"¹⁵⁵. Both Yemen and Afghanistan are still the victims of Western barbarism. As the US/NATO pump heavy weapons into Ukraine in their plan B to use this country for a battlefield to try and subvert Russia, the international peace and anti-nuclear movement has to gain a huge lease of life and revive the cause of human rights and human survival. WBW and Roots Action war charting the way forward!

Addendum

An item on *1 News* 1 (10/5/22) highlighted the outrageously and maliciously biased nature of so much of the propaganda pouring out of the mass media today on the Ukraine crisis. TVNZ's correspondent in Europe, Daniel Faitaua, in reporting on Russia's May 9th Victory Day commemoration of the defeat of Nazi Germany - unconsciously and most ironically, and yet so revealingly - rubbished the American rationale for the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. America warned Russia to take its missiles out of Cuba or face world war.

Faitaua remarked how President Putin told his people that Kyiv had been trying to station nuclear weapons right up to the Russian border. This, of course, has been the US/NATO plan as part of its first strike strategy. But Faitaua simply dismissed Putin's expressed concerns with the statement: "His claims are old". The gist of his item was instead that Ukraine would win the war. Thus, TVNZ operates as an arm of what the old war hawk Edward Luttwak calls the "Victory Lobby", as orchestrated by the Pentagon, the CIA, and the US State Department.

What a meaningless crap comment by Daniel Faitaua about Putin's concern! The Cuban Missile Crisis brought us to the very brink of world nuclear war. But this TVNZ reporter brazenly misleads the NZ public as to the very real dangers inherent in the parallel situation of the Ukrainian Crisis. Our media are even delib-

erately, if ever so stupidly, leading us into the fires of Hell!

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REVIEW

By Jeremy Agar

MOTHERS OF THE REVOLUTION

A Film By Briar March

Auckland's Briar March and New Zealand-born producer Matthew Metcalfe have made this doco about the people who became known as the Greenham Common women. It's

an inspiring tale. In 1981 a group from Wales walked almost 200 kilometres to a Royal Air Force (RAF) base that was about to host a new model of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) American nuclear weapons.

The Cold War was heating up. Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US were sure that the commies in Russia were up to no good. The West needed stronger protection. The women thought otherwise. Increasing the rhetoric and the weaponry increased the risk of war. They resolved to camp outside the base until they won their point.

Over the years the number of protestors grew as the public came to see the wisdom of the peaceniks. Most of the media were hostile, though, as were many of the locals and the Police. The camp site was for years a tense and sometimes violent place. The film is based on the thoughts of some of the original women, looking back 40 years later. It's great viewing. One memory, alarming at the time but almost amusing in retrospect, was of a young mother being told that in the event of incoming nukes, she and her child (who might have been away from the camp at school) would have four minutes warning to get away to safety. Mum must have been hoping



Greenham Common protest, 1980s

that the missiles would arrive outside school hours.

Thatcher - and virtually all the governing elites - said that Britain needed nukes to persuade a supposedly aggressive Soviet Union that any attack on the West would be met with a response so strong that they would not dare try it on. The Greenham women argued the opposite, pointing out that the weapons that were being brought into the base were particularly dangerous, likely to make nuclear war more likely.

The Madness Of MAD

At the time the theory known as deterrence was based on the knowledge that, as a nuclear war would kill everyone and everything, it was not going to happen. This was called Mutual Assured Destruction - MAD. There were several things wrong with MAD, most obviously that someone some time might make a mistake. Or the system would fail. It is now known that the world did come close to being nuked more than once.

The deployment at Greenham Common was of cruise missiles, and they were an especially stupid idea. Cruise missiles were designed to fly low and avoid radar. They were said to have what was called "house address accuracy", as they could strike within a few metres of an intended target. So, they were not about being MAD. MAD's so-called deterrence is the threat of instant and total retaliation, for which cruise missiles' qualities of evasion and accuracy are redundant, given the reality that both the US and the Soviet Union already had enough bombs to destroy everything.

The cruise was a "first-strike" weapon, designed to take out the other side's nukes while they were still in their silos. They were making a nu-

clear war "thinkable" - as the matter was commonly expressed. This, in turn, would give the Soviet Union reason to get in first. Greenham Common, not so far from London amid the millions in south-east England, would likely become a Soviet target. As the doco points out, NATO intelligence discerned heightened Russian tension at the time.

Reagan compounded the danger with a hugely expensive fantasy known as Star Wars. The idea was to defend his country with all sorts of stuff in space which would intercept incoming Soviet missiles. This was another contradiction of MAD, another effort to give America a way of "winning" a nuclear war. The Russians would have replied by a massive weapons build up, hoping to overwhelm the Star Wars shield with sheer numbers. That was their option to retain the ability to deter.

Reagan was not the brightest star in the sky and it could be that he had no clear understanding of what was involved. The curious thing is that, while his words and proposals were recklessly aggressive, he seems to have warmed to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev when they met, apparently coming to accept that neither the US nor the Soviet Union were going to benefit from ever more nukes.

Missiles Removed

For whatever reason, the mood melted and the two sides agreed to abandon their new medium-range missiles. The personal contact between Ronald and Mikhail might have been a factor, but it would not have happened without the persistence of the women at Greenham Common and the heightened public awareness they inspired. And so, in 1991 they were able to witness the last missiles being removed. There's an NZ link tacked on at the end, but it comes across as contrived, linked to the central theme only tenuously.

You can view the trailer for "Mothers Of The Revolution" here. Ed. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWirc-uWGgQ> ■

TRIBUTES TO RITA BAUA

Champion Of International Solidarity

By Murray Horton

Rita Baua was a veteran leading Filipino activist, and one with whom I worked closely decades ago. She died, in Manila in February 2022, aged 79. She died of pancreatic cancer (and it can be considered a minor miracle that an activist died of natural causes in a country where so many of them are murdered or disappeared). Rita was a leading Filipino movement figure for many decades and she took the struggle very seriously indeed, because in that country it is a matter of life and death. She personified what Filipino activists call G and D – grim and determined. In a good way.

Peace Brigade

One Filipino tribute described her as "anti-imperialist, internationalist, a pillar of the Philippine national democratic mass movement". Rita's speciality was international solidarity and that is how I met her. We first met when I was part of the New Zealand contingent (with a much larger number of Australians) as part of the Peace Brigade, which spent an action-packed month in the Philippines in 1989, lending our international weight to the marvellous campaign by the Philippine people to get rid of the accursed US bases out of their country. The most high-profile Australian participant was then-Senator Jo Vallentine.

I wrote this up, in great detail, in a long report in *Foreign Control Watchdog* 61, (May 1989, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/23993608/Watchdog-May-1989>). One quote will suffice: "Personally, it was the most fascinating month of my life". One which has had long term consequences, because it was Rita who was (indirectly) responsible for me meeting my wife, Becky.

A central event of that month-long visit was the Asia Pacific Peoples' Conference on Peace and Development. Rita and Becky had previously worked together on activist campaigns – Rita invited Becky to help out as part of the secretariat at the

conference. That's how we met (Rita used to jokingly refer to Becky and others as "solidarity brides").

Touching The Bases Tour

Rita and I next worked together here in New Zealand, when she was the leader of the Philippine contingent on the Anti-Bases Campaign's 1990 Touching The Bases Tour. "Waihopai was included (in the Tour), which also took in Tangimoana, Black Birch, Harewood and an Owen Wilkes-led day trip around 'secret' Wellington".

"The unique aspect of this information-cum-protest action was that a number of activists from the Asia-Pacific region took part, including several Filipinos and representatives from Bougainville and Fiji... It was also a great chance to meet with some of the very activists working for a nuclear-free and independent Pacific who could well have been targets of UKUSA spying" (*UK USA is now always referred to as Five Eyes. MH*).

"In fact, we really understood the personal determination and commitment of our colleagues when they insisted on walking with us to the 4,500-foot summit of Black Birch ridge in snow and gale conditions. Hardy Christchurch organisers Murray Horton and Warren Thomson became concerned that our guests from tropical climes might suffer hypothermia and worked hard to persuade them to keep their layers of woollen clothing in place even when they felt warm from their strenuous climbing" ("Peace, Power & Politics: How New Zealand Became Nuclear Free", Maire Leadbeater, 2013).

Warren Thomson reported on the Tour in *Peace Researcher* 28 (first series), February 1991 ("Linking, Learning And Levitation", [https://](https://www.scribd.com/document/33725434/Peace-Researcher-Vol1-Issue28-Feb-1991)

www.scribd.com/document/33725434/Peace-Researcher-Vol1-Issue28-Feb-1991). For example: "Secret Wellington. With sixty-five people crammed on a fifty-seater bus we visited the places where intelligence and security operations go on night and day, year in, year out. In honour of our visit, some buildings were temporarily declared defence areas and entry prohibited while we were there. At Defence Headquarters we deposited a bag containing some of their old rubbish. They panicked and thought it was a bomb!".

In *Foreign Control Watchdog* 66, March 1991 (<https://www.scribd.com/doc/24029507/Watchdog-March-1991>) I wrote: "Heartfelt thanks to our good friend Rita Baua for ensuring such a high-powered Filipino delegation took part, led by herself". While she was in NZ, Rita came to my Christchurch home (the one I still live and work in).

Working With Rita In Manila

In 1991 I was made redundant from the Railways after 14 years and used my redundancy pay to go to Manila for several months. That 1989 conference I'd attended had resulted in an organisation being set up (the Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum on Peace and Development), which was where Rita worked and she took me on as a volunteer there. So, we worked side by side for several months.

I can't remember the actual work that I did but I do remember that it was the last time that I regularly worked with a typewriter, something which I'd done since I was a high school boy in the 60s. Those few months in Manila marked the transition from my last "real" job (the Railways) to becoming the CAFCA/ABC Organiser, which I commenced when I got home from the Philip-

pinas, with Becky, in late 1991.

It was a fascinating experience, living and working in an Asian megacity. While I was there Becky and I lived together, with an eclectic bunch of housemates from several countries. Rita arranged that accommodation. She arranged other things too. I had just arrived in Manila when the death occurred, in Christchurch, of John Curnow, the Christchurch priest who was the father of NZ's Philippines solidarity movement. The Philippine movement held a memorial for him and Rita arranged for me to speak at it (for her 2022 memorial I sent a short video message).

Two very memorable things happened during those few months that I spent in Manila in 1991. The US bases did get kicked out, after nearly a century, when the Senate voted not to renew the treaty that permitted their presence in the Philippines and I had (with Becky) the pleasure to be amongst the jubilant crowd of tens of thousands outside the Senate, in the pouring rain, when the vote was taken.

And I got married to Becky. Being a couple of good political activists, we timed our wedding to coincide with an international anti-bases conference in Manila, which enabled Kiwi friends and colleagues to attend it (my old Anti-Bases Campaign partner in crime, Warren Thomson, was best man). Rita was among the guests.

Rita and I spasmodically kept in touch over the following decades but we were both very busy with our work in our respective countries. I last saw her on my last visit to Manila, a six week-long family holiday over the Christmas of 2008/09. We met at a glitzy fundraising dinner for



Touching The Bases Tour, November 1990, on top of Black Birch. Murray Horton holding left end of banner. Rita Baua in front of banner, next to Murray.



Rita in Auckland, with Keith Locke, right (sitting), Nov 1990. Photo from Del Abcede

a major human rights organisation.

I wrote up this occasion in my 2008 *Organiser's Report (Foreign Control Watchdog* 119, February 2009, <http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/19/06.htm>), under the subheading "Dining With A 'Communist Murderer'" – not Rita, I hasten to add. It was a great night and a great final memory of Rita. It was an honour and a privilege to know Rita and, even better, to closely work with her in person in our two countries. Rest in peace, kasama (comrade).

By Maire Leadbeater

I met Rita Baua when I visited the Philippines at the end of 1988/beginning of 1989. I was part of an 18-strong "peace brigade" of Kiwi activists (along with a much larger group of Australians) attending a major international anti-bases conference and undertaking "exposure" visits to learn about the Filipino struggle. Rita was a key organiser and facilitator and she did an amazing job dealing with the demands of Westerners while ensuring that no opportunity was lost to push forward the anti-bases' agenda. In 1991 Manila turned down the US request to allow its bases to remain.

The Aotearoa contingent had been in the fire of controversy and "red-baiting" even before we arrived in Manila. A stern letter from the Consul-General for the Philippines had threatened us with deportation if we incited people to take part in "sedition, rebellion or insurrection", took part in a "teach-in" or protest rally against the bases. But Rita had, of course, experienced much worse than threats and took all this in her stride.

Rita visited Aotearoa in 1990 with Cora Fabros* and a delegation of Filipinos to take part in a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Conference and to accompany local activists as they carried out a tour of Aotearoa bases. The climb up the 4,500-foot mountain to the (now discontinued) Black Birch astronomical facility was most memorable. Rita was among the 20 or so of us that made it to the top in a snow fall. * *ABC organised and hosted an NZ speaking tour by Cora Fabros in 2008. See Peace Researcher 37, November 2008 <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr37.pdf> for several articles about that. Ed.*

Rita and I kept in touch for a few years afterwards as we sought to maintain regional solidarity. I found her a warm and supportive colleague. Determined, yes – but I also remember that she once commented to me that her life in activism also brought her personal happiness. I am very sad to hear of her death and extend condolences to her colleagues, friends and family.

By Keith Locke

The highlight of my work with Rita was in November 1990 when I helped host a seven-person delegation of progressive Filipinos, led by Rita. The delegation contained tribal Filipino leaders, peace campaigners and prominent feminists. They joined the Touching the Bases tour, which visited, and protested, the US-linked intelligence bases at Tangimoana, Waihopai, Black Birch, and Harewood. Rita also played a big role in smoothing the way in the Philippines for visiting groups of progressive New Zealanders. ■

OWEN WILKES BOOK

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> is a Special Issue entirely devoted to Owen). 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 (the domes that have been dismantled and decommissioned in 2022, along with the satellite interception dishes which they concealed).

We met this expat Kiwi whilst in Oslo. In his 2020 e-mail he told me he had a collection of letters from Owen and other material, and offered them to me, which I accepted. I wrote up the Oslo package of material in *PR* 61 (June 2021, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR61.pdf>). That turned out to

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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be only the beginning of a whole new project. In September 2021 I was contacted, also out of the blue, by May Bass, who was Owen's partner at the time of his death (they were together for a dozen years). I'd had no contact with her since the year of Owen's death.

May said: "A friend of mine rang me to let me know there was an article about Owen in the April (2021) edition of *Foreign Control Watchdog*. She sent me the magazine. It reminded me that having waited all this time since Owen's death I have still not found anyone who is interested in writing a book about him. There is a huge amount of material that he left and which I arranged to be stored in Wellington Library. I am wondering whether you might have some ideas?". I told May that I wouldn't be the writer of any such book (she was not the first person to suggest it), because I don't have the time necessary to do it justice.

But I sent her a whole lot of stuff about Owen that has come out since his death (such as various *PR* articles, and the reissued 1980s' documentary "Islands Of The Empire", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDoobc7LFD>). Within a remarkably short period of time, the whole thing fell into place. I mentioned the book idea to a 1980s' Wellington peace activist and colleague of Owen's, with whom I'd previously lost contact for decades (he was active in the Waihopai campaign in the very early days). He took it upon himself to contact a professional writer, Mark Derby.

First Draft

Mark accepted with alacrity. He and May Bass are the Co-Editors. I've seen the first draft - it is a collection of essays about Owen by a number of writers, to be (hopefully) published in late 2022. My 2021 Christmas holiday project was writing an 18-page essay on Owen and the anti-bases campaign - which long pre-dates the actual organisation called the Anti-Bases Campaign. My essay involved researching from a whole lot of sources, including both *Peace Researcher* and *Watchdog*. We'll keep you posted about the book.

As for May Bass, she was also a leading peace activist back in the day (she and Owen were peace movement



Owen Wilkes, Harewood protest, 1973. Photo by Walter Logeman

colleagues as well as partners). She was a leading figure at the very earliest Waihopai spy base protests, those held in the late 1980s before it was built, specifically the on-site 1988 women's camp that involved some of the most nationally prominent, not to mention hair raising, incidents of the whole 30 plus years of protests.

She has never been back to Waihopai since (i.e., she's never seen it since the spy base was actually built) and had also moved on from the peace movement decades ago. But, in the course of our detailed communications about the Owen book project, I also invited her to come and speak at the January 2022 Waihopai protest, to deliver a message of solidarity and continuity from the original Waihopai campaigners to today's ones. She accepted. But sadly, just days beforehand, ABC had to cancel the protest - for the first time since 1988 - because of the changing covid situation. So, it was not to be. ■

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Peace Researcher is the newsletter and journal of the Anti-Bases Campaign, Box 2258, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand. If you would like to join ABC, the details are below. All ABC members receive *Peace Researcher*.

Membership is \$20 per year (ABC is not registered for GST). **Donations welcome.**

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