

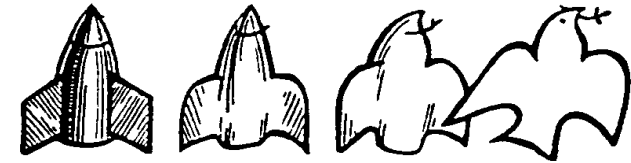
Action ideas:

- ✎ Support the regular **Quaker meetings for worship** at Menwith Hill and the weekly Tuesday evening **vigils**.
Contact NFPB and CAAB for details (see below)
- ✎ Get more **information** and discuss it with others. Here are some starting points:
 - **Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB)**
01943 466405, www.caab.org.uk
 - **Yorkshire CND**, www.cndyorks.org.uk 01274 730795
 - **British American Security Information Council (Basic)**
www.basicint.org 020 7407 2977
 - **Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space** www.space4peace.org
 - **US Missile Defense Agency** www.acq.osd.mil/bmdo
 - **US Space Command** www.spacecom.mil
- A fuller list of information sources – with postal addresses for UK organisations – is available from our address below and links to other sources are put on our web site, from time to time. We are also a member of the Missile Defence Working Group, which has produced a briefing paper and short leaflet: both are available on request.
- ✎ **Write to your MP** to explore these issues with them, perhaps looking at the following questions:
 - Can the UK play a more active role in reducing the threat of ballistic missiles through diplomacy and confidence-building and in preventing the unprecedented use of space for weapons deployment?
 - Can the Secretary of State for Defence be asked to acknowledge that Menwith Hill is already playing a part in the proposed Missile Defense system, through its role in SBIRS? If not, can it open to debate now the use of Menwith Hill in this way, rather than leaving it to the last minute, if and when the US formally requests permission for its use?

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Northern Friends Peace Board

Challenging Militarism Project
Signpost leaflet – June 2003

Menwith Hill Matters

"In the 20th Century, The Army fully exploited the high ground provided by air capabilities and led the Nation to Space. In the 21st Century we must fully exploit the high ground of Space to empower adaptive leaders and soldiers with the ability to see first, understand first, act first, and finish decisively"

US Army Space Policy, April 2003

"In place of a process which trusts technology and mistrusts humanity, we must learn and live out a process that builds trust between people and their institutions."

Mary Lou Leavitt, 1987

◆ Menwith Hill in brief

Menwith Hill Station is near Harrogate in Yorkshire and employs around 1,500 US civilians and service-personnel. The base was originally made available to the US Army in 1951 for command, control and communications and intelligence gathering. >>>

Satellite interception activity has been carried out there for nearly 30 years, and it has been run by the US National Security Agency since 1966. After the 1991 Gulf War, the station was given an award for its contribution to US military action. Satellite technology based at Menwith is understood to have been an important part of the UK and US nuclear weapons command and control systems over the years. The base is still officially known as RAF Menwith Hill although it is not a British base, apart from being located on British soil.

Menwith Hill is now to house the European Ground Relay Station for something called the Space Based Infra Red System (SBIRS). Why is this significant? The US Missile 'Defense'* programme envisages a 'layered' system of satellites and other sensors and weapons to intercept missiles. SBIRS would be a key part of this, providing information via satellites of missile launches.

The trigger

Dr David C. Wright, in a paper for the International Security and Information Service (ISIS) in 2001, writes:

"... SBIRS-high would start the clock for the NMD [now simply known as missile defense] system, supply the key information for deciding whether to attempt to intercept the missile, and provide high quality information that would be crucial for maximizing the timeline available for the NMD system to operate."

◆ Shield and sword

Missile 'defense' advocates – including the UK government recently – have often responded to concerns about missile 'defense' by trying to reassure doubters that shooting down missiles can only be a good thing. It is presented as a shield to provide protection – why should anyone be against such a thing? But shields have traditionally been important tools for those with offensive intentions. They may not inflict damage directly, but they give those possessing them a powerful advantage over an adversary.

As an example of this, the US military is actively exploring the possibility of using space, not simply for satellites but also as an arena

for deploying laser weapons. They are particularly keen that they should control the military use of space. Many analysts are very clear however that this approach runs the risk of provoking an arms race into a new realm; a realm in which there are so far no weapons deployed.

Control and dominance

A recent fact sheet from the US Army Space and Missile Defense Command describes a 'vision of a more responsive force capable of full spectrum dominance to meet threats whenever and wherever they arise ... Space control is the means by which space superiority is gained and maintained to ensure friendly forces can use the space environment while denying its use to the enemy.' (February 2003)

◆ Bringing the role of Menwith into the open?

In February 2003 the UK government agreed to a request from the US Government that they should be allowed to upgrade the early-warning military radar system at Fylingdales in North Yorkshire, with a view to its crucial role in the US missile 'defense' system. Shortly before this agreement was announced the Ministry of Defence produced a Public Discussion Paper on the issue. But Menwith Hill is not mentioned once in this paper, even though Fylingdales would need SBIRS if it is to play the role envisaged for it in US proposals.

In February 2002 a senior UK Ministry of Defence official told the House of Commons Defence Committee that the use of Menwith Hill for missile 'defense' purposes would need UK approval. But the SBIRS system is already being developed there. Does the UK government intend to acknowledge Menwith Hill's role in US Missile Defense in its public discussions? We think it should do so. Menwith Hill matters.

* We have used the US spelling of 'Defense' here and put it in quotation marks to alert people to the fact that it is a US system and is part of an offensive military strategy.