

CroughtonWatch & Oxfordshire Peace Campaign celebrate the cancellation of the US military's armed drone and cyber-warfare hub at USAF Croughton

After Congressional disputes, and more recently President Trump's claw-back of funds to build his 'border wall', proposals for a \$300 million+ 'Joint Intelligence Analysis Centre' (JIAC) at USAF Croughton have been scrapped.

Today CroughtonWatch – a local group of citizens who monitor activities at the site – are calling on South Northamptonshire Council and Cherwell District Council to refuse to determine any future planning applications, as to do so would be in breach of UK law.

The 5-year saga of the Joint Intelligence Analysis Centre has been written-up in a new report by local CroughtonWatch researcher, Paul Mobbs. The report, "*How Donald Trump's Border Wall Helped to Terminate the USAF Croughton 'Joint Intelligence Analysis Centre' (JIAC)*"^[1], documents the history of the campaign from when the US Congressional budget first awarded the money in May 2014, to when the Pentagon finally cancelled or reallocated the funding for the project in September 2019.

Doubtful legality

USAF Croughton is a controversial site because:

- ◆ it is involved in the mass surveillance of the public, and of "friendly" states, as disclosed by Edward Snowden in 2013 (he also worked at this site briefly as a contractor);
- ◆ it is involved in American special forces and armed drone operations which have been identified by a number of independent human rights agencies as being unlawful^[11].

In 2018, Amnesty International identified USAF Croughton^[2] as one of the military and intelligence sites controlling drone unlawful operations in North Africa. It is also involved in the Saudi's unlawful war in Yemen, supporting drone operations and collecting intelligence for the Saudi state, using its direct, high-capacity data line to American forces running those operations in nearby Djibouti.

Croughton's role in mass surveillance is harder to define due to its clandestine nature. It is known that the site was used to relay intercepted signals from Chancellor Merkel's mobile phone^[3] during American-German trade talks.

USAF Croughton relays one-third of all US military and intelligence communications between the USA and Europe, the Near East, and North Africa. It is a critical way-station in enforcing US foreign policy – such as President Trump's unlawful ramping-up of air-strikes in Syria in 2017^[4].

The 'Joint Intelligence Analysis Centre' (JIAC) – 'from bad to worse'

The purpose of the JIAC was significantly increase the ability^[5] of US military and intelligence agencies to carry out operations using the latest IT systems. It would have provided USAF Croughton with a more powerful computer 'data centre', and communications links to merge the operations of military and intelligence units across Europe and North Africa.

The JIAC would have instituted a practise known as "intelligence fusion"^[12]. This is something which the US security apparatus has developed across America since 9/11 – and which has become controversial due to the poor quality of the evidence it produces.

Research by the US American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) noted that Department for Homeland Security 'fusion centres' disproportionately target^[6] ethnic minorities, Muslims and non-violent peace activists. A 2012 report from the US Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations^[7] found that, *"Instead of strengthening our counter-terrorism efforts, they have too often wasted money and stepped on Americans' civil liberties"*.

'Terminated'

CroughtonWatch were first alerted to the changes to the JIAC plans in June 2019. Firstly the US Congressional budget stated that funding was being transferred to USAF Molesworth in Cambridgeshire. At the end of June, the JIAC's planning permission lapsed.

Speaking about the cancellation, Paul Mobbs said,

"It became clear in early 2019 that construction had not started, and was unlikely to do so. Then at the end of June the planning permission for the JIAC lapsed, preventing development from lawfully starting. Finally, in July, the US service magazine Stars & Stripes^[8] ran an article outlining the transfer of the project to USAF Molesworth. We have spent the last two months confirming that – which has come with the announcement from the Pentagon^[9] that the remaining funds for development at the site have been clawed-back to build Trump's border wall".

What's Next for the Campaign?

The research carried out by CroughtonWatch on the JIAC development has turned up a lot of evidence about the operations at this site more generally, and their legality. In particular, the use of USAF Croughton's facilities to support drone strikes and unlawful war-fighting in Syria and Yemen.

Section 6 of the *Human Rights Act 1998*^[10] (HRA) states that *"It is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way which is incompatible with a Convention right"*.

The fundamental 'right to life' is non-negotiable; though arguably the site also violates people's lesser rights to privacy, and perhaps expression and communication. By giving permission for any future developments at USAF Croughton, and its outstation at Barford St. John, South Northamptonshire or Cherwell planners could arguably be in violation of section 6 of the HRA.

Speaking about their call for a local moratorium on any future development at the sites, Paul Mobbs said,

“If South Northamptonshire or Cherwell refuse to determine planning applications for development at USAF Croughton the UK Government will have to give permission itself. It makes very little difference practically, since they are unable to say ‘no’ in any case, but it means local people can be assured that their local representatives are willing to act according to national and international law – even if our national government is currently choosing not to do so”.

He continued,

“South Northamptonshire also have a liaison officer who works with the US military at Croughton. Given that the Americans are violating international law it is not appropriate that local people’s taxes fund this activity. We request that all ‘facilitation’ links between South Northamptonshire and Cherwell Councils, and the US military, cease forthwith.”

Paul Mobbs will be talking more about the developments at USAF Croughton this weekend at the annual *USAF Croughton March and Rally*, organised by the Oxfordshire Peace Campaign – Noon to 3pm, Saturday 5th October, starting from Portway Lane adjacent to the base.

A web page containing source documents, as well as a number of high-definition colour photos of the USAF Croughton and Barford St. John sites and previous events there, is available on-line until the end of October at:
<http://www.fraw.org.uk/temp/cx/>

- For further information on the USAF Croughton report contact:
Paul Mobbs, 01295 261864 – or email mobbsey@gn.apc.org
Further information about his professional research can be found via his website –
<http://www.fraw.org.uk/meir/index.shtml>
- Further information about USAF Croughton, and CroughtonWatch, can be found on our web site:
<http://www.fraw.org.uk/frn/cw.html>
- For further information on the USAF Croughton march & rally contact
Oxfordshire Peace Campaign, 01865 248357 – or email oxonpeace@yahoo.co.uk

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Notes:

1. *How Donald Trump's Border Wall Helped to Terminate the USAF Croughton 'Joint Intelligence Analysis Centre' (JIAC)*, Paul Mobbs, CroughtonWatch, Thursday 3rd October 2019. Available free to download from – <http://www.fraw.org.uk/meir/2019/20191003-how-trumps-wall-terminated-the-croughton-jiac.pdf>
2. *Deadly Assistance: The Role of European States in US Drone Strikes*, Amnesty International, April 2018 – <http://www.fraw.org.uk/data/wbd/amnesty-2018.pdf>
3. *RAF Croughton base 'sent secrets from Merkel's phone straight to the CIA'*, Duncan Campbell & Cahal Milmo, The Independent, Tuesday 5th November 2013 – <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/exclusive-raf-croughton-base-sent-secrets-from-merkel-s-phone-straight-to-the-cia-8923401.html>
4. *Are Donald Trump's missile strikes in Syria legal?*, Sabrina Siddiqui & Lauren Gambino, Guardian On-line, 7th April 2017 – <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/apr/07/donald-trump-us-missile-strikes-syria-legal>
5. *USAF Croughton: Networked Warfare and the Intelligence-Fusion Complex*, Paul Mobbs, Mobbs' Environmental Investigations and Research, June 2018 – <http://www.fraw.org.uk/meir/netwar.html>
6. *What's Wrong With Fusion Centers?*, ACLU, December 2007 – https://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/privacy/fusioncenter_20071212.pdf; and, *Fusion Center Update*, ACLU, July 2008 – https://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/privacy/fusion_update_20080729.pdf
7. *Investigative Report Criticizes Counter-terrorism Reporting, Waste at State & Local Intelligence Fusion Centers*, US Senate Permanent Subcommittee On Investigations, 3rd October 2012 – <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/investigations/media/investigative-report-criticizes-counterterrorism-reporting-waste-at-state-and-local-intelligence-fusion-centers>
8. *Pentagon reconsiders plan to relocate key US intelligence hub within Britain*, John Vandiver, Stars & Stripes, 18th July 2019 – <https://www.stripes.com/news/pentagon-reconsiders-plan-to-relocate-key-us-intelligence-hub-within-britain-1.590824>
9. *Pentagon diverts \$3.6 billion in military construction funds to build Trump's border wall*, Zachary Cohen & Ryan Browne, CNN, 3rd September 2019 – <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/09/03/politics/esper-military-construction-funds-border-wall/>
10. Section 6, *Human Rights Act 1998* – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/section/6>
11. *Drone strikes by US may violate international law, says UN*, Owen Bowcott, Guardian On-line, 18th October 2013 – <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/18/drone-strikes-us-violate-law-un>
12. *The Rise of the Fusion-Intelligence Complex*, Anthony B. Newkirk, Surveillance and Society, vol.8 no.1 pp.43-60, 2010 – <http://www.justiceacademy.org/iShare/Library-DHS/Fusion/266-981-1-PB.pdf>