

RAF Croughton – What is it? Where is it and why should we be interested?

Faringdon Peace Group has known about and protested at RAF Croughton for many years. Paul Mobbs, who describes himself as a non-violent extremist, spoke to the group in July about what goes on there and how its role is about to change.

RAF Croughton is actually a little island of US administration just over the border in Northamptonshire with one token RAF Officer – the so-called ‘Base Commander’. It is a US military communications centre which has grown from a telephone exchange in the 50s to a satellite communication facility and will now combine with RAF Molesworth and expand present facilities to become the ‘Joint Intelligence Analysis Complex’; the US headquarters for European and African military communications. Conveniently placed as a stopping point between the US and the Middle East, the base will have 4 radomes, satellite dishes and huge banks of computers. Smaller bases in Italy, Germany, Bahrain and all round the Sahara are constantly watching and listening, sending a vast amount of data to Croughton where it is analysed to reveal patterns and identify threats. It has a direct cable link to GCHQ in Cheltenham and serves as a relay station for CIA agent communications.

Paul pointed out the sinister and deadly nature of this monitoring and surveillance. It enables a small group of people to run a covert war across one 6th of the world. A target, human or otherwise, can be identified and destroyed by an armed drone or by a small group of special forces who then disappear again. Unless war has been declared on the country, the rules of war do not apply, allowing war crimes and human rights violations to take place unchecked by democratic accountability. The Germans have an undertaking from the US that no data passing through their Ramstein base will be used to allow drones to kill. The UK has no such agreement.

The blurring of lines between military and civilian is also dangerous according to Paul. Quinetiq is one of the largest companies supplying technological support in many fields including communications, intelligence and surveillance to large companies and most western governments, while also developing drones and other weapons systems. They or similar companies will be used at Croughton for data analysis, often employing ex-military personnel.

Paul warned us that there is now a technological arms race. Malware, cyber warfare and false information can be used to influence, intimidate and disrupt, and any weaknesses in security systems can be exploited. We can all be silently tracked and monitored through our computers and mobile devices, credit cards, driving license etc. for good or ill.

Paul urged us to join him at the rally at Croughton on Saturday 7th September to draw attention to the evil activities that take place there.

As there is no Peace Group meeting in August, the next meeting will be on 6th September – ‘The Role of the UN in settling disputes’, with Patricia Baigrie who worked for the UN for 38 years. All welcome.