



# info pack

**this pack contains:** overview of campaign; background to new developments at AWE Aldermaston; legal information; Q&A; pledge form and notes.

**Block the Builders** is a new campaign which aims to nonviolently prevent the building of a new laser facility at AWE Aldermaston, the first stage of a series of proposed developments which would enable AWE Aldermaston to build the next generation of nuclear weapons.

If and when construction starts on site, we plan to **block the builders** through a nonviolent blockade of the site. We don't think this will happen until 2005, but we need to start planning now. This pack gives you a basic idea about the campaign, and how you can pledge to join in.

## Some background

On 23 June 2004, the Thatcham planning committee accepted the Ministry of Defence's proposal to build a state of the art laser facility (the Orion laser) at AWE Aldermaston. The facilities, which will enable the development of new nuclear weapons at Aldermaston, received less scrutiny by the planning committee than a supermarket. The next step in the legal process will be a formal building application by AWE Aldermaston, which is also unlikely to receive much scrutiny.

Many people, and local Councils, now demand a public inquiry into the proposed developments at Aldermaston, but the outcome of such an inquiry would not be legally binding. It seems the public has less opportunities to make its voice heard in the planning of a nuclear weapons factory, than if your neighbour wants to build a new garage.

## New nuclear weapons - immoral and illegal

Any new nuclear weapons would be immoral – and unlawful. They are indiscriminate weapons which cannot distinguish between military and civilian targets, and which have a deadly legacy for generations.

Any nuclear weapon – even a targetable low yield weapon – violates international law. The radiation released by any nuclear weapon cannot be contained in either space or time.

New weapons would mean that the UK would continue to break its international obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – to make progress, in good faith, towards disarmament.

The new facilities at AWE also undermine the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (signed and ratified by the UK, but not yet in force), as they would enable research on nuclear weapons to continue without underground testing.

## Can we do it? Yes we can!

The Block the Builders campaign aims to increase awareness of the new developments, and to mobilise for nonviolent action against these developments. The idea itself is simple: from now on we collect pledges to block

### Block the Builders – When and What?

We know construction is planned for 2005, but we don't know exactly when. As soon as we find out we will let people know.

The plan is that if we find out that construction will start by the Thursday noon before, we will blockade the following Monday.

Information received after Thursday noon, we will blockade the Monday one week later.

In any case: Friday evening before the blockade to Monday of the blockade, a camp will be organised for final training, for affinity groups and for supporting roles. The alert you receive will include the date for the action.

the builders at AWE Aldermaston IF they start to put their plans into practice, and begin construction of the Orion laser facility. On the Monday after it becomes known that construction has begun, we aim to nonviolently block all entrances to AWE Aldermaston, with as many people as possible, for the full day. While this will hopefully be the start of an ongoing nonviolent action campaign, the Block the Builders campaign itself will focus on organising the first nonviolent blockade of construction at AWE Aldermaston.

### Why should I pledge?

The pledge to Block the Builders is a very important aspect of the campaign. It serves as a mobilisation tool, and as more people join the pledge it increases the pressure on the authorities within the planning process, and for a public inquiry. But it also shows that when all legal options have failed, then we are prepared to take nonviolent direct action, and put our bodies in front of the builders, who will build the Orion laser – and therefore bring the next generation of nuclear weapons one step closer. Pledges can be for "arrestable" or supporting roles.

All pledgers will receive updates of the new developments at Aldermaston, and information related to the Block the Builders action/campaign. Existing or new groups are welcome to get involved in organising.

### NONVIOLENCE GUIDELINES

BtB actions should not harm living things. Respect the humanity of everyone you meet and be responsible for your own actions. We specifically request:  
NO threats/violence, verbal abuse or non-script drugs (yes that includes alcohol!).

# background

AWE Aldermaston appears to be preparing itself to build the next generation of nuclear weapons. We don't know exactly what they're going to develop, design and test. It could be a successor to the current Trident system deployed on the UK's four Trident submarines, or it could be a new generation of tactical "low yield" or "mini"-nuclear weapons. What is certain is that AWE ML (the company which manages Aldermaston) have a £5.3 billion contract with the UK government, and are planning to build a range of new facilities which will enable them to simulate underground nuclear test conditions. Similar developments are being planned in the US.

## What do we know?

In June 2002, the Observer and Guardian reported on plans for new developments at AWE. A spokesperson for AWE told the Guardian that the new facilities would provide Aldermaston with the capacity to design and produce mini-nukes.

In August 2002, AWE published their Site Development Strategy Plan (SDSP), outlining new facilities, including a new supercomputer, a state of the art laser facility, hydrodynamic testing facilities and materials-testing laboratories. In January 2003, the government announced the extension (to 25 years) of AWE ML's existing 10 year contract to manage Aldermaston, at a total cost of £5.3 billion, and in May 2003, the recruitment of new scientists was reported.

In October 2003, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) submitted outline plans for the new Orion laser facility to West Berkshire District council; it was approved in December; but in February 2004, the MoD withdrew this planning notice in the face of a threat of legal challenge; April 2004: hundreds of people take part in the London to Aldermaston march.

May 2004: the MoD resubmit the planning notice with additional (but limited) environmental information; June 2004: West Berkshire District Council local planning committee unanimously unoppose the planning notice – the next stage is a full planning notice.

## Who runs Aldermaston?

Aldermaston is owned by the British government's Ministry of Defence, but since 1 April 2000 Aldermaston has been managed (as a government owned, contractor operated, company) by AWE ML (Management Ltd), a consortium of three companies: British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL), US arms producers Lockheed Martin and the facilities management company Serco. AWE Burghfield, the assembly and dis-assembly site for Trident warheads, is also run by AWE ML.

## What are they planning at Aldermaston?

In the Site Development Strategy Plan there are four elements which, combined together, would enable AWE to design, test and build new weapons:

The new laser facility, which will replace the existing HELEN laser, with "the UK's own national laser facility", and enable the testing of nuclear materials under simulated test conditions;

The new hydrodynamics facility will enable test data to equal that previously only available from underground nuclear tests.

The new material science laboratories will also provide underground test quality diagnosis of weapons' materials.

A new supercomputer which will transpose test data into mathematical models of warhead performance,

and is already in place; another is planned. AWE do not have to build new production facilities: the A90 warhead production complex (built during the Trident programme) can be used to build and service nuclear warheads for many years to come. The skills and equipment to build small nuclear weapons also exist.

It is reported that a new generation weapon will be detonated by a relatively small thermonuclear explosion, which is considered not to break the taboo of "first-use" of Weapons of Mass Destruction. This technology could be perfected at laboratory level in 10-15 years.



## What does the government say?

"Following ratification by the United Kingdom in 1998 of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the maintenance of Trident and the capability to build a successor will have to be achieved without conducting nuclear tests. This poses considerable scientific and technical challenges. We are therefore developing a complex science-based programme at AWE that will require special facilities across a variety of disciplines. These are the main drivers for the future development of the Aldermaston site." Strategic Defence Review 1998.

"Decisions on whether to replace Trident are not needed this Parliament but are likely to be required in the next one. We will therefore continue to take appropriate steps to ensure that the range of options for maintaining a nuclear deterrent capability is kept open until that decision point." Defence White Paper, December 2003. Despite denials by the government, the decision point may already have been reached. Certainly the timing is right to begin working on a successor to Trident, which is due to come out of service in 2024. Trident took 14 years to complete, from decision to deployment.

## MORE BACKGROUND

<http://www.aldermaston.net/tng>

<http://www.nukeinfo.org.uk/updates>

# legal stuff

**Please read this before you decide to take part in Block the builders as a blockader OR a supporter. The police have extensive powers which might affect you even if you do not participate directly in a blockade.**

More details of legal support, bust-cards and logistics will be available closer to the day, but please read this now to help you make your decision.

## **What could I be arrested for?**

### **Obstruction of the Highway**

If you sit down in a public highway to prevent the builders from gaining access to the site there is a strong possibility that you will be arrested for obstruction of the highway. It may well take a while: the police might remove you without arresting you, if you go back and sit in the road again (as we hope you will), they may then arrest you.

Obstruction of the Highway is a minor offence (it is a non-recordable offence: this means it does not go on your criminal record), and if you are found guilty (as you inevitably will, see Courts, below) you will be sentenced to a fine, usually about £50 - £100, depending on your previous record; if it is your first offence you may get a conditional discharge.

Other possibilities include:

### **Aggravated Trespass. Section 68, 1994 Criminal Justice & Public Order Act**

This could be used if the blockade takes place at a gate which is on MOD land: S. 68 prohibits “trespass on land in the open air with the intent to disrupt or obstruct or intimidate someone going about a lawful activity on that land (or adjoining land) in the open air”.

**Under Section 69** of the same act, you will not be arrested but – if the senior police officer present “reasonably believes” that a S68 offence has/is/will be committed – warned to leave the land. It is an offence not to leave or to return within three months.

**Section 5, Crime and Public Order Act, 1986**, requires you to cause “distress alarm and harassment” to a reasonable person – usually the police – by using threatening or abusive behaviour or language (including banners or placards) or disorderly conduct. Note, even well behaved people have been arrested for this.

### **Obstruction of a Police Officer in the course of his/her duty**

This can also be used if you refuse to move from the middle of the road, if the police decide they don't like what you are doing. This is more serious than obstruction

of the highway, but has to be attached to another offence – such as obstruction of the highway.

Of course, they could try and stop the whole blockade, by using:

### **Section 14, Crime and Public Order Act, 1986**

If the police decide that the blockade is an assembly which would be “likely to result in serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community”, and designate somewhere harmless for us to assemble. The blockade would thus become an unlawful assembly. It is an offence to organise or takes part in an “unlawful assembly”

### **Breach of the Peace**

They may also pen you in and stop the blockade or arrest you if they think a breach of the peace might be caused. In theory, there must be violence or threat of violence for a charge to stick. In practice BoP is often used to prevent a demonstration from continuing. You can be bound over to keep the peace; this is not a criminal offence.

We will – during training – discuss tactics about how we could prevent or avoid these scenarios.

### **Going to court**

We are encouraging “non-arrestables” to help us provide legal and court support.

Don't worry, you will not be alone. More information will be available, and we would especially encourage people to join in any legal training either with BtB or other organisations before the event.

### **Probability of conviction**

Unless the police drop the charges (which they often do at Aldermaston), you are very likely to be convicted. Possible defences and further information will be provided, but don't expect to win a case based on international law at either Reading or Newbury Magistrates courts, who have spent two decades convicting Greenham women, Newbury by-pass protestors, and protestors at Aldermaston and Burghfield. Expect to be found guilty.

**DONATE!**

**BtB has no money!**

**This effort to obstruct the development of British nuclear weapons is funded solely from the pockets of concerned citizens. Support this explicitly nonviolent direct action campaign, send a cheque – made out to AWPC (but with a note telling us it is meant for BtB) – to:**

**AWPC c/o 18, Greenway Road, Bristol BS6 6SG**

# questions ... and answers ...

## How can I prepare?

We'll be organising trainings shortly before the anticipated date, but before then, try to take part in nonviolence training – especially blockade training (see also on the web, for example, Delia's Guide to Basic Blockading and other useful articles, at <http://www.uhc-collective.org.uk/knowledge/toolbox/attack/index.htm>). If you know other people from your area who are going to blockade, you could form an affinity group, and spend some time working with each other on practical techniques and tactics and on getting to know each other so that you're able to work as a strong supportive group. If you would like us to put you in touch with other pledgers in your area, make sure you choose this option on the pledge form.

## How will we know when it is going to happen?

Before any work can start on the site AWE will have to take their plans back to the Thatcham Planning Committee (bet they're shaking in their shoes at that one). Theoretically work can start any time after that. In practice there will be other indicators, including preparatory work on the site (for example, it has already been cleared). People involved in BtB are also monitoring the construction trade press and also watching out for AWE's own publicity.

## How do I get there? Where will I stay?

Most people will have lots of questions, so we will be producing more detailed information over the next few months. You can help us by letting us know what you need, to know and we'll try and come up with the

answers. Any help offered to help organise this would be welcome.

## Will I get arrested?

It's very possible: see the legal page.

## Who is behind Block the Builders?

BiB is an initiative by Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp(aign) and some of their friends. AWPC is a women-only group, but BtB is open to both women and men. BtB is part of the campaign to stop the next generation of nuclear weapons (TNG) at AWE Aldermaston.

## What if I can't make it on the day?

Organisers know that not everyone who makes a pledge will actually be able to just drop everything and come – possibly at short notice. One suggestion is that people who can't make it nominate another date, and do their own blockade. It may be smaller, but it may be more effective. BtB cannot guarantee the same level of support for smaller actions, though we hope to offer whatever support is needed.

## One blockade isn't going to stop anything, is it?

Well, no! Probably not. In a perfect world, there'd be enough of us to maintain a 24-hr blockade, every day until they stop. But then, if it was a perfect world, they probably wouldn't be building nuclear weapons.

## Can we do it?

Yes we can!

# pledge

## To sign the pledge you must confirm that:

- \* you have read and understood the information contained in this pack
- \* you understand and agree to the nonviolence guidelines (see p1).
- \* you agree to receive information via the tng\_alerts email list (operated by AWPC)
- \* you commit to an "arrestable" role (ie prepared to take action which \*may\* result in your arrest) **or** support role.

## Only return this form if you are confident you understand the implications of joining this campaign.

name: \_\_\_\_\_  
email: \_\_\_\_\_  
town: \_\_\_\_\_  
mobile: (for SMS action alerts) \_\_\_\_\_  
other phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Please choose a role

- arrestable **OR**
- supporting

## Please choose one or more support roles

- legal observer
- trainer/facilitator
- driver with vehicle
- media work
- prop/equipment maker
- I will send a donation for the campaign (details p3)

## OR

My organisation/group supports Block the Builders  
name of org/group: \_\_\_\_\_

## Choose either:

- I am happy for my name and home town to be made public **OR**
- Please do not disclose my name and home town
- Please put me in touch with pledgers in my area

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to:** BtB, c/o AWPC, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DY.