

Oppose NATO war mongering: Attend International May Day online rally

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The following is a statement by Katie Rhodes, the Socialist Equality Party's general election candidate for Glasgow Central.

A major NATO exercise is taking place off the coast of Scotland.

“Joint Warrior” began on April 11 and is scheduled to run over two weeks until April 24. Such NATO exercises take place twice annually, but this is the largest ever. It involves the UK, United States Canada, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Turkey. Two non-NATO countries, Finland and Sweden, are also participating.

A NATO statement read, “Three of NATO’s Standing Naval Forces consisting of 14 ships have joined more than 40 additional warships and submarines, as well as 70 aircraft. In total, around 13,000 personnel from 14 countries are participating in the exercise.”

The *Telegraph* reported, “submarine hunting drills led by HMS Ambush, one of the [UK Royal] Navy’s new Astute class hunter killer submarines, and the frigate HMS Somerset” will be conducted.

“There is also activity taking place at several other locations in the UK,” the *Herald* reported. The chief executive of the civilian Prestwick airport commented, “We look forward to hosting numerous aircraft from the RAF and the Royal Navy as well as those from countries including France, Belgium and Holland. Aircraft types should include various fast jets, helicopters and transport aircraft such as Hawks, Falcon 20s, A340s and C130s”.

The tensions being stoked were demonstrated on Tuesday when Russian inspectors arrived in Scottish waters at Royal Air Force Lossiemouth, to monitor the NATO exercise. A team from the Russian National

Nuclear Threat Reduction Center was given permission to observe, under reciprocal arrangements regularly exercised by the UK and other NATO powers. A spokesperson for the MoD said the inspection would “have no impact on Joint Warrior” and that the inspectors “will be accompanied throughout.”

At the same time, a Russian warship, a tanker and a support ship were monitored by the Royal Navy warship HMS Argyll, with a Lynx helicopter providing air support, as they passed through the English Channel en route from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic.

It was disclosed just hours later that RAF Typhoons war planes, based in Scotland, were scrambled after, according to the *Herald*, “two Russian Bear H aircraft were spotted flying close to UK airspace.” The Typhoons were supported by “Voyagers based at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire.”

No public discussion has taken place on these military operations, or their extremely dangerous implications.

These are, after all, exercises designed to simulate a military engagement with Russia, a conflict that could only be a precursor to World War III.

Prime Minister David Cameron made this clear when he said the NATO exercise would “send a clear message” that “the UK and NATO have the military capabilities, resolve and ability to support our Eastern Allies and defend our own waters and airspace.”

The de facto political censorship of the military exercises is designed to keep people in the dark as to what is being planned.

Nothing is said by any of the major parties in Britain on the situation in Ukraine, the escalation of threats against and NATO encirclement of Russia, similar aggressive moves by the US and its allies against China, or the worsening crisis in the Middle East—a

region whose population has suffered the catastrophic results of more than a decade of US-British-led wars. This is despite the fact that just prior to the election campaign, UK Defence Secretary Michael Fallon announced that Britain would send 75 military trainers and staff to aid opposition forces in Syria—effectively a declaration of war.

This conspiracy of silence is aimed at demobilising the millions of working people throughout the UK who are opposed to Britain's war mongering and who, not so long ago, took to the streets in their hundreds of thousands against the illegal wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, the leadership of the anti-war movement, above all the various pseudo-left parties such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), drove that mass movement into the ground by politically subordinating it to the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and, in Scotland, the Scottish National Party (SNP). They opposed any independent political mobilisation of the working class in a struggle against war.

Today the broad anti-war sentiment that remains, including opposition to the presence of Trident nuclear weapons in the UK, is being consciously driven by the SSP, SWP and the rest behind the SNP, a party that supports the NATO alliance, which is armed to teeth with nuclear weapons. At a recent “Bairns (children) not Bombs” rally in Glasgow, amid a sea of Saltire flags, pseudo-left proclaimed this pro-NATO party as a force for peace.

On Tuesday, the Scrap Trident coalition, which includes all the pseudo-left outfits, held a protest at the Faslane Naval Base near Glasgow where Trident is located. A statement on the group's web site stressed that the various organisations present “were united in sending a strong signal *in the context of the general election that we all must take this unprecedented opportunity to elect a Westminster Parliament* that will relegate the UK's nuclear weapons to the dustbin of history” [emphasis added].

In this election the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is the only political party putting forward a genuine, socialist opposition to war. Our manifesto explains, “These elections take place under conditions in which the NATO powers, led by the US and Britain, have utilised the Western-backed coup in Ukraine to

despatch thousands of troops and advanced weaponry to the states bordering Russia. Their immediate aim is to engineer regime-change in Moscow, as part of a broader geopolitical strategy for world domination.”

The SEP, the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, fights to mobilise the working class in opposition to militarism and war. We insist “The international working class is the only social force capable of putting an end to capitalism—the root cause of economic chaos and war. To carry this forward, one thing above all is necessary—a new party based on socialist internationalism.”

At the centre of our election campaign is the convening, by the International Committee of the Fourth International and *World Socialist Web Site*, of an International May Day Online Rally to be held May 3.

The rally's central task will be to organise workers and young people internationally in a new political movement against imperialist war and capitalist plunder. It will be broadcast live at meetings in Glasgow and London. We urge all those who can to make plans to attend these meetings, or if not, to register today and participate online.



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