

# Global ceasefire appeal

United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, has made an urgent 'Appeal for a Global Ceasefire'. The Appeal was issued on 23 March 2020 as the Coronavirus pandemic spread across the planet, as deaths mounted and as it became clear that urgent global action was required. The text of the Appeal is as follows:

"Our world faces a common enemy: COVID-19. The virus does not care about nationality or ethnicity, faction or faith. It attacks all, relentlessly.

Meanwhile, armed conflict rages on around the world. The most vulnerable – women and children, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the displaced – pay the highest price. They are also at the highest risk of suffering devastating losses from COVID-19.

Let's not forget that in war-ravaged countries, health systems have collapsed. Health professionals, already few in number, have often been targeted. Refugees and others displaced by violent conflict are doubly vulnerable.

**The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war.**

**That is why today, I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives.**

To warring parties, I say: *Pull back from hostilities. Put aside mistrust and animosity. Silence the guns; stop the artillery; end the airstrikes.*

This is crucial...To help create corridors for life-saving aid. To open precious windows for diplomacy. To bring hope to places among the most vulnerable to COVID-19.



Let us take inspiration from coalitions and dialogue slowly taking shape among rival parties in some parts to enable joint approaches to COVID-19. But we need much more.

**End the sickness of war and fight the disease that is ravaging our world.**

It starts by stopping the fighting everywhere. Now. That is what our human family needs, now more than ever."

More than two million people have

now supported a petition backing the Appeal, which has attracted support from a large number of NGOs and peace organizations. Guterres's call for a Global Ceasefire deserves all of this support.

The Appeal poses important questions for those members of the UN Security Council and General Assembly member states. Will they back the call, or will they stand in the way of peace and the urgent need for coordinated global action to defeat COVID-19?

## COVID-19 and the UK's 'Continuous At Sea Deterrent'

Two former British Royal Navy Commanders have called into question the need for deployment of Britain's 'Continuous At Sea Deterrent' in the context of more urgent needs in health and social care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commanders, Robert Forsyth and Robert Green, made their call in response to an article by writer and journalist George Monbiot ('What does 'National Defence' mean in a

Pandemic ...', *Guardian*, 08/04/2020). Monbiot's focus is on the arms trade and government arms spending in general, though he also calls on the US and UK to meet their disarmament commitments under the NPT.

Forsyth and Green responded by highlighting the costs and risks associated with Britain's nuclear weapons operations. Their letter was published [see pages 2 & 4/5] and has received wide-ranging attention.

# We spend billions on nuclear weapons. Let's fund the NHS instead.

George Monbiot points out that the UK dismissed early warnings about coronavirus, spending billions on the arms industry while ignoring real threats. This Covid-19 crisis focuses our minds on where priorities really lie; the NHS will undoubtedly emerge as a frontrunner.

We need to spend on “national defence” because that is a prime responsibility of government, but it should be commensurate with our national income and with the real threats facing our nation. In that light, one has to question whether spending between £2bn and £3bn per year (actual government figures are hard to come by) on maintaining a Trident submarine on constant nuclear deterrent patrol at sea – when the missiles are not targeted and have been at “several days’ notice to fire” for over 20 years for lack of any perceived nuclear threat – is now a proper use of our rapidly vanishing national financial resources.

This is on top of some £60bn-plus to replace the submarines, their missiles and other assorted costs associated with Trident.

Cmdr Robert Forsyth RN (Ret'd)

*Former executive officer of a Polaris submarine and nuclear submarine commanding officer*

Cmdr Robert Green RN (Ret'd)

*Former Fleet Air Arm nuclear-armed aircraft bombardier-navigator*

**Veteran anti-nuclear campaigner, Bruce Kent, also had a response to George Monbiot's article:**

George Monbiot deserves a prize for his article – such clear common sense. It makes it even more ludicrous that, despite spending £205bn on a new generation of nuclear weapons, the end product will not even remotely be “independent”. We have to borrow from the US, on a rotating basis, the missiles on which to put our nuclear warheads.

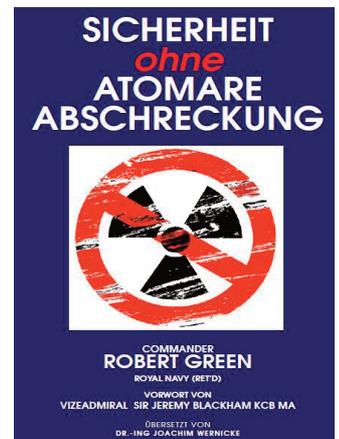
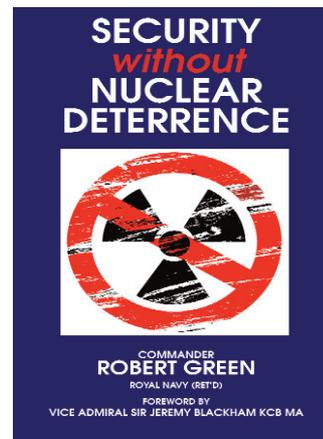
A sign of foolish national vanity? Certainly. Theft from the NHS? Inevitably. Immoral and useless? Undoubtedly.

Bruce Kent

*Vice-president, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament*



## Security *without* Nuclear Deterrence



by **Commander Robert Green RN (Ret'd)**  
Foreword by **Vice Admiral Jeremy Blackham**  
German translation by **Joachim Wernicke**

‘It is hard-won wisdom that today’s nuclear-armed states and those who would follow in their footsteps would do well to heed.’  
Dr Zia Mian, Princeton University

‘I commend this book to all who wish to gain a deeper understanding of nuclear deterrence, surely one of the most controversial ideas of our time.’ H.E. Sergio Duarte, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

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# Covid-19, peace and conversion

Europe is now the epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic. The situation is very serious: lives are in great peril and society has ceased to function normally. As CND's Kate Hudson pointed out the outbreak of a pandemic should not have come as a surprise to the UK government and we should assume that other governments were aware of the risks. Yet despite repeated warnings and the inclusion of such risks in successive security assessments, other 'security considerations' were allowed to dominate spending and infrastructure decisions. Governments have focussed spending on nuclear weapons, war planes, guns and tanks rather than investing for real human security.

Surely, effective responses to a pandemic demand global cooperation, global solidarity and global action. Unfortunately, Covid-19 arrived among us at a time of global power shifts, global competition and global tension. Covid-19 arrived among us in the era of 'America First' and 'Get

Brexit Done'. Covid-19 arrived at a time when there is a U.S. president who insists on calling it the 'Chinese virus'. Covid-19 arrived in a Global Tinderbox. The peace movements have a special responsibility to raise the alarm on these risks and to promote alternative approaches.

First of all, this means demanding an end to the blame game, an end to sanctions regimes and other hybrid-warfare techniques, an end to war games, an end to threats of regime change, an end to the arms race and reassigning armed forces to peaceful, pandemic-busting, activities. It means confidence building measures, renewing global treaties – as well as taking them seriously – and a commitment to reducing global tensions.

Most importantly, from *END Info's* perspective, it means nuclear abolition. The Covid-19 pandemic is a perfect example of the wasteful and dangerous nature of nuclear weaponry. Hundreds of billions of Dollars,

Pounds, Euros – and the rest – have been wasted on weapons of mass murder yet in the UK, for example, there are not enough respirators, acute care hospital beds or arrangements for social care provision to cope. Nuclear abolition would not only liberate enormous amounts of money but would liberate expert scientific, technical and production capacity to produce for social good. This is the essence of 'Arms Conversion and Defence Diversification': conversion from socially destructive to socially useful production.

In the UK, the government has already asked some companies to 're-tool' to produce much needed medical equipment yet only weeks ago the same government officials would have told us that such demands are unrealistic. Why does it take an acute crisis to make possible the allegedly 'impossible'? Because war-fighting and nuclear doctrines are hard-wired into governmental thinking. We need to act now to turn this around.

## Invest in Healthcare not Militarization

We, the signatories, call on the world leaders meeting at the General Assembly of the United Nations\*, to dramatically reduce military spending in favour of healthcare and all social and environmental needs.

\*Signatures will be brought to the United Nations General Assembly on the 1st day of the next session opening on September 15th 2020

### Health Care Stress

Together with the International Peace Bureau, the world's oldest peace organization and Nobel Prize winner, we are witnessing the consequences of irresponsible political decisions that have led to dramatic under-investment in healthcare. All over the world, health systems are reaching the limits of their strength and heroic front-line staff are under massive pressure. The coronavirus emergency shows the weakened state our societies find themselves in: a



world driven by financialization, shareholder value, and austerity has weakened our ability to defend the common good and placed human life in danger on a global scale.

Employees fearful of job and income loss are tempted to go to work sick. The elderly are vulnerable and need help. The virus hits the weakest hardest. Privatization, austerity measures, and the

neoliberal system have brought local, regional and national health services to the brink of collapse.

We can already draw lessons for the future – healthcare is a human right for young and old, for all people in all parts of the world. Healthcare must never be slashed or subordinated in the pursuit of profit through privatization.

*Continued on Page 4 ...*

## IPB Petition:

Continued from Page 3 ...

### Time for a global social contract

The ILO reports on the labor market consequences with a potential loss of 25 million jobs, more than during the 2008 financial crisis. Working poverty is expected to increase significantly, up to an additional 35 million individuals.

We support the efforts of the trade union movement globally and locally, in their call for a new social contract. We support their call for economic measures and resources to protect jobs, incomes, public services, and welfare.

### Prioritize Disarmament

The world spends US\$1.8 trillion on military expenditure every year and is scheduled to spend 1 trillion dollars on new nuclear weapons in the next 20 years.

Militarization is the wrong path for the world to take; it fuels tensions and raises the potential for war and conflict. It aggravates already heightened nuclear tensions.

World leaders must put disarmament and peace at the center of policy making and develop a new agenda for disarmament that includes banning nuclear weapons. We reiterate our call for governments to sign up to the TPNW treaty.

Disarmament is a major key to the great transformation of our economies, to ensure that human beings and not profit are most valued; economies in which ecological challenges will be solved and global social justice will be pursued.

With disarmament, the implementation of the SDGs, a global social contract, and a new global green peace deal, we can address challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic.

We are calling the world leaders, meeting at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2020, to act for a culture of peace. A peaceful path means that we need a global strategy, a global social contract, and global cooperation to ensure planet-wide support for people. This will be the human solidarity of the 21st century – for and with the people.

**Visit: [www.ipb.org](http://www.ipb.org) to sign the petition.**

## Former Royal Navy Commanders question ‘Continuous At Sea Deterrent’ as the costs of Covid-19 spiral



*As the global impact of Covid-19 becomes apparent, questions about the real meaning of ‘security’ come to the fore. The letter printed on the adjacent page was circulated at the beginning of April by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation to every British MP, Member of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh and Northern Irish Assembly Member. The call for an end to ‘Continuous At Sea Deterrent’ falls short of the demand for complete nuclear abolition but if we are to achieve nuclear disarmament, then every fissure and fracture in the dominant ‘deterrence ideology’ must be probed and exploited.*

### Press Release

02/04/2020

Three former Royal Navy Commanders, Ian Blackford MP, a member of the House of Lords, academics and peace campaigners have written to MPs, MSPs, Welsh and Northern Irish AMs calling into question the deployment of Britain’s nuclear ‘Continuous At Sea Deterrent’.

Commander Robert Forsyth RN (Ret’d), a former nuclear submariner\* and a signatory to the letter, commented:

“It is completely unacceptable that the UK continues to spend billions of pounds on deploying and modernising the Trident Nuclear Weapon System when faced with the threats to health, climate change and world economies that Coronavirus poses.”

Tom Unterrainer, Director of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation\*\* which circulated the letter, commented:

“This pandemic and the inability of the British government to either prepare for or effectively respond to such an immediate threat to life demonstrates the twisted priorities at the heart of nuclear weapons spending. Rather than work to guarantee real security this government prioritises the acquisition and deployment of weapons of mass murder.”

The signatories to this letter hope that their efforts to question the nuclear ‘Continuous At Sea Deterrent’ will encourage politicians and the wider public to begin to question the morality and the feasibility of nuclear weaponry.

### Notes

\* Commander Robert Forsyth RN (Ret’d) served as 2nd in Command aboard Polaris nuclear armed submarines, commanded two other submarines and ran the Commanding Officer’s Qualifying Course

\*\* The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation was established by the Earl Russell, OM, FRS in 1963 to continue his work for peace, human rights and social justice

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01/04/2020

### RE: Covid-19 and Continuous At Sea Deterrent

The increasing cost of Coronavirus will require decades to recover. Meanwhile, the UK's Trident nuclear weapon system remains on Continuous At Sea Deterrent patrol costing some £2 billion a year and using scarce military assets to protect the on-patrol submarine. This is despite Trident missiles having been de-targeted since 1994 and stood down at 'several days' notice to fire (HMG website) since 1998. Furthermore, recent public statements by the Chairs of the Defence Select and Public Accounts Committees advise that two out of four Vanguard class submarines that carry Trident missiles have been unavailable for more than a year, placing what must be considerable strain on the remaining two (normally three) submarine crews now having to carry out patrols of up to four months at a time. The morale of the submarine crew on patrol, understandably worried about their families at home and knowing their weapon system is stood down, must be a concern, as is their own state of health and exposure to the virus.

In these circumstances, and lacking any foreseeable threat of a 'bolt from the blue' nuclear weapon attack on the UK, is it appropriate for the Government to continue spending billions of pounds on Continuous at Sea Deterrent, as well as building new nuclear warheads and the submarines to carry them?

Yours sincerely,

Commander Robert Forsyth RN (Ret'd)  
2nd in Command Polaris submarine, commanded two other submarines and the Commanding Officer's Qualifying Course

Commander Robert Green RN (Ret'd)  
Former nuclear-armed aircraft bombardier-navigator, Staff Officer (Intelligence) to CINFLEET in Falklands War

Commander Colin Tabcart RN (Ret'd)  
Former Senior Engineer Officer, Polaris submarine

Rt Hon Ian Blackford MP  
Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, SNP Westminster Group Leader

Lord Green of Deddington

Professor Nick Grief  
Kent Law School and Doughty Street International

Canon Christopher Hall  
Church of England General Synod 1972-1985, speaker in 'Church and the Bomb' debate 1985

Dr Nick Ritchie  
Senior Lecturer, University of York

Tony Simpson  
Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation

Tom Unterrainer  
Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation

Angie Zelter  
Public Interest Case Against Trident

# Challenging Nuclear Weapons in Europe

*Advancing the Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds to midnight, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists warns: "The world is sleepwalking its way through a newly unstable nuclear landscape."*

**Monday April 27 - 15:00-16:30 CET**

Registration : [arielled@ipb.org](mailto:arielled@ipb.org)

The tensions between nuclear weapons possessors states have worsen dramatically these last months and Europe is at the centre of the storm. The suspension of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty with Russia has directly exposed Europe to a new nuclear arms race and there is no indication that a successor to the US-Russian New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) will be negotiated before the February 2021 deadline. NATO states are much too silent, worse, French President Macron suggested that France's nuclear weapons could become a European "deterrent".

But, along with the 74% Millenials thinking that war and nuclear annihilation can be avoided, let's point the historical movement building up around the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) ratified by 36 states and 81 have signed the Treaty, putting it on its way to entering into force in the coming months. What is the situation from different perspectives in Europe? How can civil society bring its contribution?

This Webinar replacing a Side Event due to take place at the opening of the 2020 NPT session will host experts and activists to discuss with the participants how to challenge of nuclear weapons in Europe.

CHAIR: Reiner Braun IPB Executive Director

Hans Kristensen – Federation of American Scientists - Points of tensions in regards to Nuclear Weapons in Europe

Oleg Bodrov-Coalition for a Clean Baltic/Russia – A view from Russia of the nuclear tensions in Europe

Kate Hudson Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament – UK nuclear developments

Bastien Lachaud French MP - French situation

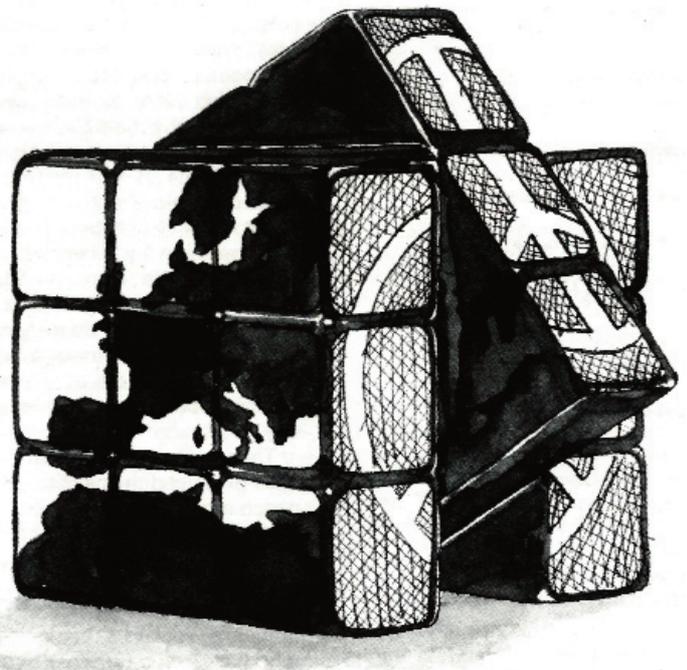
Katherine Vogler German MP - German situation - 5min

Daniel Hogsta ICAN – Potential tracks for progress in Europe(TBC)

ITUC Representative

Susi Snyder –Pax/ Don't Bank On the Bomb campaign on divestments and financial institutions

Philip Jennings- IPB- building coalition with the social movements



*World Conference goes online*

## Abolish Nuclear Weapons; Resist and Reverse the Climate Crisis; For Social and Economic Justice

April 25, 2020 – 9-11 a.m. EDT, 3-5 p.m. Western Europe | Register at: [at: bit.ly/abolishnuclear](https://bit.ly/abolishnuclear)



The *Online World Conference: Abolish Nuclear Weapons; Resist and Reverse the Climate Crisis; For Social and Economic Justice* will be in place of the in-person conference that has been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of the suffering and changes being wrought by the pandemic, the two- hour world conference will focus on the continuing urgent need to abolish nuclear weapons and its relationship to stanching the climate emergency and challenging injustices which have left so many people marginalized and vulnerable. Additional sessions of the World Conference and four workshops will be for a healthier time in the future.

Confirmed speakers include: (Hibakusha), Dr. Carlos Umana of IPPNW, Hiroshi Takakusaki of Gensuikyo, Joseph Gerson of AFSC and the Campaign for Peace Disarmament and Common Security, Reiner Braun of the International Peace Bureau, Emad Kiyaei Interdisciplinary Global Development Group (Iran), with additional speakers soon to be confirmed.

# Nuclear forces and Covid-19

According to reports in the US magazine *Newsweek* (09/04/20) and Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists, all but one US nuclear base has reported cases of Covid-19. Despite the impact of the virus, US military officials insist that they remain able to launch a nuclear strike. This may well be the case, but it must be beyond doubt that the human impact of Covid-19 will add strains and stresses to US nuclear capabilities, thus increasing the already alarming risks at the heart of 'deterrence'.

The US is not the only nuclear power and will not be alone in experiencing increased risks. As John Krzyzaniak makes clear in an important article for the *Bulletin*, the UK's nuclear forces are under some considerable pressure:

"With only two operational nuclear submarines left, the British Royal Navy has almost no margin of error in dealing with the coronavirus."

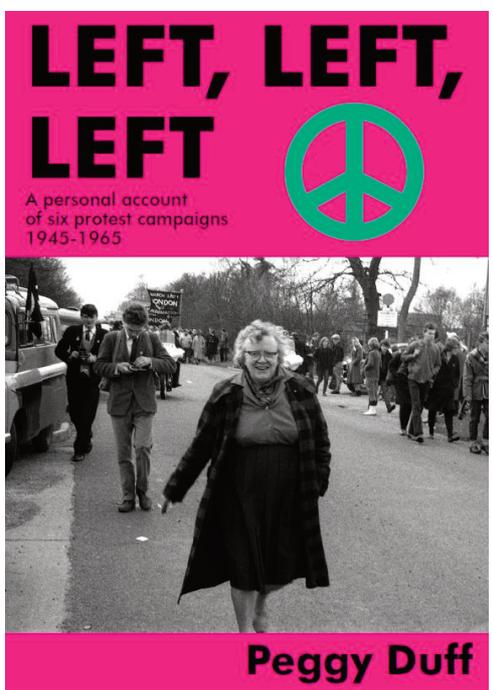
Krzyzaniak points out that the 'fitness' or otherwise of nuclear submarine fleets and submariners is not the only potential risk:

"For every country, the top of the chain of command is another potential point of failure. For instance, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has sole authority in his government to authorize a nuclear strike, became the first world leader to test positive for the coronavirus on March 27".

Which left open the question of who - if anyone - had the authority to launch a nuclear strike once Johnson was taken into intensive care on April 6.

Similar risks will present themselves to all nuclear forces with submarine launch capabilities.

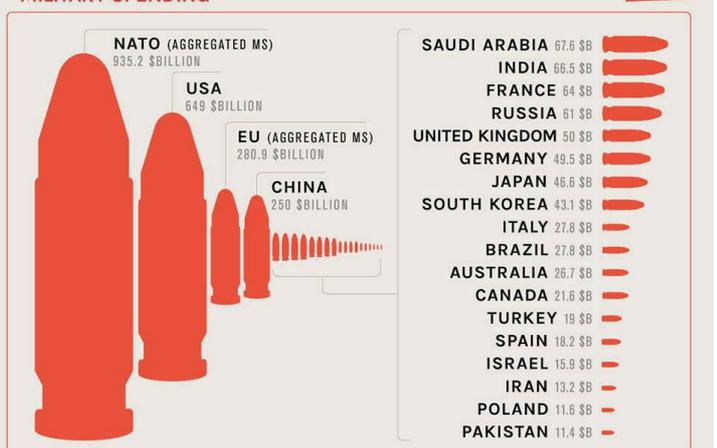
For more information see: <https://thebulletin.org/2020/04/how-nuclear-forces-worldwide-are-dealing-with-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>



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# NATO and Covid-19

Manlio Dinucci

The 30 NATO foreign ministers met on April 2 by video conference, and instructed US general Tod Wolters, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, to "coordinate the necessary military support to fight the coronavirus crisis".

He is the same general who declared in the United States Senate on February 25 "nuclear forces are supporting every US military operation in Europe" and "I am a fan of a flexible first-use policy" of nuclear weapons, that is nuclear attack by surprise ("Dr. Strangelove takes care of our health", *II manifesto*, March 24).

General Wolters is the supreme commander of NATO as head of the United States European Command. He is therefore part of the Pentagon's chain of command, which has absolute priority. Its strict rules are confirmed by a recent episode: the aircraft carrier Roosevelt commander, Brett Crozier, was removed from command because he violated military secrecy by urging aid sending, faced with the spread of the coronavirus on board.

To "fight coronavirus crisis", General Wolters has "fast-track paths through Europe's airspace for military flights", while civilian flights have almost disappeared.

Fast-track paths are also used by the US strategic bombers B2-Spirit for nuclear attack: on March 20, they took off from Fairford in England, together with Norwegian F-16 fighters, they flew to the Arctic towards Russian territory. In this way - General Basham, deputy commander of the US Air Force in Europe - explains "we can promptly and effectively respond to threats in the region, demonstrating our determination to bring our fighting power everywhere in the world".

While NATO is committed to "fighting coronavirus" in Europe, two of the major European Allies, France and Great Britain, sent their warships to the Caribbean.

The amphibious assault ship Dixmund sailed on April 3 from Toulon to French Guiana for what President Macron calls "an unprecedented military operation". called "Resilience", in the framework of the "war to coronavirus".

Dixmund can perform the secondary function of hospital ship with 69 beds and 7 for intensive care. The primary role of this large ship, 200 m long and with a flight deck of 5000 m<sup>2</sup>, is that of amphibious assault: approaching the enemy coast, it attacks with dozens of helicopters and landing crafts transporting troops and armored vehicles. Similar characteristics, albeit on a smaller scale, has the British ship Argus, which sailed on April 2 to British Guyana. The two European ships will take position in the same Caribbean waters near Venezuela, where the war fleet is arriving - with the most modern coastal combat ships (also built by Italian Leonardo Company for US Navy) and thousands of marines - sent by President Trump officially to stop drug trafficking.

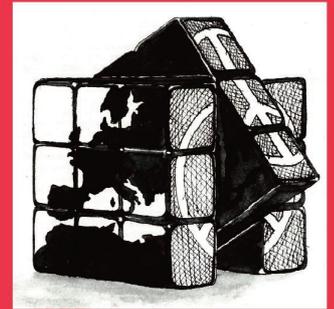
He accuses Venezuelan President Maduro of "taking advantage of the coronavirus crisis to increase the drug trafficking, he finances his narco-state with". The purpose of the operation, supported by NATO, is to strengthen the embargo tightening to economically strangle Venezuela (a country with the largest oil reserves in the world), whose situation is aggravated by the coronavirus that has started to spread. The aim is to depose regularly elected President Maduro (on whose head the US has placed a \$ 15 million bounty) and to establish a government that will bring the country into the sphere of US domination. It cannot be excluded that an incident could be caused as a pretext for the invasion of Venezuela. The coronavirus crisis creates favourable international conditions for an operation of this type, perhaps presented as "humanitarian".

## END Papers 1

European Nuclear Disarmament

*Global Tinderbox: Time for Europe's Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone?*

Tom Untertriner



Produced by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation

# END Papers

## European Nuclear Disarmament

In addition to the monthly *END Info* we have started a series of *END Papers* which seek to explore and analyse issues in greater depth. The first two editions of *END Papers* are available for download. Please read and circulate to your networks and please consider submitting your own ideas for future editions.

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The Spokesman 144

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