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Legendary Chicago activists Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers talk about this week's protests in Chicago, where NATO will hold its largest summit to date. Thousands of protesters from a diverse coalition of organizations including unions, antiwar groups, immigrant rights organizations and Occupy are expected to march in the streets. Chicago is preparing a massive security operation, with the Department of Homeland Security declaring the summit a "National Special Security Event." Civil liberties advocates have warned it could provide the first public test of a new law that expands the ability of the Secret Service to suppress protests in or around certain restricted zones. "We think that NATO should be meeting in an underground bunker or on a remote island," Dohrn says. "[Chicago] is being treated as really a practice military zone ... [while] we don't have money here for community mental health clinics, we don't have money for public libraries or for schools, we don't have money for public transportation... We want peace and not permanent wars abroad and military war games and [the] national security state at home."

Transcript

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Antiwar protests have already begun in Chicago ahead of this weekend's NATO summit. The two-day meeting is NATO's largest in its 60-year history. The gathering will draw representatives from some 50 countries, including leaders of the 28 members of the military alliance. On Tuesday, NATO invited Pakistan to attend after the country proposed reopening its Afghan border to NATO supplies.

The summit comes at a time when public scrutiny of NATO is on the rise because of the 11-year war in Afghanistan and NATO's bombing of Libya last year. The NATO summit is also expected to attract thousands of protesters from a diverse coalition of organizations including unions, antiwar groups, immigrant rights organizations and Occupy groups.

This is Zoe Sigman of Occupy Chicago.

ZOE SIGMAN: Mayor 1 Percent Emanuel has issued an invitation to NATO's warmongers to invade Chicago, bringing the military arm of the 1 percent right here to our city. For some Chicagoans, the presence of military policing will be a taste of the daily reality of communities in Afghanistan and Libya. For other Chicagoans, the warnings of violence downtown echo the reality of police repression they face in their everyday life. NATO is a symptom of the global system of violence and oppression at the hands of the 1 percent.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: The week of protests began on Monday, when dozens of peace activists picketed at President Obama's campaign headquarters. Eight protesters from the Catholic Workers group were arrested for refusing to leave the lobby. On Tuesday, four immigrants' rights activists were arrested after refusing to leave a federal courthouse that hears immigration cases.

Chicago was originally scheduled to host both the G8 and NATO conferences this week, but the White House moved the G8 summit to Camp David, the heavily guarded presidential country retreat in Maryland. Some activists plan to protest outside Camp David before making the 11-hour journey to the NATO protests in Chicago.

AMY GOODMAN: Chicago is preparing a massive security operation to keep the protesters away from the NATO summit. The Department Homeland Security has been declared the summit to be a "National Special Security Event," a designation normally reserved for the Olympics, the Super Bowl and the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. The American Civil Liberties Union says the NATO summit could be the first public test of HR 347, a new law that expands the ability of the Secret Service to suppress protests in or around certain restricted zones.

To talk more about the NATO summit and the protests, we go now to Chicago where we're joined by two veteran Chicago activists: Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn. In the '60s, both were involved in SDS, Students for a Democratic Society, later the

Weather Underground. Bill Ayers is a retired education professor and author of many books, including *Teaching Toward Freedom: Moral*

Commitment and Ethical Action in the Classroom

and also

Fugitive Days: A Memoir

. Bernardine Dohrn is a clinical professor at Northwestern Law School. She founded Northwestern's Children and Family Justice Center.

We welcome you both to *Democracy Now!* Can you talk about what the plans are for this weekend and why you're so deeply involved with the protests against the NATO summit? Let's begin with Bernardine Dohrn.

BERNARDINE DOHRN: Good morning, Amy.

We're deeply involved because NATO is a global secret cabal. It is the military arm of the global 1 percent. And really, I think NATO has become background to how we hear the news: "

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forces,

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bombings." And when you try to find out what

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is, you realize that it is the largest global military alliance in human history and that its key elements are that it is about permanent war, it is about dirty war, it is about nuclear war, and it is about hot wars—really four of them right now. So we don't really know what it is. They are secretive. And when I first went to look at a

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website to see what it was, a dove floats across the screen on the first page of the official

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website. By the end of the

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website, it's helicopters, fighter planes and drones. So, we, I think, are not made safer by

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. It is secretive. And it is opposed to peace and to our future.

So, a wide array of Chicagoans have come together in a coalition, meeting really for nine months, to stand up and ask for peace, to really say, "We don't need NATO. We need an end

to the war in Afghanistan. We need a complete end to the war in Iraq. We need to rethink what just happened in Libya and what's going on every day in Pakistan." So there's an array of events happening, beginning with a National Nurses Association rally, a permitted rally on Friday. I think the support of unions and workers, the support of African-American activists in the city and Latino and immigrant groups, a wide array of women's and activist groups and Occupy and students, and, in a way, most importantly, the Iraqi and Afghan vets against the war, who will be leading the big demonstration on Sunday when NATO opens its meeting here.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: So, Bernadine Dohrn, what are the activists who are gathering in Chicago—what are they calling for NATO to do? How do they want the organization to become more accountable?

BERNARDINE DOHRN: Well, we think that NATO should be meeting, you know, in an underground bunker or on a remote island. The idea that NATO has been invited to Chicago to have the kind of war games that have been going on here for the last six months and now accelerated this week, so that we have restricted zones, and we have the shutdown of universities and colleges, the shutdown of businesses, the closings of the major museums here, it is being treated as really a practice military zone.

And we actually feel very strongly—I think the way Americans feel—that we want an end to these wars. These wars are hated by the American people. They don't make us safer in any way. In fact, they jeopardize our safety. Bombing foreign countries, occupying other countries in the world does not make us safer. Killing civilians without any accountability makes people angry.

And so, our resources, this enormous amount of money and resources, and suddenly we don't have money here for mental—community mental health clinics. We don't have money for public libraries or for schools. We don't have money for public transportation. But somehow we have the millions of dollars necessary, or the mayor accessed the money, to hold this event right here in the city of Chicago. So we want peace and not this wars—permanent wars abroad and military war games and national security state at home.

BILL AYERS: Yeah, we would like to see an end to NATO. And we would like to see—in every

country, every member country of

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, there's a popular movement to ask its government to leave

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disbanded.

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is an instrument of war. And after 9/11, it transformed itself. I mean, its name is historical, you know, anomaly, but it's the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. But after 9/11, the Bush administration invoked Article 5, and it became the instrument of permanent war, pre-emptive war, and it really has no place in a free and peaceful and democratic world.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, then, Bill Ayers, let me get your comment on Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the secretary general of NATO, on why NATO continued to exist after the end of the Cold War. He recently wrote, quote, "NATO needed no external reasons to exist. Yet history would provide them soon enough."

"In Bosnia and Kosovo, NATO intervened to stop massive human-rights violations. In Libya, we enforced a [United Nations] Security Council resolution to protect civilians. And in Afghanistan, we are denying a safe haven to extremists."

Again, those are the comments of the head of NATO; those are the comments of Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Bill Ayers, your response?

BILL AYERS: Yeah, I mean, the problem with all of those is that they're rationales, and they're self-affirming. They don't have any transparency in the sense that people or governments can intervene and say, "No, this is wrong. We don't want to be a part of that." In fact, I mean, Bernardine began by talking about these kind of four aspects: permanent war, dirty war, nuclear war/nuclear preparation, and then hot wars. What NATO does is it allows every government deniability. So the United States and every other country in

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violates the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but they do it by saying, "It's not us who are violating it, it's

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is doing it. It's not U.S. nuclear bombs in Europe, it's

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bombs in Europe." Well, that's just completely false. Afghanistan is a case in point: 90,000 American troops; the next largest force is Great Britain, 9,000. And that coalition is unraveling. The headlines in all the local papers are about the attempt of

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to hold together through this summit. The election in France of the Socialist party gives new urgency to the fact that

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is unraveling at the top. People are not in favor of these wars anywhere in the world. And in the United States, there's only something like 27 percent of Americans support these wars, and yet the wars go on—a real crisis for democracy, a crisis for the peace movement.

AMY GOODMAN: We're going to break and then come back—

BERNARDINE DOHRN: I want to emphasize its secrecy, because this is a meeting that is not open—

AMY GOODMAN: Bernardine, we're going to break and then come back to this discussion.

We are joined by Bill Ayers, retired education professor at University of Illinois at Chicago, and Bernardine Dohrn, clinical professor at Northwestern Law School. This is *Democracy Now!*

We'll be back with them in a moment, and we'll also be speaking with a soldier who served in Iraq and Kuwait in 2003 who will be returning his medals at the

NATO

protests this weekend. Stay with us.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: Our guests in Chicago, who are preparing for mass NATO protests this weekend ahead of the largest-ever

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summit—it's happening in Chicago starting on Sunday—our guests are Bill Ayers, retired education professor at University of Illinois, Chicago, author of many books, including *Teaching Toward Freedom: Moral Commitment and Ethical Action in the Classroom*, as well as

Fugitive Days: A Memoir

— we are also joined by Bernardine Dohrn, clinical professor at Northwestern Law school,

founded Northwestern's Children and Family Justice Center. They are two veteran activists, well known for their activism in the 1960s, from SDS to the Weather Underground, deeply involved in the NATO protests this weekend.

Earlier this week, Human Rights Watch accused NATO of failing to properly investigate at least 72 civilian deaths in its bombing of Libya last year. In a new report, Human Rights Watch said seven out of the eight NATO bombing sites were found to lack clear military targets. Fred Abrahams authored the report.

FRED ABRAHAMS: We have questions that NATO has not yet answered, and we're calling for prompt, credible and thorough investigations to understand why these 72 civilians died. And until now, NATO has taken a position of denial. They refuse to acknowledge that civilians died. They refuse to give information about how they died. And they refuse to investigate. And it's this lack of transparency that's deeply troubling. And I think it will lead to unnecessary civilian deaths in the future, if NATO refuses to look at what went wrong and make corrections.

AMY GOODMAN: As part of its investigation, Human Rights Watch interviewed survivors of the August 2011 bombing that killed 30 civilians east of the capital Tripoli.

ALI HAMID GAFEZ: [translated] Why did they bomb me? The NATO forces came to fight in order to protect civilians. Because Libya is under satellite surveillance, it's right in front of them. They can see everything. So we wonder, how is it possible that they could have bombed us? How could they bomb us?

AMY GOODMAN: Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers, talk about exactly what the plans are for this weekend involving the protests against NATO. How are people organizing?

BERNARDINE DOHRN: Well, there's many—many organizations are doing demonstrations, holding teach-ins, doing counter-summits. But the focus will be on two big marches. I keep wanting to tell you about the National Nurses Association, because their march, which has been planned for over nine months, was focused originally on the G8, which, as you know, are meeting secretly now at Camp David. But they represent, I think to a lot of us, the spirit of the Madison occupation in Wisconsin just a year ago, the notion of what has happened with lower living standards in the United States because of the continuing wars and the permanent war economy we have, and because of the extraordinary gifts seized by the 1 percent. So I think that their march on Friday is going to start the weekend.

There's concerts. Woody—the anniversary of Woody Guthrie's death, there's a big music concert. There will be teach-ins and preparation. And then, Sunday morning, starting officially at noon but starting earlier with music and spoken word and cultural events in Grant Park, the site of the Democratic National Convention 1968, there will be speakers and activities in the park. And then the march will take off at 2:00. So, from noon to—from 11:00 to 2:00, there will be activities in Grant Park. And then there will be a march, a permitted, family-friendly march, which will go down toward the South Side to McCormick Place, to two blocks away from McCormick Place, where the NATO meeting is being held. And there, the Iraqi vets and Afghan vets against the war have planned to return their medals to the generals.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: I want to turn to—

BILL AYERS: It's going to be a—

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Sorry.

BILL AYERS: It's going to be a very spirited march, and it's going to be led by the veterans. And when we get down to McCormick Place, they are going to be on a stand. And the event there will begin with the playing of "Taps." They will read off their names. It will be a respectful, dignified, solemn event, where we call for the end of war and the end of the suffering, and some healing. The vets are really the moral heart of what will be going on on Sunday.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: I want to turn to a recent comment—

BERNARDINE DOHRN: I think, Amy, one of the challenges in this militarized state that we're in, having—

AMY GOODMAN: Bernardine, we wanted to bring in a comment of the Chicago police superintendent, Garry McCarthy.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: These are plans—these are comments he made about the department's plans ahead of NATO protests.

SUPERINTENDENT GARRY McCARTHY: We've taken the added steps to train the entire department, to at least a minimal level, to have knowledge of the crowd control procedures that everybody else is getting trained up to a higher level for. Only about a third of the department is going to be used for this event. Those officers are being trained to levels that have been called exceeding the national standards by the people who do this across the country. And the fact is, there's a three-tiered level that we're looking at. We are not only going to be ready, we're going to be more ready than any other city in the country, as per the people who do that training have told us.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: That was Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy speaking to *Chicago Tonight*. Bill Ayers, your comments on what the superintendent had to say?

BILL AYERS: Well, what they're doing and what they've been doing for months is to kind of deflect attention from NATO onto the idea that somehow the protests create a threat. They've begun to—there's a mass campaign. They're shutting Lakeshore Drive. They're shutting the trains. They're closing exits off the freeways. And they're creating a kind of culture of fear. We have police officers we—who are friends of ours, we run into in coffee shops. They've told us that the training is focused a lot on the danger of the protesters and how you should be careful when you grab one of them, because they might have some kind of poison spike in their sleeve or something. I mean, it really is quite nuts.

At the same time, they've denied permits, taken permits away, given them back, been very vague about making any agreement with the protesters. Bernardine just said we've asked—we insist that this is a family-friendly, nonviolent, permitted march. And all the kind of hysteria about what's about to happen is really brought on by the police. I don't think anything is going to happen, except that they are creating the conditions for a police riot, once again. They're creating the conditions for more repression. And this is a very bad thing.

BERNARDINE DOHRN: Yeah, but I want to emphasize that these war games—and where does this money come from? Let's just ask. How do we have the money to do this when we don't have the money for basic human needs in Chicago? But, OK, so there's suddenly, as for all the wars, moneys available. We don't have budget concerns for any of this permanent militarization. But this is war games at home. This is the war come home. This is national security state.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, let me—let me ask you about this issue—

BERNARDINE DOHRN: And I insist that we're going to have—

AMY GOODMAN: Let me ask—

BERNARDINE DOHRN: —an ambulant, happy, peaceful—

AMY GOODMAN: Let me ask you about the issue of the national security state, Bernardine, the increased government and private monitoring of antiwar and Occupy protesters. According to a recent report in Bloomberg News, the nation's largest banks are sharing information about protesters' plans amongst themselves as well as with the police. The information sharing is relying on video surveillance, robots, officers positioned in buildings to monitor protesters' movements. The banks are also sharing intelligence in preparation for the antiwar protest set for the NATO summit, where you are in Chicago. Meanwhile, new documents obtained by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund show that the Department of Homeland Security has been circulating intelligence on Occupy protests to a number of different federal agencies working out of government fusion centers nationwide. These fusion centers bring together federal, state, local, as well as military agencies to help share intelligence. And the documents show that the Department of Homeland Security sought White

House approval to deny involvement in cracking down on Occupy protests despite their apparent involvement. Can you talk about this?

BERNARDINE DOHRN: I think we have to counter it with the spirit of peace and imagination. If we think only about the tremendous power of the state and the global power of the military, we're paralyzed. And that's what they want, I think, a sedated population that doesn't have its own opinions. So, we must arrive—I intend to arrive with balloons and flowers and a sense that this is a peace march, a march for thinking about a sustainable planet, a march for thinking about equality and sustainability and a chance for our children and our grandchildren. So, yes, I think that this incredible menacing presence is hovering over us and spying on us and looking at our bank accounts. I don't know what they're going to find in our bank accounts. But I insist that we keep the spirit of Occupy and the spirit of all resistance and human power. And that's what we learned from 2011, that actually the power is with the people, no matter how technologically powerful a country might look. It actually can't sustain this kind of, you know, intense inequality at the top and military hardware. So we have to defy it with our spirit, with our imagination and with each other.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to thank you both for being with us, Bernardine Dohrn, clinical professor at Northwestern Law School, and Bill Ayers, a retired education professor at University of Illinois, Chicago. They're both involved in the anti-NATO protests that are taking place this weekend in Chicago.

When we come back from our break, we'll be joined by a soldier who served in Iraq and Kuwait, who, among a number of soldiers, will be returning his medals at the NATO protest. His name is Aaron Hughes. Stay with us