

Pilots wave from a Tornado fighter jet.



Germany's US Bombs in Spotlight

In Germany this year, 41 peace activists have been put on trial for protest actions at Germany's Büchel air force base, where the US stations 20 of its B61 H-bombs.

Nuclear abolitionists Dennis DuVall, a US Veteran for Peace now living in Dresden, and Margriet Bos, a Catholic Worker from Amsterdam, go on trial Dec. 7, 2020 in Cochem, charged with trespass and damage to the base's fence. The trials will draw wide attention because a Dutch national television crew is reporting.

Over a dozen resisters including DuVall are appealing their lower court convictions, and hope to win a judicial order condemning Germany's "sharing" of US nuclear weapons—a policy that many contend violates binding international treaty law.

Nukewatch staffer and *Quarterly* editor John LaForge, who was similarly charged last year for actions in 2018 and 2019, is scheduled for trial February 1 in Cochem.

Just before trial, Margriet said in part, "Along with North American peace activists Susan Crane, Ralph Hutchison and Andrew Lanier, I entered the nuclear military base in Büchel to hinder and frustrate the machine of death and destruction that's preparing a third world war with thermonuclear bombs. We cut the fence and walked towards the runway to prevent the Tornados from flying. Tornado jet fighters practice every weekday and expel 12,000 kilos of Co2 every hour they fly, the same amount as driving a diesel car nonstop for 62.5 days." —KL

Growing Criticism of Unlawful Rad Waste Storage Plans

By Christine Manwiller

Proposals targeting Texas and New Mexico for above-ground centralization of the nation's high-level radioactive waste (dubbed Consolidated Interim Storage) under review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), face broad opposition. In 2017, Holtec International and partners proposed what they call a "temporary" dump in New Mexico for the waste reactor fuel. The companies claims that storage of this waste will only last 40 years, but the fine print allows for 80 years of "renewals." In 2018, Interim Storage Partners, Inc., and Waste Control Specialists (WCS) requested that the NRC "resume evaluation" of a separate proposal to store up to 40,000 tonnes of the waste, along with other radioactive waste referred to as "low-level," in Andrews County, West Texas.

Beyond Nuclear, in Takoma Park, Maryland, notes that both the WCS and Holtec plans are proceeding unlawfully. Under the federal Nuclear Waste Policy Act (as amended), the federal government may not take title to high-level radioactive waste from commercial nuclear reactors until a permanent geologic dumpsite is operating. Under this law, the federal government cannot authorize funds for the transportation or "interim" storage of the waste, as Holtec and WCS propose, because there is no operating federal abandonment site. A license cannot be lawfully issued to WCS or Holtec until either a permanent site is operating, or the NWPA statute is again amended. Beyond Nuclear's lawsuit in the case is on appeal.

Broad public resistance to the dumps was joined by Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott who wrote November 3 to the NRC outlining the plan's negative consequences: the risks of allowing volatile waste to sit on the surface in casks; the danger of the waste being close to the "largest producing oilfield in the world": the potential for the site to attract terrorist acts; and the likelihood of the waste remaining in Texas for much longer than the proposed limit.

Risky transport of such dangerous waste is also under attack, and 19 resolutions have been adopted by communities across Texas and New Mexico, several of which are municipal resolutions banning the transportation. —Carlsbad *Current-Argus*, Nov. 10; Office of Governor of Texas letter, Nov. 3, 2020

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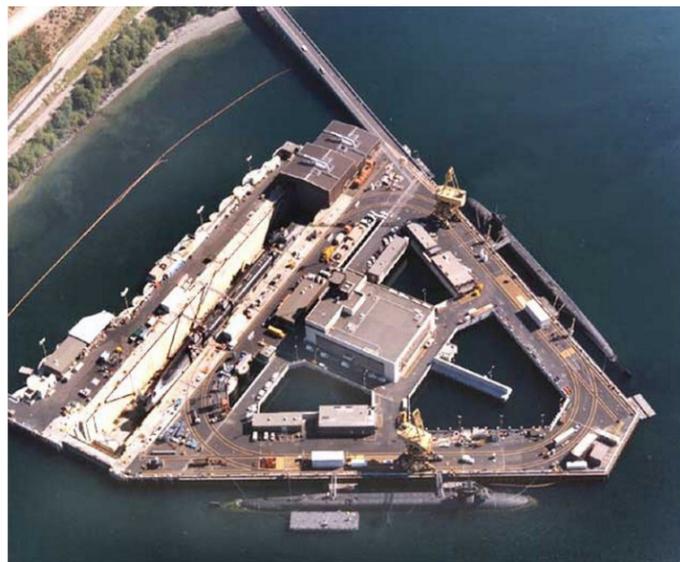
Legal Fight Against Nuclear Navy Risktaking

By Christine Manwiller

A lawsuit against the nuclear navy in Washington State's Puget Sound began June 19, 2012, over the safety and environmental impact of a second Explosives Handling Wharf in Hood Canal, home of Bangor Trident submarine base. The \$715 million wharf, 15 miles west of Seattle, is for loading and off-loading heavy nuclear-armed missiles. The Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action and Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility brought suit against the navy's plan for failure to consider the risks of accidental explosions at the new wharf, in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Navy officials did not even "comply with the navy's own explosives-siting regulations," Ground Zero reports, and the military's Explosives Safety Board flat out denied permission to build the second wharf "in part, because the navy would not study the risk of a chain reaction explosion while loading two subs," KOMO-TV news reported. "If both full subs explode [48 missiles in all], the equivalent power is 7.44 million pounds of TNT," the ABC News affiliate said.

Glen Milner with Ground Zero told KOMO-TV, "They've doubled the amount of explosives. And



Can you spot the two submarines in the photo, each two football fields long? The combined total of 48 missiles on them hold rocket fuel with explosive force equal to 7.4 million pounds of TNT—their 240 nuclear warheads (5 on each missile) equal 114 million tons of TNT.

they've doubled the number of times that missiles are being handled." The lawsuit warns of the risk of one exploding missile igniting 47 others. According to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 85% of the weight of each missile is the highly explosive rocket fuel.

The lawsuit faced significant setbacks in 2012 when certain navy records were sealed after the navy claimed publication would place national security at risk. The records were sealed by the court and a gag order regarding their contents was imposed on the plaintiffs just a few days before a scheduled hearing where they were to be used as the basis of the peace group's arguments.

In 2014, the NEPA lawsuit was dismissed by US District Court Judge Ronald Leighton, and the plaintiffs appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. While the Ninth Circuit shockingly ruled against the NEPA failure to assess risk claims, it struck down

the gag order and the sealing of documents. Judge Leighton released the records and lifted the gag this past August 20. Another judge later ordered the navy to pay the two peace groups' legal fees incurred to obtain the records and fight the gag order.

—Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, Oct. 29, 2020; KOMO-TV News, Seattle, Oct. 28, 2013

A Second Churchrock Spill in the Making?

By Leona Morgan

In 1945, the Trinity Test devastated New Mexico. Thirty-four years later at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, the United States poured extensive resources into addressing the largest and most expensive nuclear energy disaster up to that time, March 1979. Less than four months later, the country didn't flinch when it came to the second-largest release of radiation in the world. The United Nuclear Corporation (UNC) uranium "accident" was largely overlooked—a form of environmental racism—as it happened in a rural community of color. The Churchrock Spill occurred on the same day and time as the Trinity Test, July 16th at 5:30 in the morning, but in 1979.

In a recent interview, Diné elder and matriarch Edith Hood explained the impacts from the spill and uranium sites that she and others are fighting to get cleaned up. Hood and her family are residents of the Red Water Pond Road (RWPR) community. They live not far from the former UNC uranium mill, the former UNC Northeast Church Rock Mine (NECR), and two former Kerr McGee/Quivira mines.

"We were just children when the drilling companies came in ... in the 1960s, to [do] exploratory drilling for uranium." United Nuclear and Kerr McGee, known today as Quivira, began mining. Hood worked at Kerr McGee from 1976 to 1982. "Never did I hear 'unsafe' or 'dangerous....' If I was educated about this, I wouldn't probably have gone to work there."

Since 2008, the US government has been working with the Navajo Nation to clean up 523 abandoned uranium mines and four milling sites on the Navajo Nation. However, there are hundreds of additional contaminated sites nearby, though not technically on Navajo land.

General Electric, which acquired UNC, is responsible for remediation of the former uranium mine and mill. The mill operated from 1977 to 1982 and in the 1979 Churchrock Spill released over 1,100 tons of radioactive sludge into the environment and over 90 million gallons of liquid radioactive waste that flowed westward into Arizona.

For cleanup of the mine, GE proposes to move and permanently store one million cubic yards of mine waste on top of existing mill waste, and to transport more radioactive wastes offsite, most likely to the White Mesa Mill which would impact the Ute Mountain Ute indigenous community.

The former UNC mill has been undergoing remediation and monitoring, but the offsite contamination has never been adequately addressed.

RWPR community is demanding cleanup, housing, education, and a comprehensive health study. "We want the community and the impacted ground cleaned up.... We want this concept of 'hózhó' back in the community, all across the Navajo Nation," said Hood, referring to the traditional Diné teaching about living in harmony and balance with the universe.

The proposed cleanup requires an amendment to license for the mill issued by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). GE submitted a license amendment application in September 2018, and the NRC held scoping meetings in Gallup on March 19 and March 21, 2019, where locals expressed strong opposition to moving mine waste on top of a mountain of mill waste. The critics point out the mill waste is in the flood plain and warned of the possibility of another Churchrock Spill.

The NRC is now taking public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for this proposal until December 28 and has virtual public comment meetings set for December 2 and 9, 2020.

Since 2009, the RWPR Community Association has held an annual event around July 16 to raise awareness about uranium mining, the Churchrock Spill, and cleanup. Due to Covid-19, this year's event was canceled but, according to Hood, next year the group plans to "carry on" and welcome "anyone who is doing something to help Mother Earth."

—Leona Morgan works with Diné No Nukes in New Mexico.

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