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Confronting US Nuclear Weapons in Germany

war-planning cooperation does not violate the treaty.

Germany's Tactical Air Force Squadron 33 at Büchel Air Base carries out the formal "nuclear sharing agreement" between the United States and Germany. The squadron reportedly uses its PA200 Tornado fighter jets to practice flying the US bombs to target areas for detonation in the event of an order from the White House. The air base is home to the US Air Force's 702nd Munitions Support Squadron and its "protection level 1 stockpile" of US hydrogen bombs.

The apparent violation of the NPT prohibitions have led activists and resisters to call "nuclear sharing" an "unlawful conspiracy," and to label Büchel Air Base a "crime scene."

Ordinary clippers made openings in new fence.

This year's US delegation included Cee'Cee' Anderson with Women's Action for New Directions in College Park, Georgia; Richard Bishop, from the Missoula, Montana Catholic Worker; Susan Crane, from the Redwood City, Calif. Catholic Worker; Ralph Hutchison, Kevin Collins, and Cindy Collins, all with the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance in Knoxville, Tennessee; Dennis DuVall, formerly of Prescott, Arizona, with Veterans for Peace (now residing in Germany); Fred Galluccio from Newport Beach, Calif., with the Physicians for Social Responsibility; Andrew Lanier, Jr., with the San Jose, Calif. Catholic Worker; and Brian Terrell, with Voices for Creative Nonviolence who lives at the Maloy, Iowa Catholic Worker. The peace activist Ann Wright from Hawaii made plans to join the group, but was called away unexpectedly.

Christiane Danowski, Ralph Hutchison and Cee'Cee' Anderson in the meeting tent.

Camp life involved daily vigils and blockades of the main gate, regular planning meetings, meals prepared by the kitchen staff, volunteer chores, presentations by delegates, a documentary film, and a puppet-making project and performance led by Cindy and Kevin Collins.

A Series of "Go-in" Actions

Eleven activists entered the base early on the morning of July 10 to deliver a self-styled "Treaty Enforcement Order" declaring that the sharing of US nuclear weapons at the German base is a "criminal conspiracy."

The treaty reference is to the international laws on the prohibition of nuclear weapons (2017), on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons (1970), and 1949 Geneva Conventions which prohibit mass destruction.

After passing through the main gate with a printed "Cease and Desist Order," the group insisted on seeing the commander to deliver the order in person.

"We refuse to be complicit in this crime," said Brian Terrell, a drone warfare expert with the Chicago-based Voices for Creative Nonviolence. "We call for the nuclear bombs to be returned to the US immediately. The Germans want these nuclear weapons out of Germany, and so do we."

All 11 were detained by military and civilian authorities and later released after providing identification.

"Our delivery of the 'Cease and Desist Order' is an act of crime prevention," said Susan Crane. "The authorities think the entry is a matter of trespass, but nuclear bomb threats coming from this base violate the UN Charter, the Nonproliferation Treaty, and the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons" she said, adding, "Interrupting government criminality is a duty of responsible citizenship."

Susan Crane, Ralph Hutchison, Margriet Bos and Andrew Lanier "go-in" July 10 carrying banners. They were later jailed for violating a "stay away" order issued earlier by the civil police.

The early go-in group included: Crane, Terrell, Richard Bishop, Andrew Lanier, Ralph Hutchison, and Dennis DuVall; Richard Barnard (from the UK); Margriet Bos and Susan van der Hijden (from The Netherlands); and Dietrich Gerstner and Birke Kleinwächter (from Germany).

Van der Hijden, of Amsterdam, said of the bombs at the base, "The planning and training to use the US H-bombs that goes on at Büchel cannot be legal, because organizing mass destruction has been a criminal act since the Nuremberg Trials after WWII."

The United States is the only country in the world that deploys its nuclear weapons in other countries.

Peace Activists Cut Into the Base, Challenging Increased Security

Around 4 p.m. July 10, another four activists (from the US, Germany, the UK, and The Netherlands) cut through the two perimeter fences and quickly entered the Büchel Air Base. Calling themselves "Treaty Enforcement Action," they carried banners calling the nuclear weapons base a "crime scene." While pausing for photographs, the four were detained by air base security personnel.

Outside the high-security base, four others from the group posted "Crime Scene" notices on the outer fence and along a perimeter bike path. All eight activists were detained by security personnel and found in violation of a "stay-away"order issued after the earlier main gate go-in. For violating the order, all eight were taken into custody, brought to the nearby town of Cochem for court, and later transferred to jail in Koblenz. All eight were released early the next day.

"The nuclear weapons must be removed, not just because they are unlawful, but because of the poor security at the base," said Marion Küpker, spokesperson for the campaign Büchel is Everywhere!! "Members of the military and civil police declared several times that nonviolent go-in actions would now be impossible. Soldiers, a new private security company, and civil police are working together closely this year to guard the base, but they failed," Küpker said, "even after months of publicity announcing that protesters would defy the newly increased base security this July."

Susan Crane of the US delegation said, "There have been hundreds of accidents with nuclear weapons that show that deterrence is an illusion. And, with amateurs like us getting on base, it's impossible to keep the weapons themselves secure."

The eight who were jailed overnight were Crane, Hutchinson, Lanier, Bos, Dennis DuVall, Richard Barnard of the UK, Gerstner, and van der Hijden.

The July 10 daytime go-in actions followed a series of others, in 2017 and 2018, in which a total of 60 protesters got far inside the air base at different times. In four separate events, resisters managed to

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