



Sixteen of 18 nuclear abolitionists who conducted a mass “go-in” protest at the Büchel Air Force Base in Germany on July 15, 2018, upon being released by the military. The 18, including activists from the US, Germany, The Netherlands and the UK—one in a wheel chair and another on crutches—gained entry by clipping through perimeter fences and razor wire in five separate places, in broad daylight, on a Sunday morning to bring attention to US hydrogen bombs deployed there. Charges are still being brought by German authorities. Photo: Rolf Schlesener.

As Urgent Crises Abound, Pentagon Dreams of Hiroshima

By Bob Mayberry and John LaForge

While the coronavirus and climate change, war, famine, floods, hurricanes and typhoons cause social and economic disruption at home and abroad, some in the United States military plod along with routine nuclear war planning. Instead of mobilizing relief efforts and supplies for Covid-19 response and for refugees and other people displaced or endangered by war or climate chaos, our “great” country—or as Finian O’Toole recently described it in *Irish Times*, “the world’s best concentration of medical and scientific expertise, effectively limitless financial resources, [and] a military complex with stunning logistical capacity”—is blindly doubling down on its nuclear war readiness.

The German military analyst Otfried Nassauer (director of the Berlin Information Centre for Transatlantic Security) reported recently:

“At the end of 2019, the USA sent a strategic missile submarine [the *USS Tennessee*] on patrol for the first time, carrying at least one Trident II D5 missile with only a small [sic] W76-2 [nuclear] warhead of about 8 [kilotons] of explosive power. The use of this sub-strategic warhead considered for ‘initial nuclear use’—in response to an assumed Russian tactical nuclear weapons deployment in Europe was announced in February in a small war game at STRATCOM [US Strategic Command in Omaha, Nebraska].”

This ‘war game’ was reported widely, including by Julian Borger in *the Guardian*, Feb. 24, under the heading: “US staged ‘limited’ nuclear battle against Russia in war game.”[1]

Of course, some of these nuclear war exercises are anything but games.

In August last year, it’s now been reported, the US air force flew all 20 of the thermonuclear bombs it stations in Germany back to the United States for a very short time. According to the April 11 edition of the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, the H-bombs were

loaded aboard a giant US air force C-17 “Globemaster” cargo plane, and sent on the highly secret round trip in order to install new software in the bombs. [2] The new parts reportedly deal with codes used for arming and detonating the bombs.

According to Nassauer, who spoke in a conference call May 4, the US nuclear weapons were flown to Kirtland air force base, in the southeast corner of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The H-bombs went to Kirtland air base because it is home to the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center and the so-called Air Delivered Capabilities Directorate, responsible for maintaining air-launched nuclear weapons in the US and Europe.

Kirtland AFB is also the home of the Defense Nuclear Weapons School, which teaches nuclear war. Current courses include “Theater Nuclear Operations,” which the website says “provides training for planners, support staff, targeteers, and staff nuclear planners,” and teach, “the targeting effects of nuclear weapon employment.”

Another course is “Integrated Munitions Effects Assessment” which instructs students in “creating target models, [and] developing attack plans using ... nuclear weapons,” where they learn to “calculate probabilistic attacks against predefined targets,” and “consequence assessment to WMD [weapons of mass destruction] scenarios....”

For the curious, Kirtland air base is also home to the Nuclear Weapons Instructions Museum which “contains displays of all stockpiled US nuclear weapons and their associated components and delivery systems, as well as related training aids.

This is real, but you don’t have to take Nukewatch’s word for it. You could see the Defense Nuclear Weapons School on-line at nukewatchinfo.org/us-mass-murder-school. The Pentagon recently put it behind a wall but Nukewatch downloaded some relevant sections in time.



“Weapons Inspectors” John LaForge and Susan Crane detained at Büchel air force base, on Hiroshima Day, Aug. 6, 2019.

Nukewatch Staffer Charged for Actions at German Nuclear Base

By John LaForge

Charges of trespass and damage to property have been issued to several dozen peace activists that have joined “go-in” actions at the Büchel Air Base.

Now, after 22 months of delay, authorities have brought two minor criminal charges against me, your Nukewatch co-director.

The alleged offenses are presented in the “penalty order” as if already proven, like a traffic ticket. “On the basis of the facts established by the Public Prosecutor, you are charged to have on July 15, 2018 at Büchel, in two legally independent acts, acted jointly and in concurrent offenses: a) intruded illegally into the fenced property of another; b) damaged or destroyed illegally a chattel belonging to another.”

This action was one of the largest single go-ins in the long campaign of civil resistance at the base. Eighteen people in five groups went through openings cut in the fence in five places, in broad daylight, on a Sunday morning. The resisters were unhindered in the process and the group included elders and one person in a wheelchair. News of the bold breach of the fence—one headline asked “How could this happen?”—reached the German parliament where one member asked from the floor whether the nuclear weapons base was an “amusement park.”

The second alleged offense was a go-in by Susan Crane and me on Hiroshima Day 2018. When we were found after over an hour inside, we were given a robust military police reaction, presumably because we had gotten very close to some of the US nuclear bombs.

The penalty order imposes a fine of 1,500 Euros (50 “day fines” of 30 Euros per day), or, alternately, if the fine goes unpaid, “One day in prison per-day fine.” Like with petty crimes in the US, this offense could be resolved out-of-court by paying the fine.

I have contested the charges, and the order says “there will be a hearing in court.” No date has been set.

However, in several previous cases of charges brought against nuclear resisters from outside Germany, court trials were never scheduled. Penalty orders sometimes appear to have been bluffs, mere attempts to coerce the activists into paying fines.

Other Suspects Named and Unnamed

In the paperwork issued to me, Susan Crane, a plowshares activist from the Redwood City, California Catholic Worker, is named as being “subject to separate prosecution”—along with “other persons who are unknown at this stage.” It may be that Susan and others will eventually be charged. At press time neither Susan nor other US citizens that joined “go-in” actions at the base in 2017, 2018, and 2019 have been charged.

The charges against me appear to be the first time that a US citizen not living in Germany has been charged for civil resistance at the base. Only Dennis DuVall, a US citizen formerly of Arizona now living near Dresden, Germany has been convicted of damage to the fence and trespass—for joining the July 15, 2018 action. (See cover story.)

In my work for Nukewatch, I helped coordinate delegations of US peace activists to the protest camp near Büchel in the summers of 2017, 2018, and 2019, and I participated in four different go-in actions. This effort may explain the authorities’ interest in me.

Writing from Germany May 31, in the thick of several upcoming court trials and ongoing appeals court cases of resisters, we are all looking forward to bringing international attention to the lawless US deployment of nuclear weapons here—and to their inevitable ouster. I’ll keep you posted about ongoing events while I’m in Germany and after I get home.

—John LaForge

[1] The Guardian, 24 February 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/24/limited-nuclear-war-game-us-russia>

[2] *Der Spiegel*, No. 16, 11 April 2020, pp. 26, 28, 29 <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-spd-call-to-withdraw-us-nuclear-arms-stokes-debate/a-53314883>

[3] nukewatchinfo.org/us-mass-murder-school/