

U.S. Activist to German Prison for Protesting Büchel Nukes

Amidst heightened nuclear tension between NATO and Russia in Europe, U.S. peace activist John LaForge entered a German prison on January 10, 2023, to serve jail time there for protests against U.S. nuclear weapons stockpiled at Germany's Büchel Air Force Base, 80 miles southeast of Cologne. LaForge entered JVA Billwerder in Hamburg as the first American ever imprisoned for a nuclear weapons protest in Germany.

The 66-year-old Minnesota native and co-director of Nukewatch, was convicted of trespass in Cochem District Court for joining in two "go-in" actions at the German airbase in 2018. One of the actions involved entering the base and climbing atop a bunker that likely housed some of the roughly twenty U.S. B61 thermonuclear gravity bombs stationed there.

Germany's Regional Court in Koblenz affirmed his conviction and lowered the penalty from €1,500 to €600 (\$619) or 50 "daily rates" – 50 days in-carceration. LaForge refused to pay and appealed the convictions to Germany's Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, the country's highest. In the appeal, LaForge argues the District Court in Cochem and the Regional Court in Koblenz erred by refusing to consider his defense of "crime prevention," thereby violating his right to present a defense. Before entering prison, LaForge said: "U.S. and German air force plans and preparations, currently ongoing, to use the nuclear weapons stationed here in Germany are a criminal conspiracy to commit massacres with radiation and firestorms. The court authorities in this case have prosecuted the wrong suspects."

Nuclear Weapons Protests in Germany in 2023

By Marion Küpker

Nukewatch is part of the network "Abolish nuclear weapons-start with us!" consisting of 75 peace organizations. Since 2017, Nukewatch has helped organize U.S. delegations to our International Week of Actions in the annual "Büchel is everywhere! Nuclear Weapons-free Now" campaign. There are 10-20 U.S. nuclear bombs at the German army "Bundeswehr" Büchel NATO airbase as part of the nuclear sharing program. These bombs are to be exchanged, as soon as the base's infrastructure modernizations are finished, with the B61-12 bombs also produced in the U.S. Our non-violent actions were directed against this nuclear weapons deployment, which is contrary to international law, law that is officially supposed to be applied in German courts. Of the many court cases resulting from "go-in" actions of civil resistance at the base, there have now been 18 appeals to the Constitutional Court in which the convictions were upheld. In addition, there is an appeal by two resisters pending before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. Nukewatch co-director John LaForge just served jail time from January 10 to February 28 as the first U.S. citizen imprisoned for "go-in" actions: he refused to pay the court-imposed fine. While in prison, John received notice of the Constitutional Court's refusal to consider his appeal (the 18th).

In early February, our Campaign Strategy Conference determined the organizing of protests at the Büchel air base has become extremely difficult. We no longer get any local peace camp areas approved. Further, the military built itself a positive image during the Corona pandemic. Although civil-military cooperation is prohibited by law in Germany, Büchel soldiers organized the tracking of Corona-infected people in



John LaForge enters Billwerder Prison in Hamburg on Jan. 10 to serve 50 days for his actions aimed at removing U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany.

Both courts ruled against hearing from expert witnesses who had volunteered to explain the international treaties that prohibit any planning for mass destruction. In addition, the appeal argues, Germany's stationing of the U.S. nuclear weapons is a violation of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which explicitly forbids any transfer of nuclear weapons between countries that are parties to the treaty, including both the U.S. and Germany.

— Press release reprinted from *The Nuclear Resister* editors Felice and Jack Cohen-Joppa

the district. During the 2021 flood in the Ahr Valley, which killed more than 100 people, part of the military base became the hub for disaster response, and helicopters carrying soldiers rushed in to assist. Climate disasters currently give the military a good image, while the people are left financially alone with the reconstruction costs in the affected areas. Since the war in Ukraine, the media and politicians have shown solidarity with the military on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, we do not want to be driven away. Religious vigils with church representatives now take place monthly on the peace meadow near the main gate. At the June 24, 2023 event, Rev. Dr. Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh (a retired bishop and professor) will preach. IPPNW and ICAN will do their blockade actions in early July this year at the airbase Nörvenich, because the Büchel air force squadron has temporarily moved their fighter planes there, due to infrastructure work at Büchel. Furthermore, discussion is ongoing regarding protests against the Constitutional Court demanding that it finally

address the question of nuclear sharing in Germany under international law. We want a court ruling on this, whatever it is. We want to read their arguments.

On August 31, 2024, our anti-nuclear network will have existed for 30 years! At our strategy conference, we discussed organizing an "International Tribunal on the Illegality of Nuclear Sharing," where experts would testify. Discussions will continue in mid-March. Europe without nuclear sharing! For a world without nuclear weapons!

— Marion Küpker is spokeswoman for the German campaign "Büchel is everywhere! Nuclear-Weapons free Now!"

John's Letter

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inspired a group of us in the 1980s to repeatedly blockade the entrance to the Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota which then controlled 150 land-based, long-range nuclear-armed missiles. Over a ten-year period, our band of nuclear resisters served enough county jail time after staging so many marches, protests, and stunts – once pouring blood across the 100-ton concrete lid of a locked-and-loaded Minuteman III missile silo – that when the Air Force later decided to eliminate over half of its land-based missiles, the Grand Forks nukes were some of the first to go.

Our small group efforts were encouraged back then by news of hundreds of thousands across Europe who took to the streets demanding – successfully, it turned out – the ouster of U.S. Cruise and Pershing missiles. Any prospective use of the weapons was almost universally viewed in Europe as suicidal.

We never know if our demands will be realized – only that nothing is gained without venturing. Anti-nuclear marchers in the '80s never guessed they'd see the UN General Assembly vote 122-to-3 to endorse a treaty banning nuclear weapons. This overwhelming majority of the world's governments have agreed that nuclear weapons can only produce massacres, that any chance of a successful medical response to their effects is impossible, that these effects would illegally cross neutral borders, do long-term criminal damage to the environment, and then recoil to maim and destroy the very militaries that unleash them. (That's why I wrote "B61 = Suicide" on the weapons bunker just before being detained.)

Today, the groundbreaking TPNW has permanently shamed and stigmatized the nuclear weapons states as hypocrites, scoundrels, and rogues who ridicule and ignore the treaty's means while cynically claiming to desire its ends.

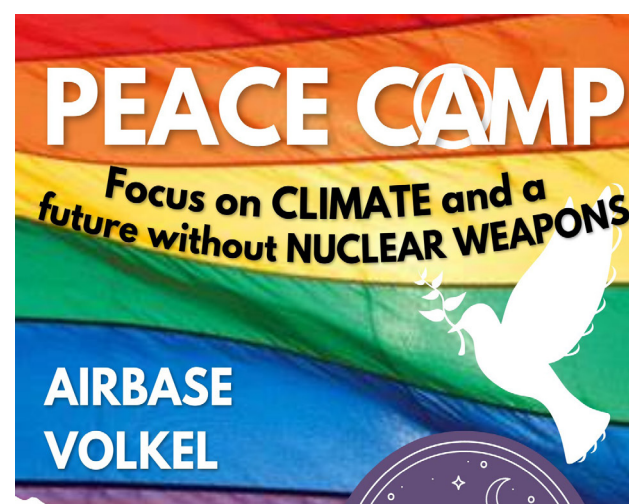
The nine-member thermonuclear cartel, like a gang of coldblooded mobsters, acts outside and above the law by rewarding their judicial, police, and prison authorities for the cover they provide – authorities who then wink and pretend that the protection racket is necessary and that the Bomb is legal.

Maybe our marching, our rebellion, and the law of nations can't denuclearize the cabal of atomic weaponers. Maybe the nuclear mobsters won't re-direct their war chests to useful purposes before they run our earthly train off the rails. But then nothing changes unless we demand it.

— Written by John LaForge



John LaForge, out on furlough, joins Marion Küpker and IPPNW in Hamburg for ban treaty anniversary. Photo: Hinrich Schultze.



Including..

- On Monday a BLOCKADE when at 12 the airraid siren howls
- A DIGGING-FOR-LIFE pink shovel action on Wednesday, NAGASAKI day
- NON-VIOLENT action training
- CREATIVE ACTIONS that come up spontaneously
- SWIMMING, CAMPFIRES, COOKING, PRAYING, DISHES, WORKSHOPS, RELAXING under a tree

<http://www.noelhuis.nl/peace-camp-volkel-2023>



AUG 2023
4-10

F-35 fighter-bombers emit >10 tons of CO2 per flight hour to practice the devastation of the earth with new nuclear bombs...