
Between the Lines

Nuremberg Actions, P.O.Box 13, Boulder Creek CA 95006

Dec. 91 / Jan. 92 #16

There is no way I can justify my failure to help sound an alarm over these activities many years sooner than I did. I feel that at least several hundred scientists trained in the biomedical aspect of atomic energy--myself definitely included--are candidates for Nuremberg-type trials for crimes against humanity for our gross negligence and irresponsibility. Now that we know the hazard of low-dose radiation, the crime is not experimentation--it's murder."

Dr. John Gofman, formerly at Livermore Lab

ATOMIC YET RETURNS TO TEST SITE

Jennifer Viereck

Sergeant James Gates, US Army Ret., is a proud man, as well he should be. He served 32 years in his country's Army, most of his adult life. He has intervened with injustice and abuse of power many times on behalf of others, and he has asked nothing special for himself in return. What he has gotten is far less than that.

During 1954-55, Jim Gates was stationed at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site, one of 33,000 American servicemen in those two years alone deliberately stationed and positioned while above ground nuclear tests were being conducted. He says that their dog tags and all personal identification were taken away from them on arrival, so that the Army could disavow any knowledge, should something go wrong.

In Deadly Deceit: Low-Level Radiation, High-Level Coverup, the authors state: "Enrico Fermi suggested to Robert Oppenheimer in 1943 that the German food supply could be poisoned with radioactive fission products...Oppenheimer and Edward Teller identified strontium-90 as the isotope that 'appears to have the most promise' because it concentrates 'dangerously and irretrievably' in human bones. Over ten years later, officers and chaplains told our own servicemen that they were perfectly safe, that the mushroom cloud was pretty, harmless, and could be observed with the naked eye. Few of those soldiers are alive today.

Most servicemen were stationed between four and seven miles away from the blast. As a demolition specialist, Gates was stationed only one half mile away. He was personally exposed to fourteen above ground tests: six atomic bombs, seven hydrogen bombs and one neutron bomb. He says that when he covered his eyes with his hands inside his bunker as instructed, he could see every bone up to his wrists when the blast went off.

On November 9-11, 1991, Jim Gates joined hundreds of other US veterans to return to the Nevada Test Site, for a national gathering, Veteran's Day Witness. Issues of concern for those present were the ending of all nuclear testing, justice and medical care for all veterans, and (continued on page 2)

INSIDE: NAVY GETS BIGGER AMMO VESSELS



James Gates speaking at the Veteran's Day Witness ceremony

NUKES TO BE STORED AT CONCORD

According to Bill Arkin, one of the foremost authorities on the US nuclear arsenal and Navy, Bush's recent decision to remove nuclear bombs and short-range missiles from ships and planes will have an enormous impact on the Concord Naval Weapons Station.

About the primary weapons shipping point on the west coast, Arkin says, "Obviously, the Naval Weapons Station will receive the brunt of the weapons." He also points out that the unloading of nuclear weapons gives local residents an opportunity to find out just what is stored at Concord, Alameda Naval Air Station, and other facilities.

"They have to come clean. I think when people realize Concord has been a primary storage facility for nuclear weapons for three decades, people will finally say, 'We want to know what's out there,'" Arkin said.

Several sources for such weapons have docked in Alameda recently as they return from the Persian Gulf: the nation's newest and largest aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln (costing \$3 billion, with a crew of 5500) and the cruisers USS Arkansas and the USS Texas. Aircraft carriers carry about 100 nuclear bombs and depth charges, according to Arkin. Cruisers carry the nuclear capable Tomahawk missiles, which have been seen coming and going at Concord by the truckload since the beginning of the Gulf War. (continued on page 3)

ATOMIC VETERAN...cont. from page 1

support for Western Shoshone land rights, from whom the land was officially stolen in 1979. Over a quarter of a million veterans were exposed to radiation at nuclear tests in Nevada and the Pacific, resulting in cancer, leukemia, genetic birth defects and many other illnesses. Thousands more were exposed to Agent Orange in Southeast Asia. They have been systematically denied benefits, had their files 'lost', and suffered endless forms of neglect and abuse, in payment for their good-faith service for their country.

As veterans gathered this November 11th before a black wreath in the roadway leading into the Test Site, each stepped forward to lay a flower before the wreath, and speak briefly. Some from the Vietnam era expressed the feeling that this was the first time they had truly felt good about celebrating Veteran's Day. Others spoke of innocents killed, comrades left behind, suicides, spouses and children traumatized by stress-related behavior.

James Gates was the last to speak. Until that day, his full story had never been told. In 1955, as his awareness increased of what he was involved with, he came to a decision. He went out in the desert at night three times to cut the wires, delaying three of the tests. While doing that, he discovered a shack in the surrounding hills, where four military resisters were being secretly held. He spoke to them through the window, and could see two of them. Gates says that they were being fed cocaine in their food, and that plutonium was being injected into the base of their skulls, to study its effect on their brains and behavior.

During this time at the Test Site, an empty city the size and capacity of Detroit had been constructed to study the effects of the blasts upon it. Often, dummies were used to study the effects of the blasts on human bodies. At the time of the last blast Gates participated in, he says that although the troops stationed several miles away were under the impression that dummies were again being used, he could clearly identify the prisoners he had seen as among four human beings in a cage that was lowered by crane to within a half mile of the blast. He says that their bodies just disintegrated.

Gates returned to his post, grabbed up a rifle, and broke his First Sergeant's arm with it. He was imprisoned, interrogated, and beaten for three days and nights with a rubber hose. Thirty-six years later, standing at the Test Site's front gate with other veterans, he finally told what he knew.

Today, James Gates lives on the streets of Chicago. He continued to serve in the Army until 1977, quietly assisting others from the inside, such as Paul Jacobson who produced the video "The Nuclear Game". After 32 years of service, he does not receive his pension. Until he was able to produce copies of Army records and photographs that he had secretly photocopied while still in the service, the Veterans Administration denied that he existed at all. He has bone cancer to the extent that a private doctor's letter states that his 'bones are black' and that his maximum life expectancy is two years. He has related respiratory problems as well. Despite eleven years of pursuing claims with the VA for disability, he has yet to see a VA physician.

Gates was joined at the Test Site by his attorney, seeing

the place himself for the first time. They are initiating a \$10 million lawsuit against the Veteran's Administration and various hospitals that have specifically and categorically denied medical help to veterans associated with nuclear testing in Nevada. They have plans for additional lawsuits against those responsible for legislation that deliberately exposed servicemen to radiation as well.

ACTION: If you would like to do something to help Mr. Gates in his ongoing fight, please write a letter to your Senator or Congressperson asking that they look into his case to provide him the medical assistance and compensation that he deserves. For more information, contact him at the Midwest Committee for Military Counseling, 59 E. Van Buren, Chicago IL 60605, 312-939-3349.

NAVY GETS BIGGER AMMO VESSELS

According to a recent Navy report, "The U.S. Navy is acquiring new design auxiliary ships over the next ten years. These Fast Combat Support Ships (AOE-6 Class) will provide fuel, ammunition and dry and refrigerated stores to operational forces of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Navy proposes to establish a program for homeporting four AOE-6 Class ships on the west coast of the United States, at existing Dept. of Defense installations. At the present rate of ship funding and acquisition, two AOE-6 Class ships must be homeported within the next 2 to 3 years. Navy proposes to homeport these two AOE-6 Class ships at Naval Shipyard Puget Sound in Bremerton, Washington...The sites identified as potential AOE-6 homeports are Naval Station Long Beach, Long Beach CA; Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego CA; and Naval Station San Diego, San Diego, CA."

The Navy's four earlier AOE Class ships were completed between 1964 and 1970, to supply US forces in Southeast Asia. They proved to be extremely costly, and a fifth was not built. Their purpose is to supply a carrier battle group with all its basic supply needs, combining the functions of oilers, ammunition, supply and cargo ships into a single huge vessel. The second of two attempts during the Reagan administration was fruitful in initiating production of the two ships under discussion here.

Although the largest west coast weapons shipping facility, Concord Naval Weapons Station, located between the two areas in question, is out of the running in this regard. The height of bridges and depth of shipping channels used to access the base prohibit the larger class of ship. Anti-nuclear sentiment in the Bay area has also been mentioned as a cause for Navy concern, as they are still smarting from the unsuccessful homeporting of the battleship Missouri and the Oakland Nuclear-Free Initiative. Concord continues to homeport six of the nation's ten active ammunition ships, which are also equipped to carry both nuclear and conventional weapons. According to Navy statements, these were augmented by leased commercial vessels to provide about one third of all munitions used by the US and its allies in the Persian Gulf War. How the acquisition of a larger ammunition supply fleet will affect Concord in the future will be most interesting to see.

One reason Bremerton may have been selected for the first pair of ships is public acquiescence. In San Diego, only one

person spoke at the hearing, voicing concern about the impact to the salt marshes and aquatic habitat of San Diego Bay, but written comments from city officials were quite discouraging. In Long Beach, fifteen people spoke, all against homeporting, citing nuclear weapons and a wide variety of environmental issues. Long Beach is also on the list of recommended base closures. However, in Bremerton, the mayor fairly drooled as he extolled the virtues of "job availability, economic stability, steady business opportunities, and technical training for our workforce" and "host[ing] not only an industrial giant, but also the residential development for those who seek a respite from their working day in a pleasant and an affordable residential area". Most concerns expressed both in person and in writing concerned traffic congestion, and the Navy has substantially altered their plans to address that.

Not so easily glossed over, however, is the fact that this project is in direct violation of the treaty fishing rights of the Suquamish Nation, attacking both their sovereignty and their livelihood. Official Navy responses to Suquamish concerns have not recognized their legal standing in any way. Instead they seek to minimize the impact of the project, and state that it "does not constitute an irreversible commitment of resources", as though they might turn around and leave after spending millions of dollars. They also assure everyone that they intend to "work with the Suquamish tribal council to resolve the effects of this action". Native Americans have been hearing variations of this language for 500 years.

Nowhere in the process was there any discussion about how the conventional and nuclear munitions involved would be loaded from Indian Island, or the effects of transporting them in and out of the area. In fact, Indian Island was never mentioned in the Puget Sound discussions at all.

NUKES AT CONCORD...cont. from page 1

The Navy, of course, continues its comical stance of "neither confirming or denying" the presence of nuclear weapons, but Concord's newsletter, the Transhipper, carried a story in November about Bush's initiative to remove nuclear weapons from carriers. Concord's fanatically right-wing spokesperson Dan Tikalsky was even disinterred to generously state that "Mr. Arkin is entitled to his opinion", and add that "there's probably nothing in the world that's as safely transported as nuclear weapons." One assumes that the 125 member Regional Response Force team at Concord whose job it is to respond to Navy nuclear accidents anywhere in the western US, is not just randomly placed.



This newsletter is published 10 times a year and is sent to Nuremberg Actions members who request it. Additional donations make it possible to distribute it more widely for educational purposes.

The goal of the newsletter is to support citizen's rights in calling for just, sustainable non-exploitive policies from business and government alike, through nonviolent, creative and responsible means. Submissions accepted to 20th of month. Editor and Publisher: Jennifer Viereck

According to the Oakland Tribune, a Navy spokesperson in Washington stated, "Upon returning to their homeports, those units that might have [nuclear] weapons will remove them in a reasonable period of time." Bay area spokesperson Lt. Cdr. Sandy Stairs was a little more specific, saying that nuclear weapons would be off-loaded within six to eight months nationwide. He declined to give any details about where the weapons would be removed, transported or stored.

A Navy map of the Alameda Naval Air Station issued in 1980 clearly labels Building 741 at the eastern perimeter of the base with a storage code and the words 'Nuclear Weapons'. However, it is likely that most weapons will follow the standard procedure of transport to Concord by barge during daylight hours, through some of the most crowded and populated waterways in the US. Concord houses a fleet of barges and 2 tugboats to do just that.

The Tribune article continues:

"[Arkin] said it is likely that Concord's role as a storage site for nuclear weapons will grow in the next few years as other Pacific-based ships and submarines shed their tactical nuclear weapons and the Navy consolidates due to post-Cold War budget cuts.

"Arkin predicted that the Naval Weapons Stations at Concord and Bangor, Washington will expand, while the other two key west coast nuclear weapons stations--in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and San Diego--will be converted to conventional weapons storage."

NUCLEAR NUGGETS

Funds for nuclear testing are included in the final portion of the Defense Authorization Bill, which has not yet passed Congress. Each test costs \$160 million.

Since the 1940's, the US has spent \$300 billion (in 1990 dollars) on designing, testing and manufacturing nuclear warheads, about 60,000 of which have been produced. The warheads contain 90-100 tons of weapons-grade plutonium and 500 tons of highly enriched uranium.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Dept. of Energy hope to bury high-level radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Experiments are needed to prove the waste can remain there for 10,000, but the state of Nevada has refused to sell them large amounts of water for the experiments. 70,000 gallons are now being imported from drought-ravaged California for this purpose.

____ Please send me more information about Nuremberg Actions

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____ I enclose a donation of \$15____ (other) to cover costs.

Name _____

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Organization _____

TRACK RECORD

December 1, 1991 is the 1634th consecutive day of resistance to US war crimes at the Concord Naval Weapons Station. Attendance at the vigil continues to be low, but, yes, Greg Getty did get to go see his mother for Thanksgiving!

Ten train movements were recorded between October 29th and November 19th, with a total of 98 loaded boxcars of munitions, mainly inbound. Seventy-four cars were Class A (detonates on impact, such as bombs and missiles), 15 were Class B (ignites on impact, such as propellants), two were Dangerous (bullets, landmines, etc.) and seven were Inert (metal fins, tail-pieces, etc.). Numerous trucks were recorded, many carrying missiles, rockets and 12" artillery shells.

Arrested this month for attempting to uphold the Nuremberg Principles were: Greg Getty (twice), Sunshine Appleby, Maylie Scott, Matt Seltzer, Victor Vasquez, Woody Schwartz, David Duncombe, Ruth Hartsough, Abraham Zwickel, Betty Black and Larry Harper. Woody Schwartz had the perseverance to get arrested twice in one day.

Local residents sometimes celebrate their holidays in strange ways. The vigil site was severely vandalized during the night near Halloween, and again on Veterans Day. Also on Veterans Day, Dominic Von Zabern was struck by an egg thrown at high velocity from a passing pickup.

THANKSGIVING EVENT A SUCCESS

Dear Richard,

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, we write you to make a special request.

We would like the Navy to deliver food collected by individuals across Northern California to countries where we normally deliver weapons.

We are coming to the base Wednesday, Nov. 27, 1991. Our hope is to enter the base, load the food aboard transport vehicles so that the Navy can deliver life sustaining food to those in need. We would encourage you to unload weapons to make room for the food. We are willing to help in this endeavor.

* * * *

CALENDAR

AT THE TRACKS:

12/12---9:00 am Sonoma Co. Taxes for Peace, Redwood Friends Morning circle, orientation and weapons blockade
12/15---10:00 am Buddhist Morning of Meditation Sitting and walking. Rides leave Berkeley Zen Center at 9:15.
Each Thursday morning orientation and training is available.

IN THE BAY AREA:

12/8---6:30 pm Bound By The Wind, a video documentary on the global impacts of nuclear testing, to benefit Western States Legal Foundation. Berkeley Friends Church, 1600 Sacramento St. \$5-15. 510-632-9273 or 510-351-1596.
1/19-19/92---National Network on Cuba National Meeting will be held in San Francisco. 415-826-6828 for more info.
Each Thursday at noon---Parents Against the War support resisters at 14th and Broadway, Oakland. 510-841-8282.
Each Friday at noon---Women in Black support Palestinians at Cody's Books, Haste and Telegraph, Berkeley. 510-644-8021

AT GREENHAM COMMON, ENGLAND:

12/14-15---Women's gathering to oust the base. Women gathered outside the US Base at Greenham Common have been credited by many for helping rid Europe of Cruise missiles. Now, the base plans to upgrade its runway for 'air exercises'

Organizers from Nuremberg Actions West, Bay Area Religious Peace Action, and Citizens for a Liveable Earth planned an event to bring Thanksgiving to the Weapons Station, and sent the letter opposite to Base Commander Richard Owens.

Apparently the Navy is not quite ready to swing from aiding death toward life, because ten of the twenty-five people arriving at the gates with food for the starving overseas were arrested. Food supplies were given instead to those providing for the hungry here at home.

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