

AN INTRODUCTION TO GAAA

The **Gewaltfreie Aktion Atomwaffen Abschaffen (GAAA**, Nonviolent Action to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) is a German non-governmental organisation dedicated to the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

After the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (NTBT) was signed in 1996, GAAA grew out of a group which had opposed nuclear testing. The GAAA monitors and pressures the nuclear weapon states to fulfil their obligation under international law and treaties to start to abolish their nuclear weapons.

The Nurnberg Principles and the decision of the International Court of Justice in 1996 (that stated "the threat and use of nuclear weapons would be illegal under international law") made it clear to us that we have an obligation to perform non-violent direct actions opposing nuclear weapons. We organise actions on civil disobedience (CD) at military bases in Germany and throughout Europe, and conduct public hearings to inform the German population about nuclear weapons.

For example, when the U.S. governments deployed B-61 nuclear bombs in seven different European countries and stationed A-10 Thunderbolt warplanes with depleted uranium ammunition in Germany, Italy and elsewhere, in 1997, 1998 and 1999 GAAA organised CD actions at the military base in Büchel, close to Frankfurt, Germany. "Inspection Teams" gained access to the base as bailiffs of the International Court of Justice. A number of people were arrested while enforcing the International Court of Justice's decision. They used their few weeks of imprisonment to further raise awareness about this issue.

The GAAA does lobby work and networking with affiliated groups in Europe and throughout the world. We have worked in coalition with such European organisations as For Mother Earth Belgium; Lakenheath Action Group, UK; International Physicians and Scientists for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), Germany; Trägerkreis Atomwaffen Abschaffen; Germany Society of War Resisters; Darmstädter Signal; Internationaler Versöhnungsbund, Germany. We have also worked in co-operation with Nukewatch in the USA; and Japanese organisations from Hiroshima.

Historically, GAAA has worked on such nuclear weapons issues as mini-nukes, weapons in space, and now DU and other uranium weapons. We have also done work on the issue of how indigenous peoples have been affected by such issues as uranium mining, weapons testing on their lands, and health effects from radiation amongst indigenous populations. Among our most notable major actions and successes are:

- In 1999, organised opposition to Germany's illegal participation in the war against Yugoslavia, and its use of depleted uranium munitions
- In 1999, participated in and helped organise the international Peace Walk from the International Court of Justice in Den Haag (Holland), right after 'The Hague Appeal for Peace Conference' to NATO Headquarter in Brussels (Belgium), performing direct actions, and demanding that NATO negotiate the abolishment of nuclear weapons and the first strike option
- In the year 2000, the GAAA worked with local activists and helped inspire them to organise actions during the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Days at the military base in Büchel, near Frankfurt
- For 2001, planned a bigger inspection of the Büchel base by so-called "very important persons" (politicians, artists, u.s.w.) in order to build up pressure on the judge to consider international law. This action was well prepared, and co-ordinated with similar actions on military bases with U.S. nuclear weapons in Holland (Voelkel) and Belgium (Kleine Brogel) on the October 3rd European Action Day Against Nuclear Weapons. (Regrettably, most of these actions did not occur because of the hysterical situation after the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre in the USA. The German police searched GAAA's office and confiscated all our computers and other equipment, saying that our planned inspection would be an incitement to crime. Our office manager

was fined, and our computers have not yet been returned, but GAAA received much solidarity from the peace movement.)

- In 2003 GAAA plans a summer bike tour connecting three different German-based U.S. military bases containing nuclear weapons to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the successful resistance against the deployment of Pershing missiles in Germany during the Cold War, culminating in the blockade of the Büchel military base; and intends to hold a major organising conference in October to organise an international campaign seeking the ban of depleted uranium (DU) and other uranium weapons, and their classification as weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

GAAA maintains contact office(s) in Hamburg, and Kornwestheim (near Stuttgart), Germany. It fields a staff of two paid and 25-30 volunteer workers. It publishes a quarterly newsletter, *FreiRaum*, (posted to a website at www.gaaa.org) which is published in Germany, and sent to over 1,600+ individuals and organisations in 13 countries.

GAAA is governed by decisions of members made at the GAAA annual meeting, held in November of each year. Program decisions and fundraising plans for the following year are made at this meeting. It is a German non-profit organization, and is affiliated with Förderverein Frieden, which in Germany acts as our fiscal agent for the purpose of making tax-deductible contributions under German tax law.