

The Danish Peace Academy

Greenham Common Women's Peace Camps Documentation

HISTORY OF THE 501ST TACTICAL MISSILE WING (TMW)
RAF GREENHAM COMMON; UNITED KINGDOM
1 JULY 1982 THROUGH 31 MARCH 1983
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CHAPTER VII

THE GREENHAM COMMON WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP

INTRODUCTION

The personnel assigned to RAF Greenham Common not only had to cope with the many challenges that were involved with the beddown of the Ground Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM), they also had to cope with the irritation of the women's peace camp established outside of the main gate.

The peace camp was set up in September 1981, shortly after the public announcement that the GLCM would be based at RAF Greenham Common. Local authorities encountered many difficulties in their attempts to evict the peace camp women because several jurisdictions were involved. One portion of the land they occupied was owned by the Newbury District Council (NDC), and another by the Ministry of Transport (MOT). As soon as one of these agencies succeeded in evicting the campers from the land under their jurisdiction the campers just moved the matter of several yards to an area of land under the jurisdiction of the other agency.¹ *

The activities of the peace camp did not have a direct impact on the U.S. Air Force and dependent personnel at RAF Greenham Common; indirectly, however, the protestors were more an irritant and frustration than anything else. The base population felt: "Here we are, basing the GLCM at RAF Greenham Common as a NATO deterrent, and these misguided women want to see the cancellation of the GLCM basing decision and the disestablishment of NATO." The exposure of base personnel to the realities of the CND camp had a negative impact on morale. This was brought about by the frustrations resulting from the perceived lack of UK government action against the

peace camps, not only at RAF Greenham Common, but at other USAF bases in the UK. If left to fester too long, this frustration could conceivably encourage confrontations.²

The CND's activities were viewed as an internal political debate within the UK in which U.S. involvement would be inappropriate.

The base commander placed the peace camp off limits to all military personnel and directed that there would be no contact between blue-suiters and peace campers. During the 23 February 1983 wing staff meeting, Colonel Thompson, the wing commander, restated the official policy regarding the peace camp:

"(...)...Supervisors should stress the seriousness of the political situation at the front gate.

Stay away from the women and avoid confrontations.

Brief dependents, this is a British situation which they want to handle themselves and Americans must stay out of it."

*(U) The peace camp maintained a loose affiliation with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

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CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The CND was organized by Canon John Collins of St. Paul's Cathedral in January 1958. The organization's initial charter called for Britain to unilaterally renounce nuclear weapons, and later focused its attention toward the disbandment of regional alliances such as NATO.

During 1959 and 1960 the CND sponsored a number of demonstrations, several of which drew over 100,000 people. The CND maintained close ties with Britain's Labour Party and has had varying degrees of communist influence since its beginnings.

The activities of the CND ebbed following an acme in 1960, at which time the Labour Party Conference voted its support of unilateral disarmament; a decision which they reversed in 1961. The CND had a serious problem with internal disagreements about tactics and policies. Some CND factors supported active resistance (violence) toward authority while others advocated lawful protests. With the conclusion of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty of 1963, the motivation within CND faded considerably. It was during these years of decline that CND came under an increasing amount of communist influence. By 1978,

CND had a membership of approximately 2,000. With the December 1979 decision to deploy GLCM to the UK, the CND began to reemerge. The GLCM deployment decision gave the CND a new focus of attention which attracted many new supporters. As a

result, peace groups established camps in the vicinity of most U.S. bases in the UK. Currently, the CND has around 35,000 formal members. The British press, however, estimates that there are five to ten times that number of supporters.⁴

The CND was administered by a national council which was composed of members elected during an annual conference.

Additionally, there were representatives from the various CND regions. There were also representatives from special factions, i.e. "Christian CND," "Youth CND," and "Green CND." The general secretary of the CND was Joan Ruddock, a Labour Party parliamentary candidate when she was first elected to the CND national council in 1980. She was elected to the chairperson position over the outgoing communist vice chairman, Dr. John Cox. At least four of the current national council members and a member of full-time national officers, were members of the communist party. Moreover, Trotskyites were active in the Youth CND.⁵

(u) The CND constitution outlined its aims and policies as follows: ⁶

"(U) The aim of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is the unilateral abandonment by Britain of nuclear weapons, nuclear bases and nuclear alliances as a prerequisite for a British policy which has the worldwide abolition of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons leading to general and complete disarmament as its prime objective. The Campaign

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for Nuclear Disarmament is opposed to the manufacture, stockpiling, testing, use and threatened use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons by any country or group of countries which make nuclear war more likely, or which hinder progress towards a world without weapons of mass destruction."

The CND used a variety of public relations and propaganda avenues to support their objectives, including press events, many of which included Warsaw Pact newspaper and electronic media. The most conspicuous activities used by the CND were peaceful demonstrations and the establishment of peace camps outside U.S. bases in the United Kingdom.⁷

The CND and its affiliated peace groups represented a vocal minority within the UK; however, their impact as a political force could not be ignored. They attempted to appeal to the members of the younger generation who missed the anti-nuclear debate of the late 1950s and 1960s. The CND also attracted some limited support from large numbers of people who might not agree with the CND and its methods, but did believe in the principles of world peace. The CND sponsored demonstrations outside RAF Greenham Common as early as April 1981. In September 1981, the peace women set up their camp outside the main gate at RAF Greenham Common.⁷

RAF GREENHAM COMMON PEAGE CAMP *

In early September 1981, a group of CND supporters began a march from Cardiff, South Wales, toward RAF Greenham Common to stage an antinuclear protest. The group, which included approximately 100 women and children and several men, arrived at the main gate of RAF Welford on 4 September 1981. They sang songs, prayed, and unfurled some CND banners. The non-violent demonstration concluded at approximately 1630 hours, at which time they started walking toward RAF Greenham Common. They arrived at the main gate of RAF Greenham Common at approximately 0855 hours on 5 September. By this time the group had grown to some 250 people. Mariane Garmen, one of the protestors, read a petition which demanded a public debate on the cruise missile. Furthermore, approximately 12 of the peace women chained themselves to the fence adjacent to the main gate. Soviet and East German television crews filmed the arrival of the protestors at RAF Greenham Common and the establishment of the CND peace camp. Also observed in the area was a Czechoslovakian vehicle. The demonstrators proclaimed that the camp would be maintained until the British government publicly debated the cruise missile issue with the CND. The camp had an average of 20-40 inhabitants with its size increasing to 200-300 on weekends. The camp consisted of 10 small tents, three large tents, a portable chemical toilet, and a small wooden structure.⁹

On 11 September 1981, several members of the peace camp presented the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) guard at the main gate with a letter addressed to the base commander. The letter asked for a meeting with the base commander to discuss the peace camp. The base's RAF commander met with the peace camp representatives the next day.

*(U) The reader should refer to Doc 325 for representative peace camp newsletters and CND literature.

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The peace campers asked the RAF commander to provide their camp site with access to water and 24-hour phone service, a reduction in MDP presence, the slowing of vehicles leaving the base, and fencing around the peace camp. They were only granted access to water. A rally involving 175 to 200 protestors was held at the peace camp the next day.¹⁰

THE PROTEST ACTIVITY BEGINS

The first large-scale CND protest held at RAF Greenham Common took place the weekend of 20-22 March 1982. On Saturday, 20 March, a group of ecologists marched from the Aldermaston Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE)* to the main gate of RAF Greenham Common. There were no confrontations between protestors and police that day. On Sunday the 21st of March, base security police found that several padlocks on perimeter gates had been filled with superglue. The locks were

subsequently replaced. At approximately 0800 hours protestors began to arrive outside of RAF Greenham Common by bus and private automobiles and gathered at several of the base's gates. They numbered around 2,000. Activities on the base were routine throughout the day and by 1800 hours the majority of the protestors had left. At approximately 1830 hours 12 women chained themselves to seven of the base's gates and a facsimile American flag was burned at the main gate. The protest activities of the peace women increased on 22 March when they blocked base gates to keep military and civilian personnel and civilian contractors from entering the base. At 0900 hours, a line of military and contractor vehicles were convoyed through an unblocked temporary gate so they could get to work. Protestors attempted to block this gate. As a result, 33 of the protestors were arrested by the Thames Valley Police (TVP). It was estimated that approximately 300-400 women had participated in the day's protest activities.

Television crews from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Independent Television Network (ITN), Sweden, and the Soviet Union were on hand to cover the weekend demonstrations. 11

THE FIRST EVICTION

As discussed earlier, a portion of the land occupied by the peace women was common land owned by the NDC. The NDC had on several occasions taken the peace women to court in an effort to evict them. On the morning of 27 May 1982, the High Sheriff of Newbury District presented a court order to the CND peace campers which evicted them from the campsite. Later that morning (around 1200 hours) the High Sheriff, aided by civilian contractors, started to take down the main tent of the camp.

A bulldozer arrived at approximately 1320 hours to help in bringing the main tent down. The MDP and TVP were present during the eviction process. Two of the CND women attempted to stop the bulldozer by sitting in its path; however, they, along with a third woman were arrested and taken away to jail. In the meantime, another woman camper had entered the bulldozer's cab. She was also arrested. There was a large amount

* AWRE was Britain's primary nuclear weapons research laboratory and was located around six miles from RAF Greenham Common.

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national and international media coverage of the eviction proceedings. Even with the completion of the eviction, protestors reestablished their peace camp on MOT land only a dozen or so yards from the land from which they were evicted.12

THE WING ACTIVATION & COSMIC CRUISE CARNIVAL

The 501 TMW was activated at RAF Greenham Common on 1 July 1982. To mark the activation, a special ceremony was held on base with a large number of dignitaries in attendance.* The base's SP and MPD had anticipated the potential of large-scale demonstrations outside of the base and had planned their actions accordingly. They had received word that a large number of people attending a pop festival at Salisbury would come to RAF Greenham Common on 1 July 1982 to hold a "Cosmic Cruise Carnival" on a site near the base's contractor entrance gate. A schedule of festivals and events for 1982 prepared by Freedom Festivals based in London had described the Cosmic Cruise Carnival as "Free fun, music & protest against nuclear missile base." It was not known at that time if the carnival participants knew of the wing activation ceremony. Consequently, the base's SP and MDP beefed up their security efforts to assure that the protestors would not enter the base. The TVP were also available if they were needed. The activation ceremony received only limited local media coverage and the peace campers staged only a small demonstration. A number of the Cosmic Cruise Carnival people established a "Rainbow Peace Camp" on Greenham Common.¹³ **

DAMAGE TO BASE PERIMETER FENCE

The base survived the 1st of July 1982 with no major problems. However, the people attending the Cosmic Cruise Carnival remained at their Greenham Common camp site until mid-July 1982. In the early morning hours of 9 July 1982 an MPD patrol discovered that the carnival participants had knocked down more than 150 yards of base perimeter fence. The TVP sent reinforcements to the base and started arriving at around 0630 hours. It was at this time that the demonstrators started to throw stones, glass, and bags of paint at the MPD officers. Later that morning, the demonstrators knocked down another 25 yards of fence. The TVP arrested five demonstrators, two of which were charged with criminal damage to the fence. A representative from Property Services Agency (PSA) estimated that more than £10,000 (\$15,000) damage had been done to the fence. On 12 September the MOD informed Headquarters Third Air Force that the fence would be repaired by PSA at no cost to the U.S. government. The MOD stated that the damage fell under the British Riot Damages act of 1886.¹⁴

TRE PROTEST ACTIVITY IS STEPPED UP

The peace camp women stepped up their protest activities against the base in August 1982. On 9 August at 1047 hours members of

*(U) See Chapter I, pp 4.

***(U) The "Rainbow Peace Camp," was set up in an area located off base which was called Greenham Common (not to be confused with the base RAF Greenham Common).

the camp blocked the main gate. Because of this, base personnel had to use the gate off Bury's Bank Road to enter and leave the base. Eight of the CND women entered the Bury's Bank Road gate around 1143 hours and sat down on a grassy area about 300 yards from the gate where they started to pray. They were apprehended by the MDP, transported off base, and were turned over to the TVP. The second incident of the month occurred on 27 August. The peace camp women rushed the main gate and effectively occupied the guard shack and blocked traffic on and off base for approximately an hour. Two USAF dependent wives, both British subjects, were grabbed by the CND women and were tied to the main gate for a short period of time. In all, 18 CND women were arrested and transported by the TVP to the Newbury Police Station to appear on charges of breach of the peace. The arrested women were finally brought to trial in November 1982 and were jailed for 14 days. The women had refused to post a £100 bond and promise they would not breach the peace again. The 27 August "CND invasion" was filmed by British TV crews. The CND women made another attempt to block the main gate on 29 August, but they changed their minds when threatened with arrest.¹⁵

TRE SECOND EVICTION

It was during September 1982 that local civilian authorities took their second eviction against the RAF Greenham Common peace camp. On the morning of 29 September a bailiff moved in to evict the peace women from their camp. The eviction had been ordered by the MOT. At the time of eviction there were approximately a dozen women in the camp. Seventy-two TVP and 15 MDP were present to assist the bailiff in the eviction process. By noon the bailiff men had removed all of the structures on the camp site. Several hours later the women tried to put up new structures on the camp site; however, they were stopped from doing so by the TVP. Several MOT trucks brought loads of quarry stone to lands cape the camp site to preclude the reestablishment of peace camps on their land. The base's main gate was closed during the eviction and traffic onto and off base was routed through another gate.

The MOT used seven trucks and 20 workmen to remove the trailers and other structures from the camp site. The trailers were loaded onto flatbed trucks and taken away to an MOT impound lot. In conjunction with the CND peace camp eviction, similar action was taken against the Rainbow Peace Camp. Three men were arrested for obstructing civil authorities. By the close of the day both camps were unoccupied. There were, though, about 30 demonstrators on privately owned land near the contractor entrance gate.¹⁶

REESTABLISHMENT OF TRE PEACE CAMP

The CND women took no time at all to reestablish a camp site outside the main gate. On the evening of 29 September 1982, there were approximately 24 women outside the gate and they erected four tents and started a campfire on NDC property; the same property from which they were evicted back in May 1982. The base contacted the TVP

in an effort to evict the women again, but they did not respond to the request. On the morning of 30 September the number of women at the camp was around 12. They had removed three of the four

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tents. Later that morning approximately 20 people and 10 vehicles were noted to be setting up a camp outside the east side of the base. Ministry of Transport personnel arrived at the camp site outside of the main gate and placed granite blocks on the land from which the CND women were evicted the day before. A number of the women attempted to stop the workmen but the TVP forced the women to leave the site.¹⁷

Things at the peace camp were quiet for a few days. On 20 October, CND protestors paraded through Newbury with a fiberglass model of a cruise missile and distributed 10,000 leaflets. On the morning of 5 October the women disrupted the work on a new sewer line being installed outside of the base perimeter by civilian contractors. The workmen arrived at the construction site around 0800 hours to find that the CND women had weaved colored yarn* across the site and were lying in the sewer trench. The TVP arrested 13 women and brought them before a special session of the Newbury Magistrates Court. Their court case was deferred until 17 November 1982. On that date the Court sentenced 10 of the women to 14 days in jail because they refused to put up £100 bond and promise not to breach the peace again. The other three women posted the bond and made such a promise; they were allowed to go free.¹⁸

TRE MOD PRO-GLCM PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

It was during October 1982 that the MOD started its own publicity campaign in support of the cruise missile deployment and against unilateral disarmament. In late October the MOD released a 24-minute film entitled "The Peace Game." The film presented the rationale for basing the cruise missile in the UK and stressed the deterrent nature of a strong NATO. The film was made available to the public and news media.¹⁹

HALLOWEEN WEEKEND DEMONSTRATION

The next CND demonstration to take place at RAF Greenham Common was on Halloween weekend. Between 300-400 demonstrators gathered near the contractor's gate the evening of 31 October 1982. They chose this date because the NDC had warned the women that quick, effective action would be taken against them if demonstration activities were held on NDC land. The demonstration that evening was sponsored by the Green and Youth CND factions.²⁰

THE DEC 82 LARGE-SCALE CND DEMONSTRATION

The CND held its second large-scale demonstration at RAF Greenham Common the weekend of 12-13 December 1982. They had selected 12 December for their demonstration because it was the third anniversary of the NATO decision to base cruise missiles at RAF Greenham Common.

12 December started out as an ill-weather day with rain and sleet.

*(U) The peace women referred to the weaved colored yarn as "nuclear webbing."

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Consequently, the arrival of the more than 20,000 CND demonstrators was slower than expected. By mid-morning only about 300-400 demonstrators were outside of the base. However, by 1600 hours their number had swelled to 15,000. For the most part, the demonstration was non-violent and there was no attempt by them to block the base entry gates. Base traffic was rerouted through a gate on the northwest side of the base to preclude confrontations between blue-suiters and demonstrators. The demonstrators encircled the base's seven mile long perimeter fence and joined hands as they sang songs, chanted, and lit candles. In the group of demonstrators were women from Denmark, West Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, and Belgium. At 1730 hours that evening approximately 100 buses arrived to transport the demonstrators back to their homes. On a humorous note, an individual who did not agree with the 12 December CND demonstration flew a light plane in the vicinity of the base pulling a banner which read: "Kremlin Sends Kongratulations."²¹

On the morning of 13 December the TVP had to remove between 40-50 demonstrators who had attempted to block the base's west entry gate. Three of the TVP received minor injuries during the removal action.

Since base officials had already anticipated problems in getting Air Force and civilian personnel through the gates, plans were made and carried out to bring a convoy of U.S. military buses and privately owned vehicles (POV) from a staging area at the Manor Rouse through the west gate.

The convoy came through the west gate around 0700 hours. The TVP also cleared demonstrators from the contractor's gate to enable the contractors to get on base. At approximately 1500 hours two British contractor personnel were apprehended by TVP for putting up a CND banner on one of the base's hangars. They were not prosecuted, but their base passes were pulled and they were barred from entering the base again. Around 1630 hours the TVP, MDP and RAF police cleared demonstrators from the main gate to allow 10 USAF buses and 20-30 POVs and contractor vehicles to depart the base. By 2000 hours there was only a small contingent of protestors left. Base officials estimated that no more than 2,000 protestors had been outside RAF Greenham Common on 13 December. The next morning TVP and MDP had to extinguish a bonfire and clear 20 protestors from blockading the main gate.²²

The protestors of 12-13 December left a horrible mess all around the base's perimeter and local residents were furious with both the NDC and police for permitting the

demonstration to occur. Not only did the protestors leave a mess on private property; they also trapped the local residents in their homes for two days. The residents were afraid to leave their homes for fear of property damage and bodily injury. The RAF Greenham Common Community Relations Council organized a volunteer effort to clean up the mess the weekend after the demonstration.²³

THE "DISCO" INCIDENT

On the evening of 18 December 1982, several young Air Force members had unbeknowningly signed three CND women onto the base and took them to the disco dance at the consolidated open mess. The women had dressed up (something totally out of character for the CND women)

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and had asked the young airmen to bring them to the disco dance. Later it was found that the women had spray painted CND slogans on the walls of the women's latrine in the open mess. The women had entered the base at 2212 hours, 18 December, and left at 0105 hours, 19 December. Needless to say, the sign-in procedures for escorting people on the base were tightened up.²⁴

CND PENETRATIONS OF THE BASE PERIMETER FENCE

In January 1983, the CND demonstrators made their first major penetration of RAF Greenham Common. The base Law Enforcement (LE) Desk received a phone call from local police at 0715 hours, 1 January 1983, which warned that the protestors planned to climb over the perimeter fence and enter the GAMA site. The local police had received a tip-off from a reporter. The LE Desk immediately dispatched three USAF SPs and three MDPs to the GAMA site and found approximately 33 protestors on top of the QRA facility in the GAMA area. They were dancing about and had unfurled a CND banner. Another 11 protestors were inside the base perimeter fence and 50 more were outside the fence. The protestors had thrown pieces of carpet over the barbed wire fences and used ladders to scale the fence. The 11 demonstrators who were outside of the GAMA area were arrested by the MDPs and were detained in military vehicles. Ministry of Defence Police reinforcements from Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) Burgfield arrived at 0810 hours and started to arrest the women who were at op the QRA facility. The arrests were completed by 0855 hours.

The protestors offered only minimal resistance and were turned over to the TVP. The women were brought to the Newbury Police Station and were charged with breach of the peace. They were refused bail and were ordered to remain in jail until 3 January at which time they would appear in Magistrate's Court. On 3 January the court bound the women over for trial until 14 February 1983. USAF involvement consisted of the use of military buses to detain the demonstrators and transport them to the police station.²⁵

In the later part of January 1983 the CND protestors expanded their activities by increasing the size of their camp at the main gate and by establishing a second camp near the contractor's entrance gate. They erected six more tents outside the main gate and approximately 25 women now lived at the camp site. There were eight to 10 women staying at the second campsite. On 25 January an incident occurred which pointed to the fact that some newsmen wanted to make news rather than report it. A Canadian film crew arrived at the peace camp and had talked the women into staging a sit-down demonstration at the main gate at noon. The women blocked the gate for around three minutes during which time the "responsible" journalists filmed the staged demonstration. About an hour later 24 women started a sit-down demonstration at the construction gate. The TVP arrested 12 of the women for obstructing traffic. At the same time six women blocked the main gate entrance. The TVP informed the film crew that instigating demonstrations for filming could result in arrest and subsequent charges of conspiracy being brought against them.

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The response of the TVP was quick and it was the first time that protestors had been charged with obstructing a public highway.²⁶

The harassment of base security forces by the CND women increased and on 28 January 1983 the women attempted to provoke a confrontation, but to no avail. The women now had two-way radios (provided by a GND group in northern England) for communication between the two camps and to coordinate demonstration activity.²⁷ On the morning of 7 February an unidentified civilian had informed the guard at the Sadler Gate that a group of about 40 women were gathering at the east end of the base.

Base SPs and MDP were dispatched to that area of the base and found a large group of women were at the end of the runway. The women broke off into three groups, heading for the main base and GAMA areas. The SPs, because of the non-confrontation policy, did not attempt to confront the demonstrators. Rather, they relayed all necessary information to the MDP for their action. The TVP responded to the base and between 1100-1150 hours a total of 654 women had been arrested. The protestors were brought to the Newbury Police Station. By 1230 hours demonstrators were outside of all the base gates attempting to block the flow of traffic on and off base. They ceased their demonstration activities at 1450 hours and left the area quietly. By 1700 hours there were only 15-20 protestors at the main peace camp. It was determined that the protestors had entered the base through a 5-foot opening they had cut in the perimeter fence. The protestors also used two vans parked near the fence to jump over the top of the fence. There were no injuries to military or civil police. One of the USAF buses used to transport the protestors suffered a broken window and control handle. There was extensive news coverage of the day's demonstration.²⁸

The next penetration of the base perimeter fence by CND protestors took place on 14 February 1983. Around 0700 hours an RAF security patrol reported that eight women protestors had cut a hole 2-foot by 3-foot in the fence, had entered the base, and were

climbing up the tower used by the contractors to mix cement. The women were arrested by MDP, with the assistance of the RAF police, and brought to the SP operations building. Female MDP officers body-searched the CND women and questioned them about the incident. As was the case in the previous incident, there was wide-spread news coverage of the CND women's entrance to the base.²⁹

The CND women continued their harassment tactics the very next day. Around 2030 hours, 30-35 of the women entered the main gate, encircled the gate shack, and started to sing and dance. Another 70 protestors remained outside of the gate. The MDP pushed the women back off base while the RAF police formed a second line behind the MDP to prevent any break throughs. The TVP arrived at the base at 2050 hours and dispersed the crowd of women outside of the main gate. Eleven additional MDP officers from RAP Farnborough were sent to RAF Greenham Common and remained the night in case there were further incidents.³⁰

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There was no rest for the weary as on 15 February 1983 50-60 protestors used ladders to climb over the perimeter fence on the southwest side of the base. Base security forces arrived to find approximately 45 women sitting in a circle just inside their point of entry. The other 10 or so protestors were heading for the batch cement plant located 300 yards inside the perimeter fence. A total of 62 protestors were removed from the base between 0750-0835 hours and were subsequently released off base by the MDP. This was only the start of the day's protest activities. Around 1000 hours, a dozen women sat down in the middle of Brackenhurst Lane, which connected the access road of A339 and the GAMA site contractor's gate. The TVP responded and by 1050 hours the roadway was clear again. There were three other instances that day whereby small bands of 10-12 protestors got onto the base. The MDP and RAF police were able to round up the women and escort them off base with little difficulty. The base had received word around 1316 hours that a group of approximately 400 protestors were on their way to the base from Newbury and they intended to block the base gates. By 1336 hours there were 60 protestors at the main gate, 50 at the west gate, and 15 at the Sadler Gate. As a result, base personnel departing the base after work were instructed to form a convoy by building 303. At approximately 1712 hours the TVP cleared the protestors from blocking the main gate and the convoy safely departed the base. By 1735 hours the protestors had left the vicinity of the base. The TVP arrested a total of 17 protestors and more than 100 were removed from the base that day. The next day, 16 February, saw 12 more CND women arrested by TVP for obstructing traffic. After the TVP departed the base the protestors reblocked the main gate and 33 women were arrested.³¹

BASE ENTRY/EXIT AND BUILDING SECURITY PROCEDURES

As a result of the increase in CND base entry incidents, the base commander issued detailed policy letters on 15 February dealing with base entry and exit procedures and office security during demonstrations. Base personnel attempting to enter the base

and finding the gates blocked by protestors, were instructed to depart the area and proceed to the Manor House in Greenham Close and await convoy instructions from the SPs or MDP. When attempting to depart the base when the gates were blocked, POVs and contractor vehicles were to proceed to hangar 301 to form a convoy. The convoy would exit one of the base's several gates. The TVP would clear protestors from the convoy exit, if required. Each convoy was very costly in terms of police manpower, and involved an extensive coordination effort. Due to this, base entrance and exit during demonstrations would be for mission-essential or emergency purposes only. In the area of building security during demonstrations, if protestors were seen approaching a building, the building custodian was to notify the LE Desk, make sure all classified material was locked up, and all windows and doors were locked. Further, the custodian was tasked to make a sweep of the building to ensure that no protestors had entered the building or placed anything inside of the building. An individual would be posted as an entry/exit monitor to make sure authorized personnel entered the building and only those personnel on mission

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essential business left the building. If protestors gained entry to a base facility USAF personnel were instructed not to physically restrain them. The doors to other areas of the building would be locked to keep the protestors from gaining access to them. Additionally, the building custodians were instructed to record any damage caused by the protestors. It was stressed in both of the base commander's letters that DSAF personnel would not engage in either verbal or physical contact with the protestors.³²

THE IDES OF MARCH

(u) The month of March 1983 was one of expanded CND protest activities both outside of and an RAF Greenham Common. On the afternoon of 8 March, the protestors attempted to block several of the base's gates. At approximately 1515 hour, approximately 30-40 CND women demonstrators blocked Brackenhurst Lane. About an hour and a half later, 12 more of the women sat down in front of the main gate. In both cases, the TVP responded to the demonstration sites but took no action. Consequently, the base's RAF Commander served a written notice to the TVP which asked for the removal of the protestors that were blocking the main gate. As a result, the TVP removed the protestors from in front of the gate and two of the women were arrested. Besides their activities at the Brackenhurst Lane and main gates, eight women attempted to block Sadler gate. Accordingly, the SP gate guard closed the Sadler gate. At 1740 hours the west gate was opened as an exit for base traffic. Protestors from the Sadler gate scurried to the west gate to try and hinder vehicular traffic from the base. Much to their chagrin, the convoy departed the base through the west gate with no major problems encountered. By 1800 hours CND activities had pretty much quieted down.³³

The next day, 9 March, the NDG obtained a writ from the High Court in London which ordered the eviction of 21 CND women from the common and not to return. By

the evening hours the women had moved their camp back to MOT land next to the main road. The MOT planned to evict the women from their land, but decided to wait until after the Easter weekend demonstrations. 34

DESEGREGATION OF THE AMERICAN FLAG

(U) On 12 March 1983, one of the most infuriating GND protest actions took place at RAF Greenham Common. At approximately 1200 hours several of the CND women had managed to get on base and pulled down the American flag which was flying in front of the base headquarters building. Two SPs managed to corral the protestors until MDP officers arrived and arrested them. The protestors had managed to desecrate the American flag in the meantime. Even with incidents such as this facing base personnel, the official policy was no confrontation between blue-suiters and protestors.³⁵

VISIT BY SECRETARY HESELTINE*

The Right Honourable David Heseltine, the UK Secretary of State for Defence, visited RAF Greenham Common on 24 March 1983. Major General Carl H. Cathey, Jr., the Third Air Force Commander, travelled to RAF Greenham Common via DSAF C-12 aircraft. General Cathey and Colonel Thompson met Secretary Heseltine who arrived at the base in an RAF helicopter. The three, accompanied by around 80 members of the local, national,

'(U) Also see Chapter III p 48.

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and international press, toured the GAMA site. From there, the whole entourage went to the recreation center where Secretary Heseltine held a press conference. The Secretary stated: "Here at Greenham Common we and our allies are sending a clear message to any potential aggressor that we have the resolve and the means of defending ourselves." He added that security at the base would be increased due to the large number of "infiltrations" by the CND women and the anticipated 40,000 demonstrators expected for the upcoming Easter weekend. He felt that the Easter weekend demonstrations were being planned by a relatively small group of highly motivated political people and he had no reason to believe that the peace demonstration activities were being orchestrated from outside Britain. The arrival of Mr. Heseltine caught the peace campers by surprise and at approximately 1700 hours, five of them feebly attempted to block the back gate from where the press bus exited the base. The bus was only delayed a few minutes as police dragged the demonstrators from the roadway. A number of the women also attempted to enter the main gate, but they were ejected by the MDP. Secretary Heseltine left the base in the RAF helicopter he arrived in and General Gathe left in the G-12.³⁶

THE EASTER WEEKEND DEMONSTRATIONS

It was known as early as January 1983 that the CND would hold a large-scale demonstration outside of RAF Greenham Common on Easter weekend. 37 There would be an extensive anti-nuclear demonstration effort throughout Europe. The demonstrations would focus their attention on missile bases and nuclear weapons factories. In the local area, approximately 30,000 to 40,000 protestors were expected. They planned a well-organized, non-violent blockade of the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) at Burghfield as well as a blockade of the seven gates at RAF Greenham Common. It was expected that the demonstrators would start arriving in the vicinity of the base on 30 March and attempt to disrupt base activities that day. The demonstrators hoped to form a 14-mile long chain of people holding hands from RAF Greenham 8 Common, past the Aldermaston Weapons Research Establishment, to RAF Burghfield.³ After the human chain was completed, the demonstrators would converge on the city of Aldermaston where a theatre and music festival was planned. 9

(U) Throughout the month of March, wing and base staff agencies worked on contingency plans to deal with the demonstration activities over Easter weekend. The Security Police coordinated with the TVP to ensure that sufficient numbers of civil police were available to deal with the demonstrators who were outside of the perimeter fence. The TVP had cancelled all leaves and officers from other outlying areas were brought in, including 30 mounted officers from London. Inner base security would be the responsibility of the SPs, MDP, and RAF Regiment/Police. The MDP contingent at RAF Greenham Common was beefed up with approximately 150 more officers, including patrol dogs. Further, approximately 150 of the RAF Regiment/Police troops were stationed at key locations around the base to detect and apprehend any protestors that entered the base. The number of SPs available for duty during the demonstrations was 30. Also, during the first week of March 1983, RAF troops installed concertina wire around the wing headquarters building and in areas along the perimeter fence where visibility was obscured by thick trees or bushes.⁴⁰

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(U) During the 16 March 1983 wing staff meeting, Colonel Thompson announced that Thursday, 31 March, would be a normal duty day; normal in the sense that everyone would be required to report for duty. The Transportation Squadron arranged to contract for additional buses to bring base personnel and construction workers onto the base in the morning and off again in the evening. The focal point for establishing the convoy was the Newbury Race Track. Individuals who lived in the Newbury and Bishops Green area drove their POVs to the race track and got onto the buses. Those who lived south of the base drove their POVs to the Royal Army Depot at Bramley Green, disembarked their vehicles, and boarded a contract bus. The bus then proceeded to the race track to meet up with the other buses. There was also a bus to/from the base to/from the Wantage/Grove housing area.⁴¹

(U) A total of 17 buses, carrying around 550 personnel, were formed into a convoy which departed the race track at approximately 0820 hours. The convoy was escorted

by a police bus in the front as lead vehicle, and seven police vans brought up the rear. The convoy arrived at the gate near the west end of the base around 0830 hours and stopped. Civil police were lined up on either side of the road to keep the protestors from getting in front of the buses or entering the base. Once the civil police were in place and the gate was opened, the convoy proceeded through the gate at a slow pace. There was only a crowd of 150-200 protestors outside of the west gate. As the buses passed them the protestors shouted out such things as "Suicide," "No Nukes. The convoy entered the base, continued down the flightline and stopped in front of the wing headquarters to let off people who worked there. From there, the convoy went to the main cantonment area to drop off the rest of their passengers.⁴²

(u) Throughout the day, there were only between 1,000-2,000 protestors outside of the base. There were no attempts on their part to enter the base; however, there were incidents of perimeter fence retaining wire being cut. The only out of the ordinary incident that day occurred at 0730 hours when a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) helicopter requested permission to land at the base. This request, of course, was denied.⁴³

(u) The convoy to transport the personnel off base, back to the Newbury Race Track and Bramley Green, formed up near the hangars about 1600 hours. A decoy convoy was formed and it drove back and forth between the various gates on base in an effort to confuse the demonstrators and hamper any attempt they might make to block the convoy exit gate.

Almost as if it were planned, rain started to fall heavily at approximately 1620 hours to dampen the spirits of the protestors. The convoy of 17 buses and two POVs started to roll and proceeded to the main gate. The buses stopped short of the gate and the civil police took action to clear a pathway for the convoy to drive through. RAF Police/Regiment forces were also poised near the chapel to react if the protestors got onto the base. As the convoy went through the gate, the one-hundred or so protestors outside of the gate looked a little frustrated and confused as to what was happening.⁴⁴ The reader should refer to the next edition of the 501 TMW History for coverage of the remainder of the Easter weekend demonstration activity.