

# Ground Zero

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## Medea Benjamin Welcomed at Ground Zero Amidst Seattle Controversy

By Leonard Eiger

Medea Benjamin spoke at Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action on Monday, March 13th while on a nationwide speaking tour marking the first anniversary of the Ukraine war.

Benjamin is the co-founder of the women-led peace group CODEPINK. She also co-founded the advocacy and human rights organization Global Exchange, and the Peace in Ukraine coalition.

Her appearance at Ground Zero was part of a nationwide book tour. *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict*, co-authored with Nicolas Davies, is a critical read for anyone who wants a deeper understanding of a war with consequences that could prove disastrous for humanity. David Swanson, executive director of World Beyond War said, "Give this book to anyone seek-

ing the knowledge and wisdom needed to help end the violence in Ukraine." Mairead McGuire, activist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, calls this book, "an important antidote to the war propaganda about Ukraine that so many in the West are caught up in."

Following her book talk at Ground Zero Center, retired Navy captain and former nuclear submarine commander Tom Rogers presented an overview of the Bangor Trident base and the risks posed by nuclear weapons. Benjamin then joined Ground Zero members and other attendees for a vigil at the nearby Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor Main Gate. The group included members of the Raging Grannies, who entertained the protesters with their creative singing.

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**Medea Benjamin...** continued on page 2

Benjamin was scheduled to speak in at the University of Washington Book Store the following day, but the bookstore canceled her appearance at the last minute, telling event organizers they were under pressure from a pro-Ukrainian student group and a few professors from the University of Washington. Bookstore staff stated that they did not have the necessary staff trained in managing controversy.

The main event organizers, the Seattle Anti-War Coalition (SAWC) tried to persuade the bookstore that Medea Benjamin is comfortable with controversy and welcomes protesters to participate in the discussion, as Benjamin confirmed: "I welcome people coming to my events who oppose my views. They have a right to protest and I certainly understand and empathize with them, especially if they are Ukrainian," Medea Benjamin says, explaining they would be called to the stage to express their views and engage in respectful dialogue. "But free speech must be respected in the U.S., and the bookstore, especially given its association with a university, made a grave mistake cancelling the event."

Organizers appealed to the University Congregational United Church, whose pastor agreed to hold the event, but then canceled just hours before the event was to start. Like the bookstore, they said they did not have staff who could handle any conflict that might arise. Benjamin, however, was not deterred and spoke to attendees outside of the church.

Coincidentally, Benjamin had an event the night before at Tacoma Community College that was attended by a group of pro-Ukrainians. She gave them ample time to voice their concerns and opinions, and attendees engaged in constructive dialogue. The audience applauded

the courage of the Ukrainians to come out and express themselves. This is the same type of healthy, respectful conversation that would probably have taken place in Seattle, had the bookstore and church not succumbed to intimidation.



**Medea Benjamin** brought her decades of peace and justice activism to share at Ground Zero. *Photo by Mary Gleysteen.*

"The complaints waged by a small group of Ukrainians wrongly characterize the book as pro-Russian," said Benjamin. "Anyone who reads the book knows that it clearly condemns Russia's illegal and deadly invasion. In any case, this violation of my free speech by a university-affiliated bookstore and a peace church is shocking and shameful—especially in the liberal city of Seattle."

Benjamin has been on tour with the book for six months with over 100 successful events in over

a dozen different states. The reaction in Seattle is the first and only time this has happened. "Does Seattle really want to be a city that censors and cancels instead of a city that welcomes healthy, respectful dialogue about such a critical issue as war?" Benjamin asked.

Ground Zero member Glen Milner commented on the Seattle debacle: "The militarists have been stoking conflict in the Ukraine for years. Mass media has been suppressing any voice for resolution and for peace. So here we are—Medea Benjamin, whose book in my mind does not lay enough blame on the U.S., and others are hassled, ignored, and ridiculed. We might make it through this proxy war with Russia without a nuclear exchange."

Negotiated peace settlement anyone?

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**Leonard Eiger** chairs the Communication and Outreach Committee, and sends out press releases and information on behalf of Ground Zero.

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## Ray McGovern Speaks About Ukraine at Ground Zero

By Carolee Flaten

Ray McGovern, former CIA Analyst, spoke at Ground Zero on January 29, 2023. His presentation: *Ukraine How We Got Here and What Now?* was a well-attended, wide ranging, interesting, hour-long presentation followed by a lively Q&A period.

McGovern started by speaking of the alliance the US had with the USSR during WWII. He continued by discussing the circumstances surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Union. Then he pivoted to describing the verbal agreement between U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet leader Mikhail Gor-

bachev that NATO would not expand closer to Russia's border, along with the obvious fact that NATO has indeed expanded ever closer to Russia's border.

Throughout his talk, McGovern spoke of the multiple issues that people are mostly unaware of. For instance: Putin's New York Times Op-Ed piece written after Syria was persuaded to destroy all of its chemical weapons under UN Supervision in 2013. Putin wrote he

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**Ray McGovern... continued on page 8**

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# Federal Charges Dismissed for Two Ground Zero Activists

By Mack Johnson

The US Attorney for the Western District of Washington ordered the dismissal of federal trespassing charges for 2 protesters detained and charged at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor during a nonviolent direct action at the Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor main gate on August 8, 2022. The two people are Mack Johnson and Vic White, both associated with the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action.

The two activists crossed the blue line demarking secure federal property on the morning of August 8th following a march and vigil at the main gate, a flash-mob performance in the roadway of State Highway 308, and the blocking of traffic approaching the entrance to the nuclear submarine base.

The other 11 activists were all cited for Pedestrian in the Roadway Unlawfully, a non-moving traffic violation. Most have had their fines reduced in mitigation hearings in Kitsap County District Court.

The August 8 action was the first federal violation for Johnson and White, who have been active for years opposing nuclear arms and working for peace. Violators can be charged with federal trespass, a simple misdemeanor. In past years, most federal protesters have received a “Ban and Bar” letter for their first offense, forbidding them from entering the federal property again, and warning them not to trespass again on penalty of prosecution. In November, the US District Court notified Johnson and White that they were required to appear at an arraignment for the offense, via Zoom, on December 7. White elected to represent himself pro se, and Johnson enlisted Blake Kremer as pro bono legal counsel.

A couple of months of back-and-forth communications ensued between Kremer and the Naval Criminal Investigative Services attorney, who was new at his post. He apologized via email for being new at his duties and for slow or no responses.

The federal courts in the Western District of Washington are almost 2 years behind on their trial load, and in autumn 2022 were just getting back to in-person court hearings. During this time, White experienced some family health issues and changed his plea to guilty to avoid travel to Washington for trial. For a few days Johnson was the only defendant facing federal charges. Mr. Kremer was also sending communications to the Navy attorney about White’s and Johnson’s careers, community service, and commitment to nuclear abolition.

On February 8, 2023 Kremer received a notice that charges for White and Johnson were dismissed. (Johnson’s dismissal is attached below.) Now they have an arrest record but no conviction for federal trespass.

It is the view of Kremer, Johnson, and others and the dismissal was not due to any belief in the validity of activists’ arguments against the legality, cost, or morality of

nuclear weapons. Rather, they saw the case as a minor one compared to the other cases they have to try, and the charges were dismissed due to the prioritizing of resources in the justice system.

However, the dismissal was viewed as a victory by Kremer, White and Johnson. Kremer stated in an email, “I am so pleased for you”. White, whose original goal had been to speak truth to power in a jury trial, was satisfied with a dismissal that would allow him to focus on his family duties and other activities.

Johnson, who has around 2 dozen citations or arrests



**Peace symbols** were drawn on the road leading to the nuclear base during last year’s Hiroshima/Nagasaki action. *Photo by Karol Milner.*

at Bangor since 1998 but was facing his first federal trial, with the likelihood of probation and 100 hours of community service, was very happy with the outcome. “The minimum consequence for an action like this is always a victory. A dismissal is cause for celebration!”

Ground Zero has been witnessing and organizing against nuclear weapons since 1977. As part of its mission, nonviolent direct action against the nuclear juggernaut is a continual calling. Wherever nuclear weapons exist, there will be a core of people and groups that say, “Never! And never again!” Ground Zero is an integral part of this movement and is proud to have a part in the establishment in the 2017 United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The United States is the only nation to have used atomic weapons in wartime. If this catastrophe is never repeated, the peace movement deserves some of the credit.

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**Mack Johnson**, co-secretary of Ground Zero, was found not guilty in 2021 by a Kitsap County judge after holding a banner in the road to the Trident base.

## Annual vigil honors MLK's work to end militarism

# Ground Zero Carries On Dr. King's Legacy

By Leonard Eiger

Peace activists paid tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Trident submarine base at Bangor, Washington on January 13, 2023.

Members of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action stood in a peaceful vigil at the Main Gate to Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor with anti-nuclear weapons signs and a large banner with a statement by Dr. King stating, "When scientific power outruns spiritual power, we end up with guided missiles and misguided men."

Ground Zero members also joined with other peace and justice activists at the annual Martin Luther King Day march and rally in Seattle on January 16th.

Although Dr. King was famous for championing racial and economic justice and nonviolence, his strong opposition to war, and particularly nuclear weapons, generally receive little attention.

In a speech to the War Resisters League on February 2, 1959 Dr. King said:

*"Not only in the South, but throughout the nation and the world, we live in an age of conflicts, an age of biological weapons, chemical warfare, atomic fallout and nuclear bombs. It is a period of conflict between the mammoth powers . . . It is a period of uncertainty and fear. Every man, woman, and child lives, not knowing if they shall see tomorrow's sunrise . . . We must no longer cooperate with policies that degrade man and make for war. The great need in the world today is to find the means for the social organization of the power of non-violence . . ."*

*"As you know, the establishment of social justice in our nation is of profound concern to me. This great struggle is in the interest of all Americans and I shall not be turned from it. Yet no sane person can afford to work for social justice within the nation unless he simultaneously resists war and clearly declares himself for non-violence in international relations. What will be the ultimate value of having established social justice in a context where all people, Negro and White, are merely free to face destruction by strontium 90 or atomic war. . ."*

*"Today the choice is no longer between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence."*

Dr. King's words ring as true now as then. Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action honors Dr. King's

legacy by working for a world free of the threat of nuclear annihilation as well as one in which nations learn to embrace nonviolence in both internal and external relations.



**Refusing to be complicit.** Activists gathered early in the morning on the anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki and closed the main entrance to the Trident base for several minutes.

*Photo by Chris Rogers.*

The Trident nuclear weapon system is central to our nation's continuing threat of use of nuclear weapons that imperils all people of this planet. Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor is homeport to the largest concentration of deployed nuclear warheads in the U.S. The nuclear warheads are deployed on Trident D-5 missiles on SSBN submarines and are stored in an underground nuclear weapons storage facility on the base. There are eight Trident SSBN submarines deployed at Bangor. Six Trident SSBN submarines are deployed on the East Coast at Kings Bay, Georgia.

The destructive force of just one Trident submarine is unimaginable; each one carries the destructive force of over 1,200 Hiroshima bombs (the Hiroshima bomb was 15 kilotons), enough to incinerate all the major Russian cities (and beyond).

*"We must no longer cooperate with policies that degrade man and make for war. The great need in the world today is to find the means for the social organization of the power of non-violence." -MLK*

**Dr. King's Legacy... continued on page 5**

Dr. King's statement about "guided missiles and misguided men" is something we must consider carefully if we care about humanity's future. It is time to understand that it is not misguided to state that so long as nuclear weapons exist they will one day be used, either accidentally or intentionally, and that the only way to ensure this does not happen is to bring about complete and total global disarmament. It is not misguided to say that "strategic nuclear deterrence" is a myth. It is not misguided to call on the nuclear armed nations to embrace the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and abide by it.

Those who are misguided are those who play with humanity's fate as if it is a game, who say that nuclear weapons are assets that protect our nation, and who are now calling for more and new nuclear warheads and delivery systems to counter the Russians, Chinese, North

Korea, Iran (and who knows who will be next) creating a new and even more dangerous nuclear arms race.

Dr. King's voice rings loud and clear – violence only begets more violence, and when we embrace it as evidenced in our own nation's endless wars, including the current proxy war with Russia (in Ukraine), we enter a rabbit hole from which we will one day not be able to return. For the sake of future generations we must make the right choice – nonviolence – or else the only option, in light of our demonic ability for Mutually Assured Destruction, we face – NONEXISTENCE.

May we make the right choice!

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**Leonard Eiger** chairs the Communication and Outreach Committee, and sends out press releases and information on behalf of Ground Zero.

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# Going All the Way In

By Mary Gleysteen

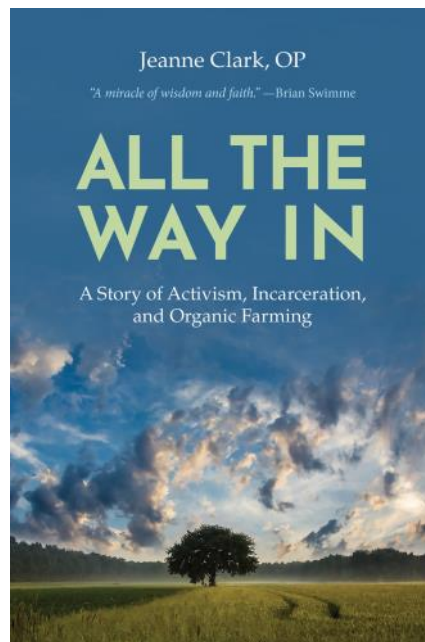
*All the Way In: A Story of Activism, Incarceration and Organic Farming* (Orbis Books), by Jeanne Clark, is part memoir, part poetry, part prayer - a meditation on connection - of home and belonging. It is a testament to the power of stories in faith and action.

Jeanne is a gifted storyteller, and her accounts of the arrival of the first "Trident" ballistic missile submarine USS Ohio and the White Trains that delivered missile rocket motors and thermonuclear warheads to the Bangor Trident submarine base will resonate with Ground Zero readers who may recognize the picture on page 50 of a young Glen Milner. I found Jeanne's memory of Dan Ellsberg's presence at the White Train trial and his words, "Wouldn't you go to jail if it would help to end the war?" prompting Karol Schulkin, another of the defendants, to sit in front of a train carrying nuclear weapons to the Trident submarine base, particularly moving.

Marie Dennis, Senior Advisor to the Secretary General, Pax Christi International, said of *All the Way In* that, "Jeanne Clark's collection of inspiring personal stories reveals a faithful journey in response to deeply challenging manifestations of violence and injustice. Clearly, a community of communities—

ultimately the beloved Earth Community—provided fertile soil for her repeatedly affirmative and risky responses to the signs of the times."

*All the Way In* informs and inspires. I recommend it highly.



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**Mary Gleysteen** lives in Kingston where she volunteers serving homeless residents. She has worked for nuclear disarmament for over 40 years.

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# The Call and the Courage

By Caroline Wildflower

*Author's note: This is the text of a speech I made at a Religion and Resistance program in 1977, the year Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action was established as a part of our ongoing anti-Trident campaign. This article was published in Fellowship Magazine, July/August 1977. In re-reading the article I was taken aback to realize how long we have been at this—that we had only been “teetering on the brink of nuclear war over 20 years.” Now nuclear weapons have been hanging over us for more than 75 years. It's time to rise up and get those nuclear weapons dismantled!*

I am speaking today for myself and as a member of the Pacific Life Community. I want to emphasize that the Pacific Life Community as a whole does not have a religious orientation; some members are distinctly not religious; and we are careful in our statements and choices of symbols to pick things that will speak to our diversity. My roots are religious and I want to trace some of my personal history for you: how I came to go to jail with my unborn child, who will be born in approximately one month. (Ed. Note: A girl, Rachel Lynn Wildflower-Williams, was born June 6, at home).

I am a Quaker, a member of the Religious Society of Friends. As a child, I could never understand why we, who were Quakers, weren't all in jail—why, in fact, I knew of no Quakers who were. The early Friends, 300 years ago, consistently ended up in jail for simply and faithfully following God's leadings and their understanding of Jesus' life and statements.

God told them all people were equal and that it was wrong to remove their hats before judges—so into jail they went, with no minimum term. Many died there. God told them it was wrong to kill—so they ended up in jail for refusing military service.

There are many other examples of how acting out of their beliefs put them into jail.

In 1661, the Friends made their peace testimony official with a declaration to King Charles II, which said in part:

*“We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons: for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it.”*

I began to see a few signs of Quakers continuing to act on their beliefs and leadings from God. In 1958, I was proud to learn that Quakers had sailed boats into the nuclear test zone. Friends celebrated the 300th anniversary of the declaration of the peace testimony by organizing

one thousand Friends to ring the Pentagon with signs like “Figs from thistles?”

That witness in 1961 marked my first peace demonstration. I continued to wonder whether conditions were different today or whether Quakers had stopped really listening to God. I found it difficult in my own life to listen consistently, to push out the everyday things that fill my life, to be still. It is hard to remain ready to feel the spirit of God, the Inner Light, which can be one's inner guide, and hard to follow its sometimes difficult instructions.



**Still protesting joyously after all these years.** Caroline being cited at last summer's Ground Zero action. *Photo by Glen Milner.*

In the past two years, when I have been still and listened, sometimes in the context of a Catholic mass, or spending time alone, walking or in meditation, or in Friends Meeting for Worship—I have often felt a pull to resist the Trident Submarine, to do as much as I can. This new weapons system to be based near us in Seattle is designed to strike first in a nuclear war; each submarine is capable of bombing 408 separate targets.

So even though I was trying to get pregnant, I knew I had to continue to risk arrest. With two other women, I planted a garden inside the Bangor base last May, and later attempted to water it. In August, I participated in our Hiroshima Day action, where we brought the Trident monster home to Bangor. There was real power in those actions, in people acting to say “No” to the force repre-

**The Call and the Courage... continued on page 7**

sented by the base and “Yes” to life, to the lives of unborn children. Those were the actions that put me in jail for thirty days in December.

For it is still true now, as it was three hundred years ago, that acting on one’s beliefs is often considered a crime.

I knew that if our child turned out to be anything like me, she or he would be proud of me, and glad to learn of having been in jail so early in life. I’m not saying it was easy. I was worried about whether I was getting enough protein for the child to develop properly, and about whether the tension of being in jail would affect the child. I wanted to be outside, to see sun and sky instead of four metal walls always encroaching on me.

**“I want to continue to live ‘in that life and power which takes away the occasion of all wars.’”**

But we are fooling ourselves if we think any of us are free, in or out of jail, while nuclear weapons continue to be stockpiled.

In a way, what we have done so far is token, even the 90-day jail sentences. What I would like to see is a real dismantling of the nuclear weapons which are already based at Bangor and many other places in this country. I mean people acquiring the knowledge of how to dismantle them and where they are located and going in there and doing it. It wouldn’t be a picnic. People would die, just as happened in the civil rights movement. But we collectively do have that power—to abolish nuclear weapons. And I feel very strongly that nuclear weapons should not exist in this world—for the sake of all of us and all unborn children.

I don’t know if I will have the courage to carry out that vision, especially now that I have a child, but I want to continue to live “in that life and power which takes away the occasion of all wars,” to quote George Fox, an early Quaker. I will continue to seek those still, quiet times when I can listen to my Inner Light, and I will attempt not to have my life so cluttered with material possessions and time commitments that I lose those times. I want to emphasize that whatever acts we take, however small they may seem, do have consequences, often far beyond what we know.

We have been teetering on the brink of nuclear catastrophe for over twenty years now and I want to give two examples of actions which prevented acts of war or possibly the use of nuclear weapons. In both cases, people were totally unaware of this result of their actions.

In the 1950’s the Fellowship of Reconciliation ran a campaign to get people to send a little bag of grain to President Eisenhower with the caption, “If Thine Enemy Hunger, Feed Him—Send Surplus Food to China.” The idea was to urge reconciliation via the use of some of our

surplus grain to relieve famine in China.

It seemed that nothing came of it, but years later the Fellowship learned that there had indeed been results. In a cabinet meeting, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been arguing for bombing mainland China. Eisenhower asked how many bags of grain had been received. Upon hearing the number—forty-five thousand—he ruled out the bombing, on grounds that if so many Americans wanted reconciliation with China, it was hardly the time to start bombing it. (Fellowship magazine, December 1975).

The March, 1975, Fellowship carried a speech by Daniel Ellsberg, in which he quoted testimony by Nixon and Kissinger aides to the following facts: In 1969, we had two of the biggest anti-war demonstrations ever, the Moratorium in October and the March on Washington in November.

Many of us who were there were discouraged, feeling that we had accomplished nothing, that demonstrations were not of much use. There had been no cuts in troop levels; Nixon ignored us and watched a football game.

But it came out later that he had planned an escalation of the war for November 3rd! He planned to mine Haiphong harbor and begin carpet-bombing Hanoi. What stopped him was the extent of visible opposition to the war.

So the small actions we took and the demonstrations we participated in actually postponed the mining of Haiphong harbor by two-and-a-half years and the carpet-bombing of Hanoi by three years. And each lasted months or days instead of years.

These were consequences far beyond anything we knew or suspected at the time.

I want to end with a call for all of us to be more faithful, to really try to do the part we are called to, whether we feel called by our conscience, by God or by some humanitarian spirit.

If you do feel called to act against Trident, you may want to participate in some way with one of the Life Communities, which are working against Trident and nuclear weapons all across North America. There may be other things that you, in particular, are called to.

The important thing is to listen and to act.

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**Caroline Wildflower** has continued working to abolish nuclear weapons, including a stint in a small boat attempting to block the first Trident submarine arriving at the base in 1982, walking with the Buddhist peace group annually and crewing on the Golden Rule in 2016, the vessel which set out for the nuclear test zone in 1958. Currently, her favorite risking-arrest action is dancing in front of the gate at the base. She is co-chair of the Ground Zero stewardship committee. Her daughter Rachel grew up and became a lawyer. She and her husband practice law in Portland, Oregon. Their son enjoys the stories of her previous brushes with the law as a young child.

was “happy with the increased trust between the US and Russia and between President Obama and me.”

We were shown a fascinating video of Putin, speaking in Russian, to western journalists at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2016. Putin explained how he really felt about the Offensive Strike Missiles being placed in Romania and Poland as a US response to a supposed but actually non-existent Iranian nuclear threat. McGovern further emphasized how that presence would give Russia only 5-7 minutes to figure out their response to a nuclear missile launch.

In another disturbing video, we heard the US Assistant Secretary of State discussing the planned coup to overthrow Putin with the US Ambassador in Kiev. In this same conversation, Biden’s name was mentioned as well. We were told that prior to this, there was no evidence that there were plans in the works for Russia to annex Crimea. McGovern also spoke of the effect the knowledge of a planned coup might have had on the same players as they sat down together in June 2021.

McGovern further explained that, just as the US/President John F Kennedy felt provoked by the actions of the Cuban government during that Missile Crises, Russia/Putin could have felt provoked, by the above instances and others, into invading Ukraine.

The presentation ended with McGovern’s thoughts

about the “What Now?” of his title. Speaking to both ending the War in Ukraine and to our goal of Nuclear Disarmament, he spoke of how the Nazi Party was in the minority but was not deterred as others could not find a strong enough united voice and then, as still is the case now, lies were prevalent.



**Ray McGovern** continues a remarkable second career as an activist after retiring from the CIA in 1990. In 2003 he founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity.

McGovern quoted Will Rogers that “the problem is not that people don’t know, it is that people know what just ain’t so.” He quoted Caesar Chavez and Daniel Berrigan that there are “enough of us” and that while it is understandable for us to wish not to be laughed at or called naïve or other names that “the good is worth doing because it is good.” Results are nice but they are secondary to, as Berrigan said, “know where you stand and stand there.” McGovern stated that we just have to do our part and it might hurt. But, that those of us with gray hair are given more sympathy if attacked than our youth might be given.

In conclusion, McGovern suggested that all parties can and do feel the existential threat of the use of nuclear weapons, and that the US can be just as tempted to actually use them as anyone else.

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**Carolee Flaten** is a registered nurse who lives in Hansville. She was cited last year for blocking the main entrance to Submarine Base Kitsap-Bangor during Ground Zero’s Mother’s Day vigil and nonviolent direct action.

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## Remembering The Man Who Saved the World (from a Nuclear War)

By Leonard Eiger and Glen Milner

The man who saved the world from thermonuclear annihilation in 1962 was born on January 30, 1926.

At a time when the probability of nuclear war is as arguably as high as it was during the Cuban Missile Crisis, it is crucial that we recall the story of Vasili Arkhipov, a Soviet submarine officer who prevented a Soviet nuclear strike against U.S. surface warships during that very crisis in 1962. An attack by a single Soviet submarine using just one nuclear-armed torpedo would have caused a major global thermonuclear response.

In the fall of 1962, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev secretly began the deployment of medium and intermediate-range ballistic nuclear missiles in Cuba. On October 22, 1962, President John Kennedy ordered U.S.

naval forces to enforce a naval “quarantine” of offensive military cargoes in route to Cuba. On the same day, CIA Director John McCone informed President Kennedy that four Soviet submarines were positioned to reach Cuba within a week.

All four Soviet diesel-powered Foxtrot-class submarines in the flotilla were equipped with conventional torpedoes and one “Special Weapon”—a torpedo equipped with a 15-kiloton nuclear warhead. Soviet officers were told that in the absence of the possibility of communication with Moscow, only the agreement of the captain of

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*The Man Who Saved the World... continued on page 9*

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the submarine and the political officer were needed to launch a nuclear torpedo. But on submarine B-59, due to Arkhipov's position as chief of staff of the flotilla, all three officers on board B-59 had to agree unanimously to authorize a nuclear launch.

On October 27, 1962, a group of eleven U.S. Navy destroyers and the aircraft carrier USS Randolph located Soviet submarine B-59 near Cuba. Despite being in international waters, the U.S. Navy started dropping signaling depth charges, explosives intended to force the submarine to come to the surface for identification.

At this time, the Soviet crew had been out of contact with Moscow for several days and the submarine was too deep to monitor U.S. civilian radio broadcasts. The submarine's batteries had run very low and the air conditioning had failed, causing extreme heat and high levels of carbon dioxide inside the submarine. Under these extreme conditions, the captain of the submarine, Valentin Savitsky, decided a war might have already started. As the depth charges exploded around his vessel, Captain Savitsky ordered the arming of the nuclear torpedo and came within minutes of launching it.

According to a Soviet intelligence report, an argument broke out on B-59, with Arkhipov alone blocking the launch. Arkhipov eventually persuaded Captain Savitsky to surface amid U.S. Navy vessels and await orders from Moscow.

No one on the U.S. side knew at the time that the Soviet submarines were nuclear-armed; no one knew that conditions in the submarines were so physically difficult and unstable that commanding officers, fearing they were under attack by U.S. forces, might consider arming and launching their nuclear torpedoes.

On November 2, 1962, Kennedy addressed the nation regarding the dismantling of the Soviet nuclear missile bases located in Cuba. All Soviet nuclear weapons were removed in the following months.

Strangely, many historians view the Cuban Missile Crisis as a triumph of rational leadership in both the Soviet Union and the United States. However, it was the leadership in both countries that brought the world to the brink of annihilation in the first place—only to be prevented by a single Soviet naval officer.

Ultimately, Kennedy and Khrushchev did negotiate in good faith to end the stalemate, with Kennedy agreeing to withdraw US nuclear-armed missiles from Turkey in exchange for the Soviets withdrawing their missiles from Cuba. Yet, had Arkhipov not prevented the launching of a single nuclear-armed torpedo against a US warship, the two leaders would not have had the chance to bring the

crisis to a peaceful resolution.

Today, in the United States, hundreds of individuals have the awesome responsibility to launch nuclear weapons on the command of a verified authority in our government. In the case of any of the OHIO Class "Trident" ballistic missile submarines, up to ten of which might be on patrol at any given time, it is a possibility, even though a remote one, that one or more submarines would be unable to receive communications during a crisis involving Russia. In such a situation the anxious officers might question whether or not to launch their 20 Trident II D-5 ballistic missiles, each armed with an average of 4-5 thermonuclear warheads – the total equivalent destructive force of over 1,200 Hiroshima bombs.

In such a situation we could only hope that those officers would reflect on Arkhipov's courageous act before deciding to initiate the launch sequence that, should a nuclear

war have not already started, would certainly trigger the conflagration that would end civilization as we know it.

Considering the current crisis in Ukraine – including Russia's ongoing nuclear rhetoric, NATO's encirclement of and pressure on Russia, the increasingly dangerous escalation in weaponry provided to Ukraine by the US and allies, and the high probability of tactical miscalculations – the probability of either accidental or intentional use of nuclear weapons cannot, and must not, be discounted.

Cooler heads must prevail to save humanity from annihilation, and the importance of Arkhipov's actions are therefore more important than ever before.

January 30th would be Vasili Arkhipov's 97th birthday: born on January 30, 1926; retired as a Vice Admiral in the mid-1980s; and died on August 19, 1998.

Of course, we cannot allow humanity's fate to rest in the hands of one or even hundreds of people with the ability to initiate a global conflagration. Time is not on our side. Eliminating nuclear weapons altogether is the only way to prevent the otherwise inevitability of nuclear annihilation.

May we, as global citizens, continue to demand that the nuclear-armed nations pull back from the brink, and work together toward the day when nuclear weapons will be only a memory, putting our human and economic capital into mutual cooperation to preserve our world for the sake of future generations.



**In 1962**, activists took to the streets to demand a peaceful resolution to the missile crisis.

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**Glen Milner** leads legal struggles on behalf of Ground Zero. He lives in Lake Forest Park. **Leonard Eiger** manages the Ground Zero website and leads communication efforts for Ground Zero.

# GROUND ZERO

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*“We must abolish nuclear  
weapons before they  
abolish us.”*

*— Ivana Nikolić Hughes*

## Celebrate Earth Day & Mother's Day with Ground Zero

By Leonard Eiger

Join Ground Zero at Manchester Fuel Depot (MFD), the largest Department of Defense fuel depot on the West Coast (a.k.a., the Pentagon's Largest Gas Station), when peace and environmental activists join on Earth Day to protest hydrocarbon use by the U.S. Navy and the Department of Defense. The peaceful protest will take place on Saturday, April 22, 2022, from 10:00am to 2:00 pm.

The U.S. military must reduce its carbon footprint while reducing its global military footprint on the planet. The U.S. military has approximately 750 military bases around the world and emits more carbon into the atmosphere than 140 nations, fueling climate change while simultaneously creating the conditions for violent conflict and war.

Just one F/A-18F, similar to the Blue Angels jets that fly each summer over Seattle, consumes approximately 1,100 gallons of jet fuel per hour. The vast majority of the fuel MFD is sent to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island.

While climate change and the threat of nuclear war

are the two major threats to the future of humankind and life on our planet, their solutions are similar. International cooperation to solve one of the problems—whether to abolish or tightly reduce nuclear weapons or to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—would greatly help with the solution of the other.

Ground Zero will also celebrate the original intention of a Mother's Day for Peace the day before Mother's Day, Saturday, May 13, 2023.

As Julia Ward Howe said in her Mother's Day Proclamation for Peace, “Disarm, Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.” Please join us as we work to reclaim Mother's Day for its original purpose.

Plans for both events are still coming together, and you can find more information on our Events page at [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org).

**Leonard Eiger** chairs the Communication and Outreach Committee, and sends out press releases and information on behalf of Ground Zero.

