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Volkel Women's Resistance Camp

A case study of the transatlantic women's anti-nuclear movement

From the late 1970s to the early 80s, the relation between the West and East deteriorated rapidly and the nuclear arms race accelerated.¹ A large popular movement arose which was concerned with environmentalism and exhibited suspicion towards technology, modernism, militarism, and capitalism. For many demonstrators, this resulted in a focus on the major threat posed by nuclear energy. Dario Fazzi identifies two major turning points that accelerated the spread of environmental protest in the Western Hemisphere: the Three Mile Island nuclear meltdown accident in Pennsylvania and the Euromissiles crisis, resulting from NATO's Double-Track Decision, in Europe.² The pre-existing connections between American and European protest groups and the idea of a "nuclear Freeze", meaning that "the nuclear arms race was a problem that had to be stopped – or frozen – immediately", as the "common flag to hoist"³ contributed to this movement becoming transatlantic. Large protests erupted in Western Europe⁴ and NATO's Double-Track Decision drew attention to the weapons already stationed at locations in various European countries. These storage sites, often at least partially manned by the US military, became the target of protestors.⁵ In the Netherlands, the targets were air force bases Woensdrecht, De Peel, and Volkel. Several of the major movements of this period, including feminism, anti-militarism, environmentalism, and

¹ Dario Fazzi, "The Nuclear Freeze: Transnational pursuit of positive peace," in *The Routledge History of World Peace Since 1750*, ed. Christian Philip Peterson, William M. Knoblauch, and Michael Loadenthal (CRC Press, 2018), 229.

² Dario Fazzi, "The Nuclear Freeze Generation: The Early 1980s Anti-Nuclear Movement between 'Carter's Vietnam' and 'Euroshima,'" in *A European Youth Revolt: European Perspectives on Youth Protest and Social Movements in the 1980s*, ed. Knud Anders and Bart van der Steen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 145-46.

³ Fazzi, "The Nuclear Freeze Generation," 150.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 150-51.

⁵ David Heller and Hans Lammerant, "U.S. Nuclear Weapons Bases in Europe," in *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against US Military Posts*, ed. Catherine Lutz (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 97-98.

opposition to nuclear weapons, converged in the women's anti-nuclear movement that appeared throughout the Western World. Margaret Laware writes about what she sees as a "unique type and style of women-led peace protest strategies" that "relied on the powerful language, and particularly the powerful imagery of women as a group engaged in an extended protest against nuclear weapons."⁶

This paper is a case study of the Women's Peace Camp near the Volkel air base, which took place from January 21 to June 25, 1984. For some months after evacuation, women would remain active around the base and attempt to re-establish their camp. This case study will answer the following question: How do the tactics and ideals of the Volkel Vrouwenverzetkamp (Volkel Women's Resistance Camp) relate to the transnational feminist anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s? First, there is a short discussion of the tactics and meaning of women's peace camps. Then the camp in Volkel and its relation to this movement is discussed on the basis of materials from the Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum (BHIC) archives. These materials consist of newsletters, newspaper clippings, letters, and other written documents.

Protest camps were one of the ways in which protest against nuclear weapons took shape. These camps were a fitting way to protest this issue for a number of reasons. Fazzi writes that the anti-nuclear movement "anticipated a common trend in contemporary social protests, which frequently combine local needs and actions with global issues."⁷ Protest camps are a logical result of this combination. Local issues a protest camp can directly target include the threat of the storage of nuclear weapons, the expected targeting of these locations by an enemy, and issues such as pollution. Larger issues it can deal with are militarism, environmentalism, and capitalism.⁸ These abstract notions can be made concrete by drawing attention to the locations associated with them.⁹ Catherine Lutz mentions that after the establishment of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in England, "these were no longer abstract weapons, based in anonymous locations; these were very real weapons, with a very real location."¹⁰ As a result, peace camps were established near military bases and

⁶ Margaret L. Laware, "Circling the Missiles and Staining Them Red: Feminist Rhetorical Invention and Strategies of Resistance at the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common," *NWSA Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004), 18.

⁷ Fazzi, "The Nuclear Freeze Generation," 153.

⁸ Fabian Frenzel, Anna Feigenbaum, and Patrick McCurdy, "Protest camps: an emerging field of social movement research," *The Sociological Review* 62 (2014), 460.

⁹ Frenzel, Feigenbaum, and McCurdy, "Protest camps," 4.

¹⁰ Heller and Lammerant, "Bases in Europe," 100.

manufacturing plants around the world.¹¹ Additionally, the fact that people choose to live with others under “uncomfortable” circumstances in camps represents the disruption of the normative ideas of daily life and domestic space that these weapons cause.¹² This effect is amplified even more when women live under these circumstances, away from the home society consigns them to. Their presence became an expression of power; “women’s bodies were re-figured, individually and en masse, as powerful, disruptive and autonomous.”¹³ By locating themselves in this military and patriarchal environment, these women challenged the “normative boundaries of ‘womanhood.’”¹⁴ RAF Greenham Common was the first European air force base to receive NATO’s new ground launched cruise missiles. Therefore, it became the first base to be targeted by protestors in 1982.¹⁵ According to Sasha Roseneil, these women established a distinct Greenham style of nonviolent but disruptive action¹⁶ that can also be seen at “sister” camps on both sides of the Atlantic. These include the Women’s Resistance Camp in Volkel and Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice, which is extensively described by Louise Krasniewicz.¹⁷

One of the Dutch bases at which US nuclear weapons were stored was Volkel Air Base, located in the municipality of Uden. The air base was, and still is, operated by the Royal Netherlands Air Force, but the nuclear weapons located there are in custody of the US Munitions Support Squadron (MUNSS) until deployment.¹⁸ The Dutch government never officially denied or confirmed the presence of nuclear weapons at the base, but this has long been regarded an open secret. In 2013, both Dries van Agt and Ruud Lubbers, the prime ministers from 1977 to 1982 and from 1982 to 1994 respectively, confirmed that these weapons were, and still are, present in Volkel.¹⁹ The transatlantic discussion on nuclear weapons also played in the Netherlands, especially due to the role Dutch air bases might play

¹¹ Frenzel, Feigenbaum, and McCurdy, “Protest camps,” 460.

¹² Frenzel, Feigenbaum, and McCurdy, “Protest camps,” 462.

¹³ Laware, “Circling the Missiles,” 32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵ Heller and Lammerant, “Bases in Europe,” 98.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 101; Laware, “Circling the Missiles,” 21.

¹⁷ “Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Collection,” University of Massachusetts Amherst, accessed January 14, 2021, <http://findingaids.library.umass.edu/ead/mums839>.

¹⁸ Heller and Lammerant, “Bases in Europe,” 103-104; Louise Krasniewicz, “Preface,” in *Nuclear Summer: The Clash of Communities at the Seneca Women’s Peace Encampment*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Cornell University Press, 1992).

¹⁹ “Lubbers bevestigt Amerikaanse kernwapens Volkel,” June 10, 2013, <https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/lubbers-bevestigt-amerikaanse-kernwapens-volkel~b878a237/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>; “Ook Van Agt: kernwapens in Volkel,” June 12, 2013, <https://nos.nl/artikel/517308-ook-van-agt-kernwapens-in-volkel.html>.

in the deployment of American nuclear weapons as part of NATO's Double-Track Decision. The first Dutch women's peace camps were located in Woensdrecht and Soesterberg.²⁰ A temporary peace camp near the Volkel Air Base was established during the Vredesweek (Peace Week) from September 18 to 26 of 1982.²¹ A second camp was established on June 20, 1983, but was already broken up on the 25th.²² A press release from this camp includes a declaration of solidarity that they sent to the women in Greenham.²³

On January 21, 1984, the Volkel Women's Resistance Camp was established by about 25 to 30 women.²⁴ The initiative for this camp was taken at a gathering of women against militarism in Deventer earlier that month.²⁵ Since a camp near the Woensdrecht air base already existed,²⁶ the Volkel camp was meant to demonstrate that nuclear weapons were also located elsewhere in the country.²⁷ The camp can be seen as an extension of an already existing campaign.²⁸ Although a local chapter of the Dutch organization Vrouwen voor Vrede (Women for Peace) was active in the municipality and would lend support to the camp, most

²⁰ Petra Hunsche, "Ik ben mezelf kwijtgeraakt in het vrouwenvredeskamp Soesterberg," interview by Maurits van Tongeren, *De verhalen achter Vliegbasis Soesterberg 1954-1994: De invloed van veertig jaar Amerikaanse aanwezigheid op de omgeving*, ed. F.J. Stuurman, (July 2, 2015): 70.

²¹ Article activist "VREDESKAMP VliegBASIS VOLKEL," n.d. [October/November 1982], Inventory number 2127, Archive item 6, Het tweede Vredeskamp, 20-25 juni 1983, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

²² Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Tot en met vredesweek: Protestkamp bij basis in Volkel," 22 June 1983, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 7, Het tweede Vredeskamp, 20-25 juni 1983, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Het vorige week ingerichte Vredeskampje...," 28 June 1983, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 7, Het tweede Vredeskamp, 20-25 juni 1983, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

²³ Two page press release "PERSBERICHT" and "Vervolg persbericht," 23 June 1983, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 8, Plakboek met (vergader) verslagen en foto's van het Vredeskamp Volkel, 20-25 juni (17 aug) 1983, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

²⁴ Newspaper clipping De Gelderlander "Vredesvrouwen in de sneeuw," January 24, 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

²⁵ Letter "Beste vrede-zoekers," n.d. [January/February 1984], Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping "Vredeskamp ontbeert Brabantse inbring: Van verre naar Volkel," n.d. [January 1984], Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

²⁶ Women's newspaper article "Vrouwenverzet tegen de kruisraket" April 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

²⁷ Newspaper clipping De Volkskrant "Groep vrouwen richt vredeskamp in bij Volkel," 23 January 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

²⁸ Newsletter Women's Resistance Camp Volkel "Nieuwsbrief Vrouwenverzetskamp Volkel," February 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

of the permanent residents were not locals. Some came from the camp in Woensdrecht,²⁹ and at least two of the five women who, even as it started snowing, stayed at the camp came from Greenham Common.³⁰ Because after the harsh winter only a small number of permanent residents remained, they put out a call for more women to join and set up a rotation system.³¹ The idea of living under uncomfortable circumstances to disrupt normative ideas of daily life seems to have also played a role in Volkel. The April newsletter mentions that this sober life shows that “you can do without a lot of luxury, you shouldn’t let yourself be defined by material possessions, by the all-dominating consuming.”³² Clearly these women were not just protesting nuclear weapons. They make mention of issues such as consumerism, militarism, imperialism, racism, and sexism.³³ Following the example of the Greenham camp, as described by Laware, the women in Volkel built “benders” out of wood and plastic. Laware describes them as “igloo-like structures”.³⁴ Although their camp was smaller, the Volkel women, in the tradition of Greenham, at one point spread themselves out over smaller camps.³⁵ About 15 of them set up camp closer to where the nuclear warheads were stored, but they were quickly removed from this location.³⁶ On July 1 a group of women, most of which were based in Volkel, set up camp in Havelte near the military training grounds there. This

²⁹ Newspaper clipping De Volkskrant “Groep vrouwen richt vredeskamp in bij Volkel,” 23 January 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

³⁰ Newspaper Clipping Dagblad voor Noord-Limburg “Verkleumde vuist aan rand van Peel,” 25 January 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

³¹ Call to all women from the camp “Vrouwenverzet’s kamp. Oproep aan alle vrouwen,” 18 March 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping De Waarheid “Vrouwen in Volkel,” 31 March 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping Vrij Nederland “Verzetskamp,” 21 April 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

³² Newsletter Women’s Resistance Camp Volkel “Volkel Nieuwsbrief Vrouwenverzetskamp,” n.d. [April 1984], Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Laware, “Circling the Missiles,” 22; Newsletter Women’s Resistance Camp Volkel “Nieuwsbrief Vrouwenverzetskamp Volkel,” February 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

³⁵ Heller and Lammerant, “Bases in Europe,” 99; Laware, “Circling the Missiles,” 20-21.

³⁶ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad “Kamp drie keer ontruimd: Zeeland wenst geen vrouwenvredeskamp,” 24 April 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

location was, however, evacuated within a day.³⁷ After about five months, the Volkel camp was evacuated by police on June 25. Subsequently, the women occasionally set up a new camp, like on October 7 which also lasted only a day.³⁸ They also attempted to acquire a piece of land near the base to continue their protest, a tactic that had proven successful for the camps at Greenham and Seneca to evade eviction.³⁹ At least at the end of October the women in Volkel were still looking for a piece of land⁴⁰ and they set up camp in front of city hall in support of their request for the establishment of a new camp.⁴¹ Unlike Greenham Common, Volkel had been a women's camp from the start.⁴² The reason for this, one woman wrote, was that militarism is an oppressive system that women have to resist.⁴³ This is also confirmed by another woman who told a reporter that militarism oppresses women. According to her, the involvement of men might also make women more hesitant to participate.⁴⁴ The centrality of women highlights the connections between capitalism, patriarchy, and militarism.⁴⁵ Similar arguments for a women-only camp were made at Seneca where a woman said that “[s]eparatists have a hell of a hard time finding harassment-free space. [...] Whenever men are invited, separatists are excluded.”⁴⁶

The style of demonstrating in Volkel was also clearly inspired by the disruptive nonviolent style of the Greenham women. On March 8, International Women's Day, there

³⁷ Newspaper clipping Meppeler Courant “Kampement moest worden afgebroken: Vrouwenprotest in open lucht,” 2 July 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

³⁸ Newspaper clipping Algemeen Dagblad “Vrouwenvredeskamp ontruimd,” 8 October 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

³⁹ Kyle Harvey, *American Anti-Nuclear Activism, 1975-1990*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 85; Laware, “Circling the Missiles,” 22.

⁴⁰ Newspaper clipping Udens Weekblad “Te huur, te koop, te geef...,” 31 October 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping Veghelse Courant “Gevraagd: te huur, te koop...,” 31 October 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁴¹ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad “Vrouwen slaan tenten op voor gemeentehuis,” 1 November 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁴² Laware, “Circling the Missiles,” 20.

⁴³ Letter “Beste vrede-zoekers,” n.d. [January/February 1984], Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁴⁴ Newspaper clipping De Volkskrant “Groep vrouwen richt vredeskamp in bij Volkel,” 23 January 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁴⁵ Heller and Lammerant, “Bases in Europe,” 101.

⁴⁶ Harvey, *American Anti-Nuclear Activism*, 86.

was an action of around 100 women who blocked the main entrance and decorated the base's fence with flowers and ribbons,⁴⁷ as the women at Greenham also did. The decorating of the fence highlighted the arbitrary lines drawn between military and civilian space, women and men, and public and private space.⁴⁸ Also the atmosphere the women created contributed to a dichotomy between the violent and dark world of the base and the welcoming women who sang songs and invited children to visit. These actions show the continuity and the similar ideals and strategies of these different women's camps. Like the Greenham women, the women in Volkel also entered the air base several times.⁴⁹ On April 1, the gendarmerie arrested 18 women who climbed over the fence in solidarity with the women at Woensdrecht and Greenham Common. According to a woman from the camp, the gendarmerie was heavy-handed in its approach. After their photos and finger prints had been taken, the women were released.⁵⁰ As at other women's camps, the women here also made use of their bodies "to rhetorically challenge the real and symbolic boundary markers that the base represented."⁵¹ During another action on the air base the women sang and held a picnic—reminiscent of the Greenham action where women sang and danced on the missile silos⁵²—while soldiers had to remove them, thereby recognizing the power these women were able to exert.⁵³ The women continued to cut through the fence and thereby highlighted the base's insecurity.⁵⁴ After several incursions, the fence was reinforced with extra barbed wire in May.⁵⁵ This did however not stop them and on May 24 they entered the base again.⁵⁶ Also after the camp was evacuated on June 25, the women did not end their resistance. Like in Greenham, women

⁴⁷ Newsletter Women's Resistance Camp Volkel "Volkel Nieuwsbrief Vrouwenverzetkamp," n.d. [April 1984], Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁴⁸ Laware, "Circling the Missiles," 28.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁰ Newspaper clipping De Volkskrant "Achtien arrestaties bij actie op Volkel tegen kruisraketten," 2 April 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁵¹ Laware, "Circling the Missiles," 19.

⁵² Ibid., 21.

⁵³ Newsletter Women's Resistance Camp Volkel "Volkel Nieuwsbrief Vrouwenverzetkamp," n.d. [April 1984], Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁵⁴ Laware, "Circling the Missiles," 30-31.

⁵⁵ Newspaper clipping De Waarheid "Rond basis in Volkel extra prikkeldraad," 21 April 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁵⁶ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Demonstrante bij val gewond: Vrouwen dringen basis Volkel 3 keer binnen," 25 May 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

gathered to remember the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6 and they continued to appear at the gates and enter the base several times.⁵⁷

Initially the relationship with people living in the vicinity of the camp seemed to be good. When it snowed during the first week, neighbors brought over wood and a gas heater.⁵⁸ The Women's camp organized open days and a special day for kids.⁵⁹ According to one of the women, even soldiers would come by until this was forbidden.⁶⁰ However, as was the case at other camps across the world like Greenham and Seneca, there was also conflict with the surrounding communities.⁶¹ As one of the women writes in the *Vrouwenkrant* (Women's newspaper), there were also always men who honked and swore as they drove by.⁶² Throughout the camp's existence there were several incidents during which the women were targeted by locals or unknown people: a man threw firecrackers at the women,⁶³ a fire was lit in the camp which destroyed the firewood, six women were sprayed with liquid manure,⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Laware, "Circling the Missiles," 19, 34; Newspaper clipping *Brabants Dagblad* "DRIE VROUWEN die zaterdag bij..." November, 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping *Brabants Dagblad* "Op basis Volkel twaalf vrouwen gearresteerd," 27 December, 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping *Brabants Dagblad* "Vrouwen voeren weer acties bij vliegbasis," 15 November, 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping *De Volkskrant* "Betoging op vredesverzetkamp," 7 August 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁵⁸ Newspaper clipping *De Volkskrant* "Vredeskamp bij vliegbasis uitgedund door sneeuw," January 24, 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁵⁹ Information leaflet Women's resistance camp "Vrouwen in de kou blijven stoken," n.d. [April 1984], Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁶⁰ Newspaper Clipping *Brabants Dagblad* "Opmerkelijke rollen van burgemeesters van Zeeland en Uden: Onvrede over vrouwenkamp," 19 May 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁶¹ Heller and Lammerant, "Bases in Europe," 99; Krasniewicz, "Preface," IX.

⁶² Women's newspaper article "Vrouwenverzet tegen de kruisraket" April 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁶³ Newspaper Clipping *Brabants Dagblad* "Rotjes voor vredeskamp," 26 April 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁶⁴ Newspaper clipping *Brabants Dagblad* "Actie Zeelandse boeren tegen vredeskamp Volkel: Vrouwen met gier bespoten," 7 May 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

five men released bags of red ants into the camp,⁶⁵ a visitor's car was flipped on its side,⁶⁶ the windows of a caravan were smashed,⁶⁷ that same caravan later burned out after being set on fire, and four persons destroyed part of the camp and threw an opened gas canister into a tent's sleeping quarters.⁶⁸ Although the women had never been granted permission for their camp, the mayor of Uden, Gerard Schampers, had tolerated it. However, these attacks made against the women made him reconsider his position.⁶⁹

Whereas Schampers initially tolerated the camp, the mayor of the neighboring municipality Zeeland, Ben Schellekens, was less willing to tolerate protests and claimed that his population was not happy with the camp. He was, for example, responsible for the evacuation of the smaller camp mentioned earlier⁷⁰ and had police block the rural roads north of the base to prevent demonstrations.⁷¹ In June, the mayor of Uden did however also decide to no longer tolerate the camp. On the 25th of that month, he sent a letter to the women's camp in which he explained that their presence would no longer be tolerated. There were two reasons for this: (1) a decision on the placement of the new weapons had been made and (2) the response of third parties were increasingly violent and the safety of the women could not be guaranteed.⁷² The evening of the 25th, the camp was evacuated by the police after the women had ignored the 8pm deadline. A considerable amount of people had gathered and for

⁶⁵ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Rode bosmieren losgelaten in vredeskamp," 19 May 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁶⁶ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Lelijk Eendje gekanteld bij vredeskamp," 21 May 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁶⁷ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Ramen caravan op vrouwenkamp stukgegooid," 5 June 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁶⁸ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Kermisgangers overvallen vrouwenkamp," 25 June 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁶⁹ Newspaper clipping Udens Weekblad "Vrouwenvredeskamp ontruimd," 27 June 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷⁰ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Demonstraties bij vliegbasis uit den boze: Zeeland blijft verboden gebied," 25 April 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Opmerkelijke rollen van burgemeesters van Zeeland en Uden: Onvrede over vrouwenkamp," 19 May 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, 1984, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷¹ Newspaper clipping Algemeen Dagblad "Wegen achter Volkel afgesloten," 23 May 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷² Letter Mayor of Uden to women's camp, 25 June 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 215, 1984, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

this reason Schampers decided to employ riot police. Women who returned after being removed were provided with protection against counter protestors. The ground was plowed to prevent the establishment of another camp.⁷³

After the camp was terminated, it was decided that no new protest camp would be tolerated⁷⁴ and any person who came too close to the base would be removed three kilometers.⁷⁵ In a November 1984 letter to the Minister of the Interior, Koos Rietkerk, Schampers explained this new policy toward the women, which was aimed at preventing the establishment of a new camp.⁷⁶ In response to parliamentary questions about this measure, the Minister admitted that this measure applied to any person within three kilometers of the base.⁷⁷ That same month, he sent a letter to the Queen's Commissioner in the province of Noord-Brabant, Dries van Agt, in which he wrote that removing any person three kilometers from the base was against article 15 of the constitution which prevents unlawfully depriving someone of their freedom.⁷⁸ Van Agt relayed this information to Schampers.⁷⁹ As had happened at Greenham Common, local authorities took measures that later were decided to be unlawful.⁸⁰

The Women's Resistance Camp in Volkel was clearly inspired and influenced by other women's camps throughout the West, for example at Greenham Common and Seneca as described by Laware and Krasniewicz. The women in Volkel adapted and shared in their peaceful but disrupting tactics. They attempted to set up different camps, drew attention to the

⁷³ Newspaper clipping De Telegraaf "Vrouwenvredeskamp Volkel ontruimd," 26 June 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; Newspaper clipping Udens Weekblad "Vrouwenvredeskamp ontruimd," 27 June 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷⁴ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Geen nieuw verzetskamp in Uden," 3 July 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷⁵ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Ander beleid jegens Volkelse 'vredesvrouwen,'" 24 October 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷⁶ Letter Mayor of Uden to Minister of the Interior, 1 November 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 215, 1984, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷⁷ Newspaper clipping Brabants Dagblad "Over demonstratie-verbod: Vrouwen willen uitleg van Schampers," 25 October 1984, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 10, Het 3e (Vrouwen) Vredeskamp, (1983) 21 jan - 7 oktober 1984 (1985, 1987), Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷⁸ Letter Minister of the Interior to Queen's Commissioner Noord-Brabant, 6 March 1985, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 215, 1984, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁷⁹ Letter Minister of the Interior to mayor of Uden, 6 March 1985, Inventory number 2127, Archive item 215, 1984, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

⁸⁰ Laware, "Circling the Missiles," 23.

nuclear weapons stored there, and opposed their own lightheartedness to the base's gloom. While singing songs and having a picnic on the base, their presence there challenged the military and its men and thereby attributed power to the women. Their actions could however not always count on the support of locals and authorities. Despite setbacks, the women in Volkel carried on with their actions and reached out to the community. Unlike in Greenham where the camp ended when the weapons departed, in Volkel it was due to external pressures that authorities decided to evacuate the camp. However, even after that the women in Volkel continued to protest the base as part of a transnational women's struggle.

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