

# Press Release: Drone Protesters' Charges Dismissed

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ANTI-REAPER DRONE PROTESTERS' CHARGES DISMISSED IN DEWITT TOWN COURT**

This afternoon, December 16, town of DeWitt (NY) judge Robert Jokl dismissed the charges against the five anti-Reaper drone protesters arrested on September 21, 2015. The protesters had blocked the main entrance of Hancock Air Force Base near Syracuse with three long one-word banners reading **DRONES KILL CHILDREN.**

Hancock is the home of the 174th *Attack* Wing of the New York State National Guard.

The five Central New Yorkers are from Syracuse and Ithaca, and are each active in the Upstate Drone Action Coalition.

That Coalition alleges that the 174th *Attack* Wing commits ongoing war crime for its weaponized Reaper drone missions over Afghanistan. The robotic unmanned Reapers operated by remote control notoriously kill many civilians both within and beyond war zones through the Middle East and West Asia.

Pro bono attorney Jonathan Wallace argued before Judge Jokl that the prosecution's paperwork was woefully inadequate. That the prosecutor failed to even appear in court probably did not help his case.

The five – along with many others – have each been arrested

and incarcerated for previous nonviolent anti-drone protests at Hancock:

- Dan Burgevin
- Ed Kinane
- Bonny Mahoney
- Julienne Oldfield
- James Ricks.

Since 2010 scores of Upstate Drone Action members have been arrested for their nonviolent protests at Hancock.

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## **Terrorism is Killing or Instilling Fear – No Matter Who Does It**

We watch proliferating terror and violence. . . Mourning and fear come too. What's the remedy? More of the same?!

Peacemakers on retreat were playing a game where the caller, standing in the middle of a circle of seated people says, "The Big Wind Blows on anyone who . ." All for whom it's true – including the caller – must find another seat. The person left standing is the next caller.

My friend said, "The Big Wind Blows on anyone who has ever been part of a Terrorist Organization." I was shocked. Why did he ask that? And was the room bugged? Would the FBI, who bugs peace groups, think that meant we're terrorists? Why would he ask that?

Since I wasn't the only confused-looking person, he said, "Well, I was part of a terrorist organization: the U.S. military."

The Buffalo News said in its December 4 headline story "Massacre again raises question of when to define it as terrorism,"

*Federal law defines terrorism as dangerous acts intended to intimidate a civilian population, influence government policy or affect government conduct "by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping."*

Some examples are

- our weaponized drone program, where, per Intercept based on leaked U.S. internal documents, nearly 90% of those killed were not the intended targets (assassination, mass destruction and community intimidation included);
- night raids in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, which terrify surprised families and whole communities. War is state terrorism.
- "policing" murders, especially of black people. People of color, activists, and innocents know and are highly intimidated because even moving (Amadou Diallo); questioning (Sandra Bland); or failing immediate obedience (12-year-old Tamir Rice) – could result in one's getting killed.

Terrorism is killing and/or instilling fear. Let's kill the people who are killing people? Which causes more people to kill? How can that work? It doesn't make sense. (Don't hit your sister. *Whap!!*) Restraining and preventing aggression is necessary. Instilling fear and Islamophobia promote a police state.

The U.S. treatment of whistle blowers confirms governmental intimidation. Hero Edward Snowden caused policy improvements, yet he faces espionage charges. Drone pilots revealing program

truths have had their bank accounts and credit cards frozen. Police have generally been protected from charges of murder, wrongful death, or brutality until quite recently. State violence is excused.

State terrorism is still terrorism, and like violence, Terrorism begets more Terrorism. In fact, besides our government's above-described intimidation of civilian populations, the U.S. efforts to influence other governments' policies and/or affect their conduct are well known worldwide. The Project for the New American Century espoused our challenging policies or conduct of other governments that are not aligned with our interests and prominence.

Do we need more or less violence? Hope we can agree we need less.

We need faith, courage, and resolute adherence to principle. Let's work cooperatively, fearlessly, to mainstream nonviolence, including petitioning our government. You can join organizations like the WNY Peace Center and allies on specific campaigns.

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*Victoria Ross*, QCSW, LMSW, MALD, is the Executive Director of the WNY Peace Center, a consultant for the Interfaith Peace Network, and Holy Trinity Lutheran Church's delegate to the Network of Religious Communities (all cosponsors of the Solidarity Rally along with Muslim Public Affairs Council, and 40 other groups).

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# Does America Spend Enough on Defense?

In response to the Buffalo News' interesting August 2 feature "Does America Spend Enough on Defense?": We don't need *more* military spending – we need *less*. Our military aggression makes us a target.

John Quigley rightly points out that we should be building bridges at home, rather than bombing bridges abroad and maintaining about 1,000 military bases worldwide. He observes that the average annual defense budget has risen, not fallen, since George W. Bush left office.

In opposition, James Jay Carafano claims that cuts to military spending will leave the US weaker than before 9/11: without continual increases in military spending, others will think we're weak and attack us. However, Al-Qaida's 9/11 attack was not caused by perceived weakness.

The USA spends \$15 Billion more on its military than the next nine countries put together, per the International Institute for Strategic Studies, or more than 34% of the military spending for the entire world, per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2015.

What have we got to show for such spending?

- A drone program that kills 28 people for each one targeted, which person may be reported killed up to seven times (per *Reprive's* 2014 study "You Never Die Twice" ) – prompting the question: who was actually killed?
- Ever-multiplying numbers of potential "terrorists," persons violently disposed toward U.S. citizens for the U.S.' terrorizing of whole communities (by soldiers' night raids on suspect family homes, and frequent drone

- surveillance with intermittent deadly attacks).
- Culpability for war crimes. Attacks are made without regard for humanitarian principles of international law governing armed conflicts (e.g., necessity and proportionality; protection for civilians, especially women and children; and prohibition against collective punishment).

The USA is also the major seller of arms worldwide, representing more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all arms exports in 2011, per the NY Times. We sometimes arm both sides of a conflict, and not surprisingly are often attacked with weapons we provided, lately by Isis and Al-Qaida. (We are also #1 in guns per capita, with [per the UN Office of Drugs and Crime] an unbelievable 88.8 guns per 100 residents in 2012 – *excluding* arms held by the government!)

We are the only country that has used nuclear bombs (despite Japan's imminent surrender), and we maintain our nuclear arsenal at great financial and environmental cost rather than pursuing nuclear disarmament. The treaty with Iran is the first recent serious attempt toward nuclear nonproliferation. Hopefully Congress will support the treaty with Iran. The accord prevents Iran from obtaining nuclear capabilities, and includes robust reporting and verification. Iran will benefit by the end of sanctions – as will U.S. businesses eager to enter that market. Diplomacy rather than military efforts make this a real victory for the U.S.

Such peaceful and just conflict resolution benefits all, and is much more effective in reducing violence. Let's invest in life-sustaining efforts instead.

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# Omnicide, No Thanks!

*Guest Post by George Payne, republished from The Deconstructed Globe*

What has the U.S. done to respond to the “slow emergency” of global warming? The short answer is not much. Even though the United States has been the world’s largest polluter over the past hundred years, our nation has done almost nothing of significance on the political level to curb greenhouse gas emissions. In 1997 Clinton failed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and shamefully walked away from the problem. At the key moment when we were in a position to help curtail the worst impacts of global warming, we simply turned our backs on the responsibility. In 2003 the U.S. invaded Iraq, hijacked that nation’s oil supply, commandeered transportation and distribution routes for oil, and ensured American hegemony in the region for years to come. On the domestic front the U.S. increased natural gas extraction from Colorado to Pennsylvania, making it cheaper and more abundant than it has ever been in our nation’s history.

Adding salt to a festering wound, in 2009 the U.S. participated in a UN summit in Copenhagen in which the U.S. and China failed to reach any binding agreements. When Copenhagen failed, Congress doubled down on their climate change denial and neglected to pass legislation which would have reduced carbon emissions at home.

I hate to sound pessimistic about what is happening in Paris right now but I have little faith in the U.S. to help solve this crisis. There is just not enough willpower on the national level to do anything that will substantially alter the course we are on. I am writing this lamentation just a few

days after the "Global Climate Action March" in Rochester which took place on Sunday, Nov 29. Now that the excitement of the march has toned down a bit, I am feeling compelled to speak more reflectively about my overall state of mind concerning the movement and its prospects for success. Without taking anything away from the utterly inspiring work of the organizers- and without diminishing or trivializing the passionate display of civil democracy which I experienced first hand as a marcher- I do think it is important to honestly acknowledge that the vast majority of our fellow citizens could care less about this issue. This may be an overly simplistic and harsh way to articulate my dissatisfaction, but that's how I feel. As impressive as it is to see nearly 500 concerned citizens show up at a demonstrate on a holiday weekend, the fact remains that over 190,000 people chose to stay home. The overwhelming majority of these people had no intention of supporting the marchers or their cause. Truth be told, they do not believe that global warming is a serious threat to their lives; and they certainly do not believe that the government should be prioritizing this issue at the expense of others such as job creation, international trade, the rise of religious extremism in the Middle East, race relations in American cities, and so much more that is presumably unrelated to climate.

If I may continue to speak bluntly, the reason I am so discouraged (besides our nation's history of political inaction on climate change) is the failure of the populace to understand how these social problems are intimately connected. Economic growth can not be considered without thinking about a future based on renewable energy sources. War and deprivation cannot be considered apart from the terrible ecological impacts that climate change will have on volatile conflict zones. And racism generated against people is essentially no different than the violence perpetrated against other living organisms. To hate someone or even kill them because of their skin tone is no less damaging to our systemic health as a

global community than clear cutting forests or strip mining mountaintops. In both cases living organisms with intrinsic worth are assaulted due to ignorance, malice and greed. That being said, I was hoping to see more people of color at the march. Until we all understand that the causes listed above are all based on the same existential struggle for liberty, dignity and genuine happiness, we will continue to distract, divide and defuse our capacity to make meaningful and lasting change. Whether we like it or not, this change that we are seeking will only come when a majority of the 190,000 people in our city (and the majority in all cities) participate in the movement.

In order to take this climate justice movement to the level it needs to go, it will need conservatives to join the fight. That is, people who think liberals are incredibly naive and self-righteous. The movement will need people of color who have traditionally distrusted large scale environmental campaigns run by middle class whites. It will need youth who are not afraid to put down their laptop and iphone and get a little dirty in the field of grassroots organizing. It will need elders who have serious roles to play. It will need activists, artists, teachers, priests, rabbis, imams, and symbolic figureheads. It will need people who speak different languages and come from different parts of the world. It will need people who have no employment but have a plethora of skills to employ. Every step of the way it will need people who are in love with compromise and negotiation. And it will need to have hardcore dreamers and hardcore scientists alike. No one can be left out.

Furthermore, those who come out in force for the environment must also come out in force for young men and women who are killed unjustly in wars-whether for natural resources overseas or by undisciplined police in their neighborhood. Those who are willing to show up in costumes to a climate justice event on a Sunday afternoon, must also stand side by side with

laborers who are fighting for a living wage on a Tuesday morning. And those who are willing to bring their children to a church for a peaceful walk around the City Center, must find the courage to also bring them to a military drone base in Syracuse where they can bear witness to the murder of other children living in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen.

My hope is that this march will be another milestone event that continues to build momentum over the next few weeks and months. For me and others, there is simply no turning back. Turning back is to walk off a ledge into the abyss of omnicide. No thanks.

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