

Art Against Drones

by **Kathy Kelly**, published on the **Progressive**, May 11, 2021

Photos reprinted from CovertAction

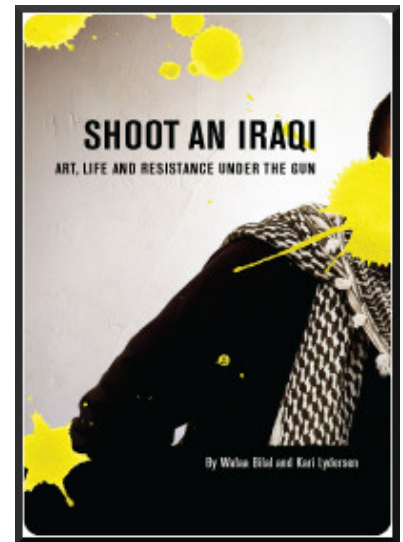
At the High Line, a popular tourist attraction in New York City, visitors to the west side of Lower Manhattan ascend above street level to what was once an elevated freight train line and is now a tranquil and architecturally intriguing promenade. Here walkers enjoy a park-like openness where they can experience urban beauty, art, and the wonder of comradeship.

In late May, a Predator drone replica, appearing suddenly above the High Line promenade at 30th Street, might seem to scrutinize people below. The “gaze” of the sleek, white sculpture by Sam Durant, called “*Untitled (drone)*,” in the shape of the U.S. military’s Predator killer drone, will sweep unpredictably over the people below, rotating atop its twenty-five-foot-high steel pole, its direction guided by the wind.

Unlike the real Predator, it won’t carry two Hellfire missiles and a surveillance camera. The drone’s death-delivering features are omitted from Durant’s sculpture. Nevertheless, he hopes it will generate discussion.

“*Untitled (drone)*” is meant to animate questions “*about the use of drones, surveillance, and targeted killings in places far and near,*” said Durant in a statement “*and whether as a society we agree with and want to continue these practices.*”

Durant regards art as a place for exploring possibilities and alternatives.



[Source:
www.wafaabilal.com]

In 2007, a similar desire to raise questions about remote killing motivated New York artist Wafaa Bilal, now a professor at NYU's Tisch Gallery, to lock himself in a cubicle where, for a month, and at any hour of the day, he could be remotely targeted by a paint-ball gun blast. Anyone on the Internet who chose to could shoot at him.

He was shot at more than 60,000 times by people from 128 different countries. Bilal called the project "*Domestic Tension*." In a resulting book, *Shoot an Iraqi: Art Life and Resistance Under the Gun*, Bilal and co-author Kary Lydersen chronicled the remarkable outcome of the "*Domestic Tension*" project.

Along with descriptions of constant paint-ball attacks against Bilal, they wrote of the Internet participants who instead wrestled with the controls to keep Bilal from being shot. And they described the death of Bilal's brother, Hajj, who was killed by a U.S. air to ground missile in 2004.

Grappling with the terrible vulnerability to sudden death felt by people all across Iraq, Bilal, who grew up in Iraq, with this exhibit chose to partly experience the pervasive fear of being suddenly, and without warning, attacked remotely. He made himself vulnerable to people who might wish him harm.

Three years later, in June 2010, Bilal developed the “And Counting” art work in which a tattoo artist inked the names of Iraq’s major cities on Bilal’s back. The tattoo artist then used his needle to place *“dots of ink, thousands and thousands of them—each representing a casualty of the Iraq war. The dots are tattooed near the city where the person died: red ink for the American soldiers, ultraviolet ink for the Iraqi civilians, invisible unless seen under black light.”*

Bilal, Durant, and other artists who help us think about U.S. colonial warfare against the people of Iraq and other nations should surely be thanked. It’s helpful to compare Bilal’s and Durant’s projects.

The pristine, unsullied drone may be an apt metaphor for twenty-first-century U.S. warfare which can be entirely remote. Before driving home to dinner with their own loved ones, soldiers on another side of the world can kill suspected militants miles from any battlefield. The people assassinated by drone attacks may themselves be driving along a road, possibly headed toward their family homes.

U.S. technicians analyze miles of surveillance footage from drone cameras, but such surveillance doesn’t disclose information about the people a drone operator targets.



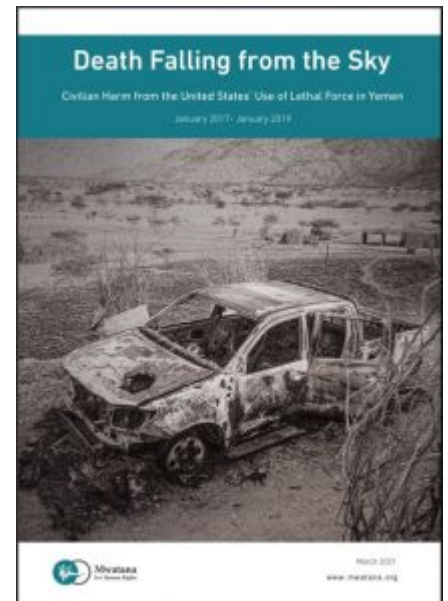
Image from a reaper drone during operation

In fact, as Andrew Cockburn wrote in the *London Review of Books*, “the laws of physics impose inherent restrictions of picture quality from distant drones that no amount of money can overcome. Unless pictured from low altitude and in clear weather, individuals appear as dots, cars as blurry blobs.”

On the other hand, Bilal’s exploration is deeply personal, connoting the anguish of victims. Bilal took great pains, including the pain of tattooing, to name the people whose dots appear on his back, people who had been killed.

Contemplating “*Untitled (drone)*,” it’s unsettling to recall that no one in the U.S. can name the thirty Afghan laborers killed by a U.S. drone in 2019. A U.S. drone operator fired a missile into an encampment of Afghan migrant workers resting after a day of harvesting pine nuts in Afghanistan’s Nangarhar province. An additional forty people were injured. To U.S. drone pilots, such victims may appear only as dots.

In many war zones, incredibly brave human rights documentarians risk their lives to record the testimonies of people suffering war-related human rights violations, including drone attacks striking civilians. Mwatana for Human Rights, based in Yemen, researches human rights abuses committed by all the warring parties in Yemen. In their report, *"Death Falling from the Sky, Civilian Harm from the United States' Use of Lethal Force in Yemen,"* they examine twelve U.S. aerial attacks in Yemen, ten of them U.S. drone strikes, between 2017 and 2019.



The report says at least thirty-eight Yemeni civilians—nineteen men, thirteen children, and six women—were killed and seven others were injured in the attacks.

From the report, we learn of important roles the slain victims played as family and community members. We read of families bereft of income after the killing of wage earners including beekeepers, fishers, laborers, and drivers. Students described one of the men killed as a beloved teacher. Also among the dead were university students and housewives. Loved ones who mourn the deaths of those killed still fear hearing the hum of a drone.

Now it's clear that the Houthis in Yemen have been able to use 3-D models to create their own drones which they have fired across a border, hitting targets in Saudi Arabia. This kind of proliferation has been entirely predictable.

The U.S. recently announced it plans to sell the United Arab Emirates fifty F-35 fighter jets, eighteen Reaper drones, and various missiles, bombs and munitions. The United Arab Emirates has used its weapons against its own people and has run ghastly clandestine prisons in Yemen where people are

tortured and broken as human beings, a fate awaiting any Yemeni critic of their power.

The installation of a drone overlooking people in Manhattan can bring them into the larger discussion.



Upstate Drone Action Die in at Hancock Air National Guard Base

Outside of many military bases safely within the United States—from which drones are piloted to deal death over Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Syria, and other lands—activists have repeatedly staged artistic events. In 2011, at Hancock Field in Syracuse, thirty-eight activists were arrested for a “die-in” during which they simply lay down, at the gate, covering themselves with bloodied sheets.

The title of Sam Durant’s sculpture, “Untitled (drone),” means that in a sense it is officially nameless, like so many of the victims of the U.S. Predator drones it is designed to resemble.



Locals mourn one of 30 Afghan laborers killed in errant drone strike in Nangarhar province in 2019. [Source: taskandpurpose.com]

People in many parts of the world can't speak up. Comparatively, we don't face torture or death for protesting. We can tell the stories of the people being killed now by our drones, or watching the skies in terror of them.

We should tell those stories, those realities, to our elected representatives, to faith-based communities, to academics, to media and to our family and friends. And if you know anyone in New York City, tell them to be on the lookout for a Predator drone in lower Manhattan. This pretend drone could help us grapple with reality and accelerate an international push to ban killer drones.

Kathy Kelly has worked for nearly half a century to end military and economic wars. At times, her activism has led her to war zones and prisons. She can be reached at: Kathy.vcnv@gmail.com.

Ban Killer Drones: International Campaign of Civil Disobedience Necessary (P2)

by Brian Terrell, published on Covert Action, May 10, 2021

A large campaign of civil disobedience is necessary to abolish one of the U.S. military's monstrous creations

The headline of the *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan* on November 30, 2012, page one above the fold with my photo, read "Terrell: American Drone Strikes Must Stop."

I was served well by this article explaining my opposition to killing by remotely controlled drones, as that morning I "surrendered" myself to the Federal Prison Camp in Yankton, South Dakota, to begin a six-month prison sentence for protesting at a drone base in Missouri earlier that year.

"While many Americans may think drone strikes are a safe way to conduct war and improve the nation's safety, one man will go to prison in Yankton today because of his belief that they are remotely committing crimes against humanity," the paper reported.

That first afternoon, when I walked into the prison's library, one inmate was reading that article aloud to the others, who broke into applause when they recognized me.



Protest outside Whiteman Air Force base, Missouri, April 7th, 2014. [Source: veteransforpeace.org]

It is a rare event for someone to go to prison for a federal misdemeanor like trespass and, in these days of mass incarceration and maximum-minimum sentencing, it is unusual for anyone to be incarcerated for so short a time as six months except in exchange for testifying against other accused defendants.

Having my crime and intention advertised to guards and prisoners alike saved me from the uncomfortable suspicion of being a snitch in prison. It also opened up many great discussions with my fellow inmates over those months.

The sentencing judge in this case had given me six weeks before presenting myself to the prison to put my affairs in order and I used that time traveling through Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, New York and Minnesota, speaking, protesting and organizing with other anti-drone activists.

A reporter from Missouri Public Radio called me during that time and requested an interview. She asked me a question I often hear, if I did not feel that I could do more for the cause by staying out of prison.

I responded by asking her if we would be having this interview if, instead of getting arrested and going to jail for it, I had simply called her station and expressed my concern that

the United States was committing war crimes by remote control from Whiteman Air Force Base. This reporter admitted that no, there would not be any interest in talking with me if that were the case.



Terrell (left) protests drones with Colonel Ann Wright (right), at Whiteman Air Force Base in 2012. [Source: flickr.com]

The shift captain who checked me out when my sentence was completed six months later told me that, while he respected the strength of my conviction, he felt I had done my cause a disservice by going to prison.

I had irresponsibly squandered any credibility I might have had, he told me. Who will listen to a convict? Within the following six months, my platform from which to speak out about drone warfare expanded to churches, libraries, schools, universities, Quaker meeting houses and community organizations around the U.S., the United Kingdom and Germany, including Yale Divinity School, Harvard Law School and Queen's College in Birmingham, UK.

This was not the first time I had gone to jail protesting

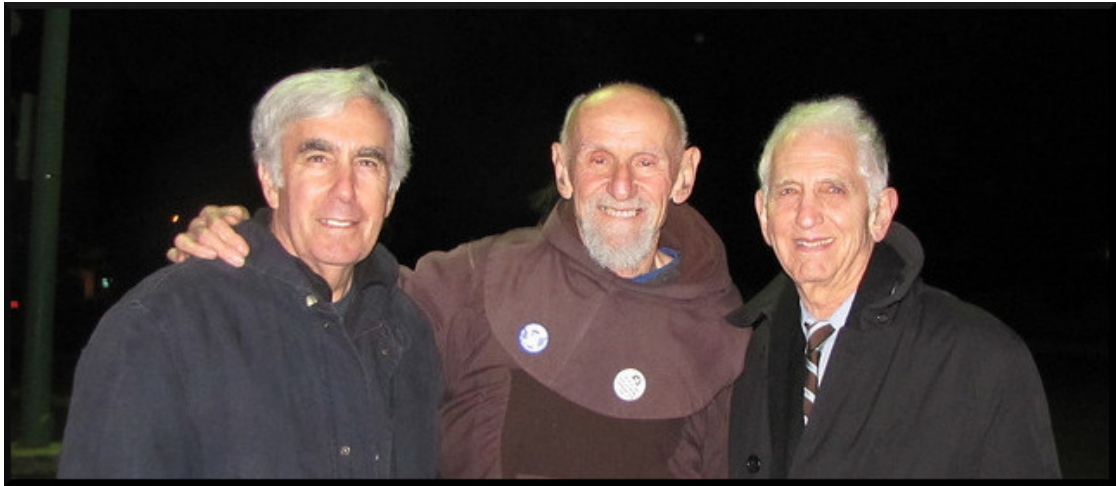
drones. In April 2009, about the time that President Obama made the Predator Drone the key to his “war on terror,” I took part in the first protest of drone warfare anywhere, at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada. Creech was where the drone wars began and where the CIA runs its clandestine program of extrajudicial executions.



Protesters temporarily block traffic outside Creech Air Force Base in Nevada. [Source: commondreams.org]

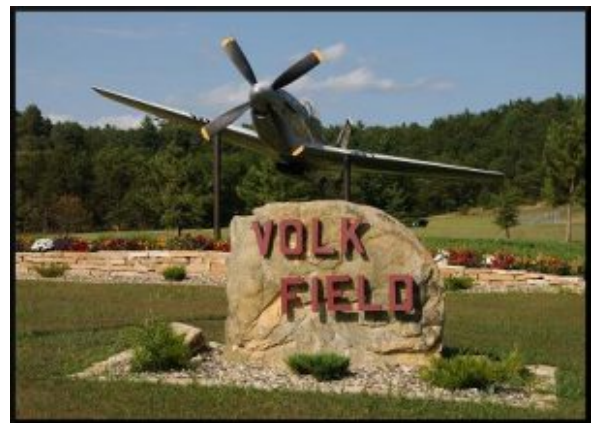
Louie Vitale, a Franciscan priest and activist with the Nevada Desert Experience, first noticed mysterious pilotless/windowless planes circling the desert while he was protesting at the Nevada nuclear test site nearby.

As a U.S. Air Force veteran of the Cold War, Louie first understood and alerted us to their grim significance. From that beginning, I have been arrested at Creech at least nine times, each time spending anywhere from a few hours to four days in the Clark County Jail in Las Vegas, one of the most squalid and cruel lockups in the country.



Louis Vitale (center), with legendary whistleblower Dan Ellsberg (right), and David Krieger, after arrest in 2012 at Vandenberg Air Force Base. [Source: oaklandvoices.us]

In February 2012, I was sentenced to ten days in the Jamestown Penitentiary for my part as one of the “*Hancock 38*.” The previous April we were arrested at the Syracuse, NY, civilian airport from where the New York Air National Guard flies weaponized drone missions.



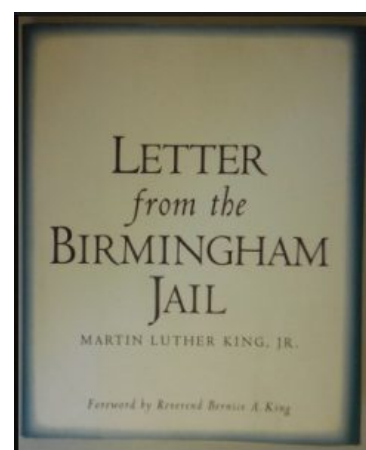
Volk Field [Source: volkfield.eng.af.mil]

Twice I joined the regular actions of the “*Occupy Beale*” group in California, resisting the Global Hawk surveillance drones flown from Beale Air Force Base. Each of those times, federal prosecutors dropped the charges.

I have also been arrested twice at Wisconsin’s Volk Field, where the National Guard trains soldiers to pilot the Shadow,

a surveillance drone that is used for “target acquisition” for armed drones and attack helicopters and, in 2017, I was lodged quite comfortably in the Juneau County Jail for five days after refusing to pay a fine on a trespass charge.

Acts of civil resistance such as these are responses to grave crimes of the state and not crimes in themselves, even when arrest and prosecution seem the immediate outcomes. Such actions are often required, but are not the whole of a campaign for change, either. In resistance to killer drones, such tactics as petitions, billboards, teach-ins, marches, pickets have also been effectively used and more will be needed as we go forward.



[Source:
amazon.com]

Martin Luther King, Jr., explained the necessity of direct action in his 1963 Letter from the Birmingham Jail:

“Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has consistently refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue.

It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. I just referred to the creation of tension as a part of the work of the nonviolent resister. This may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word

“tension.”

I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth.”

Nonviolent direct action is not the whole of a campaign for social betterment, but it is a necessary and indispensable component of any successful one.



The Late Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark addresses a gathering of about 50 defendants and supporters in front of the DeWitt Court House where the 38 Hancock drone protesters were on trial. [Source: mediasyracuse.com]

These actions in Nevada, California, Missouri, New York and Wisconsin and their ensuing courtroom dramas have raised the *“constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth”* in their communities at least to the extent that drone violence cannot be so easily ignored. We are responsible to build on these beginnings.

At the Syracuse trial of the *“Hancock 38,”* former United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark was permitted to testify

on our behalf on the subject of international law.

Judge Gideon, after listening to Mr. Clark speak of the Nuremberg Principles and other laws as they apply to drone warfare at length, leaned over the bench and asked him,

"This is all interesting, but what is the enforcement mechanism? Who is responsible for enforcing international law?"

"They are," responded Mr. Clark, pointing to the 31 defendants, *"and so,"* he said to Judge Gideon, *"are you!"*



Activists Brian Terrell and Ghulam Hussein Ahmadi at the Border Free Center in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[Graffiti by Kabul Knight; photo by Hakim]

As a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, a 25-year campaign that ended in December 2020, I was privileged to have the community support, the time and the means to join with these local cells of drone resistance around the U.S. and abroad.

Voices had also raised drone awareness by organizing several “peace walks” to drone bases, hundreds of miles on foot—from Chicago to a Michigan National Guard base in Kalamazoo; from Madison, Wisconsin, to Volk Field; from Rock Island, Illinois, to the Iowa Air National Guard drone command center in Des Moines—each time meeting with community groups and talking to hundreds of people along the way.



Peace march toward Volk Air National Guard Base in Wisconsin to voice concern with U.S. drone policy.

[Source: cnsblog.wordpress.com]

We itinerant Voices activists had a role in informing local anti-drone groups, in part because many of us have traveled to places under attack by armed drones, including Gaza, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Lebanon and Afghanistan. I have visited Afghanistan, the nation most subjected to U.S. drone attacks and with the most drone casualties, five times between 2010 and 2018 and, with my colleagues, we have met with and often been befriended by Afghans who have lost limbs and loved ones in drone strikes.

We know many others who, fearing drone violence, have fled their village homes with their families to live in squalid and overcrowded refugee camps.

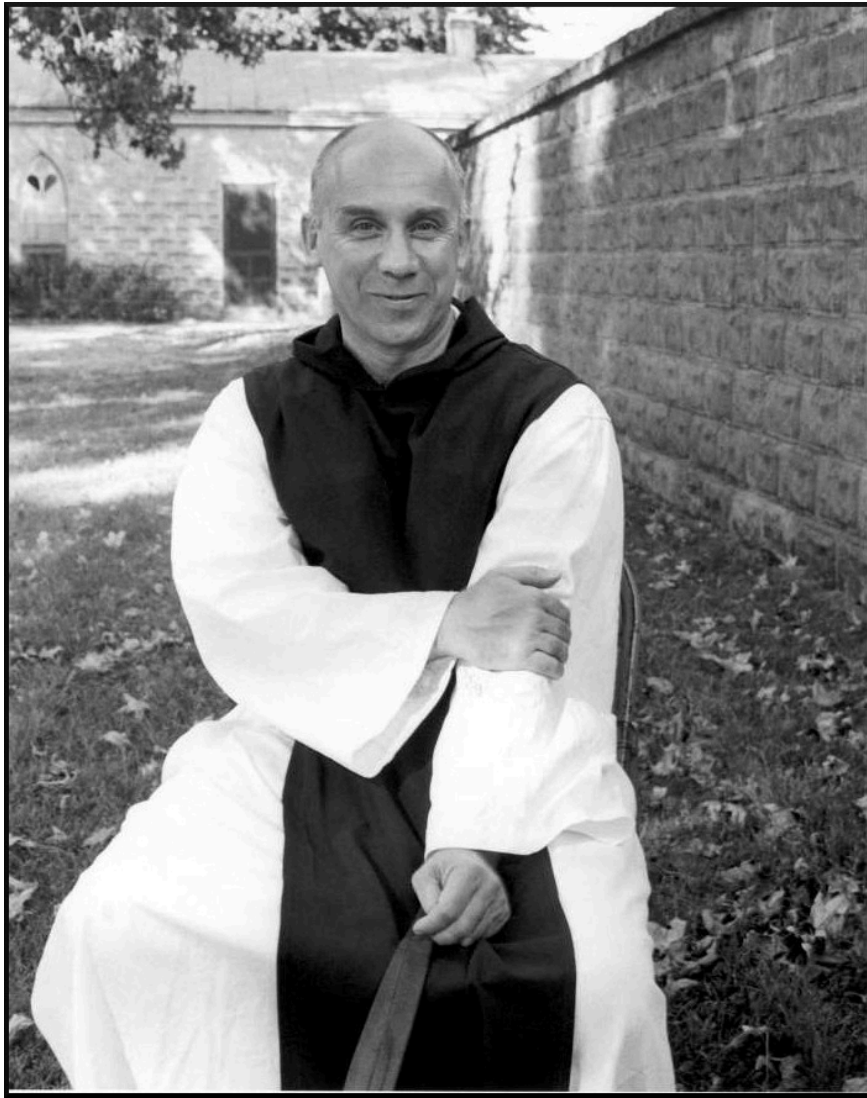
Activists from Voices in the United Kingdom have been resisting the use of armed drones by the Royal Air Force, including nonviolent resistance at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire and at factories there producing drones for Israel's military.

CODEPINK Women for Peace anti-drone activists likewise have traveled to and established friendships in Pakistan, Palestine and other places targeted by weaponized drones.



CodePink founder Medea Benjamin protests drone war. [Source: codepink.org]

Banning weaponized drones is not an abstract "cause" but a real human obligation. Addressing resistance to the Vietnam War in 1966, Thomas Merton wrote, "It is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything."



Thomas Merton [Source: uscatholic.org]

Not every anti-drone activist needs to visit war zones, just as not all of us need to go to prison, but some of us need to do both of these and it is the reality of those personal relationships that keeps our resistance from the abstractions that would otherwise suffocate it.

To learn more about the international campaign to ban killer drones, see bankillerdrones.org.

***Featured Image:** Brian Terrell (right), with Father Louie Vitale, at a 2009 anti-drone war protest at Creech Air Force Base, outside of Las Vegas, NV. [Source: Jeff Leys]

Ban Killer Drones: International Grassroots Movement to Ban Weaponized Drones Launched (P1)

by **Jack Gilroy**, published on **Covert Action**, May 10, 2021

An international grassroots movement to ban weaponized drones and military and police surveillance, entitled Ban Killer Drones, has been launched. Go to www.bankillerdrones.org to see the teamwork results of this excellent resource on the United States's not-so-secret assassinations around the world.



Protests outside Hancock Air National Guard Base in Syracuse, New York, in 2014.
[Source: Syracuse.com]

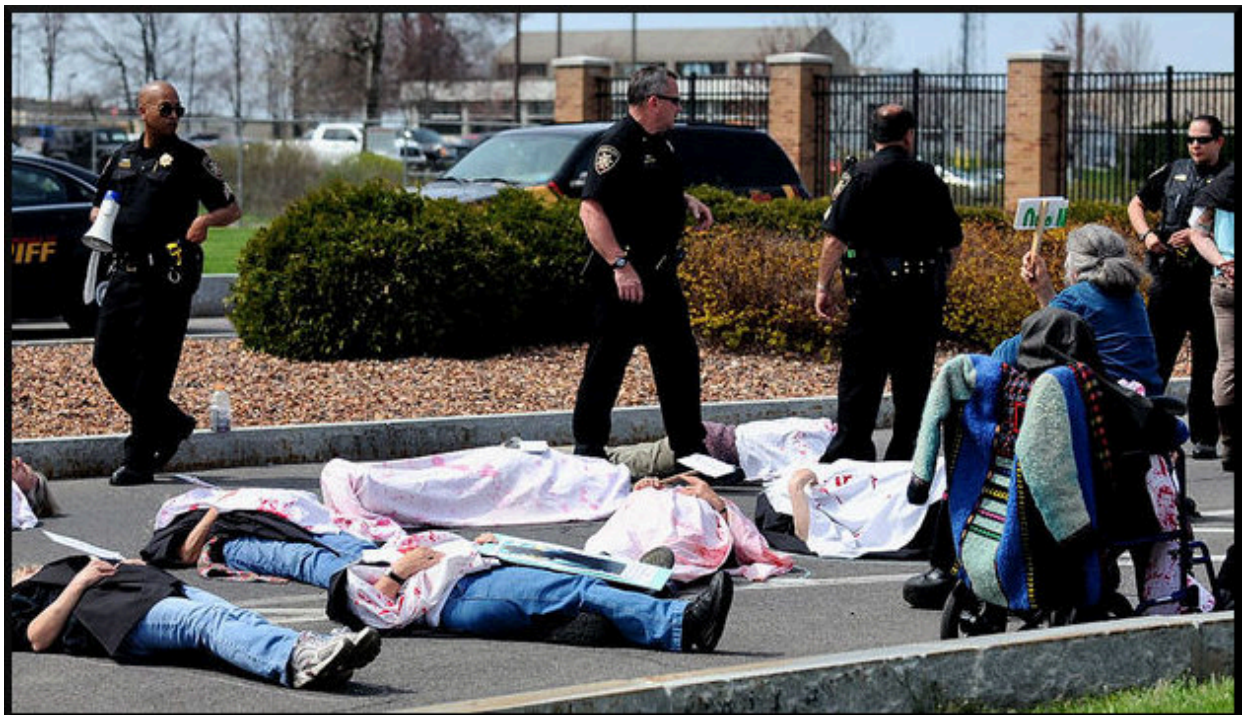
A group of long-time anti-drone war organizers, including Nick Mottern, Brian Terrell and Chelsea Faria, with support from two Nobel Peace Prize candidates, Kathy Kelly and David Swanson, worked to make this site the prime resource site to ban killer drones internationally.

Progressive readers will remember the years of struggle that produced the recent ban on nuclear weapons as well as the struggle that produced agreements on landmine and cluster

bombs.

I remember well where I was on October 1, 2014: I was handcuffed tighter than I had ever been, wiggling my fingers to keep my hands from going numb. I had been stuffed prostrate between the front and rear seat of an Onondaga Sheriff's Department car in Syracuse, New York.

DeWitt Town Court Judge Robert Jokl had just sent me on my way to the nearby Jamesville Correctional Facility to begin a three-month sentence for my participation in a die-in at the main gate of the NY Air National Guard 174th Attack Wing at Hancock Field killer drone base.



Die-in outside Hancock drone base in April 2013. [Source: space4peace.org]

Lying on the floor, squeezed between the seats, I asked the two deputies to give me room to sit. The deputy in the passenger seat called out: "You'll be at the jail in just 15 minutes or so, live with it."

I lived with it, serving 60 days of my 90-day sentence, with time reduced for "good behavior."

But I'm still mad as hell that my U.S. government continues to assassinate "suspected terrorists," expands its drone war and encourages other countries to do the same.

It is time to promote a treaty to ban weaponized and surveillance drones world-wide.



Gilroy protesting outside Hancock Air Force base on Earth day, April 22, 2021. [Photo courtesy of Heriberto Rodriguez]

The Predator

When I became aware of the drone protests at Hancock Field, I had written coming-of-age novels about conscientious objectors from WWII and the Vietnam war, but now war was being waged in my own back yard and few seemed to know about it.

The resisters at Hancock were, of course, trying to educate the public.

Sadly, even when some Americans did learn of assassinations operating out of United States drone bases, the acts of drone

terror seemed of little importance to them. After all, the terrorists were in foreign lands and we needed to “take them out” and not to worry about Hellfire missiles and bombs since they were in the Middle East, not in Syracuse.

Hancock’s 174th Attack Wing just did the electronic firing of weapons hovering over suspects thousands of miles away, seen of course by Attack Wing pilots with high-tech drone cameras via satellite.



[Source: 174attackwing.ang.af.mil]

I researched Predator and Reaper drones, spoke to folks who had been arrested for trespass at Hancock and was arrested a couple of times myself.

At the time, I was chair of the St. James Peace and Justice Committee in Johnson City, New York, 75 miles south of Syracuse. The headquarters of the Syracuse Diocese and the leader, Bishop William Cunningham, was hiking distance from the nearby weaponized drone base.

I had tried for more than two years with letters and phone calls to speak to Bishop Cunningham. My intent was to ask him his views on being so close to an institution that orchestrates assassinations, the 174th Attack Wing of the New York National Guard, just up the road a bit from his residence.

Persistence paid off. The bishop agreed to meet with our team of six resisters.

I asked Bishop Cunningham what he thought of the morality of the Hancock weaponized drone base. Bishop Cunningham said: "It's one way to keep our boys' boots off foreign soil. We don't need to be sending our young men off to war." Then, a bit later, he noted: "You do know that a lot of Catholics work at Hancock, don't you?"

We had assumed that to be so since we knew Bishop Cunningham had assigned one of his priests to minister to Hancock drone pilots.



Scene from The Predator: "I had hoped you'd go to one of the military academies." Jay Becker as Major Jennifer Golden, drone pilot, and Sarah Latham as her daughter, Ella. [Source: awaketodrones.blogspot.com]

Realizing that the Bishop's office was a dead end, I began to form a play in my mind of a young woman whose mother was a drone pilot at Creech. I decided to go with the title *The Predator* for obvious reasons.

In November 2013, the first staging of *The Predator* was done at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., with students from Syracuse University and the University of Scranton as actors. The event was the annual Ignatian Family Teach-In, the largest annual Catholic social justice conference in the United States.



Jack Gilroy discusses *The Predator*.

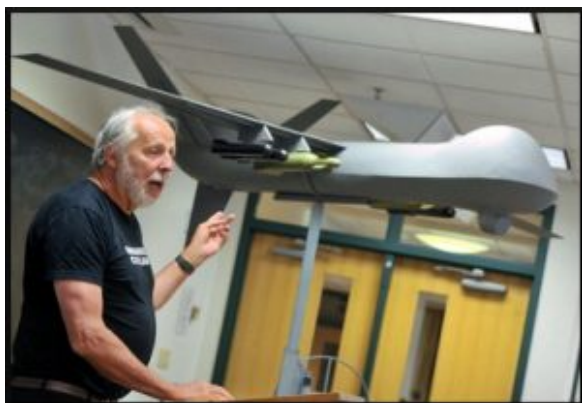
[Source: awaketodrones.blogspot.com]

Thankfully, I had a professional to assist: Aetna Thompson, a former member and singer with the satirical group in Washington called "The Capitol Steps."

An eye-catching prop was set up on campus, a facsimile of a Reaper drone designed and made by Nick Mottern, of Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, and coordinator of <https://www.knowdrones.com/>

Nick drove the disassembled mock drone from his home to Route 81 in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he showed me how to assemble it and then covered the mock Hellfire missiles with

blankets—“just in case a State Trooper wonders about these rockets,” said Nick. The Reaper was my traveling mate in my old Volvo, the fuselage resting on my dashboard and the tail bumping my rear window.



Nick Mottern with mock drone. [Source: lehighvalleylive.com]

I drove south for our first gig at Georgetown University and then on to Ft. Benning, Georgia, where I stationed the Reaper mock-up at the entrance to the Columbus, Georgia, convention center, with a large sign tacked onto it announcing “*THE PREDATOR.*”

The Predator had legs, playing at many college campuses and church halls around the nation from around 2013 to 2017 with activists such as Ann Wright, former U.S. Army Colonel and U.S. diplomat and Kathy Kelly, Director of *Voices for Creative Nonviolence*, taking on roles.

The play is still available to download (and tweak to bring it up-to-date) for any group to use.

Did the reflection, the thinking of the outlandish immorality and cowardly killing of people with high-tech American terrorism lead me to write the play? Quite likely, it was a factor. But I felt that what I had done with the play was not enough, hence my arrest and jailing, noted above.

Going International

The work of Up State Drone Action to expose the international crimes of the 174th Attack Wing at Hancock killer drone base has been outstanding. From the first direct action at Hancock in 2011 to Earth Day 2021, a team of creative artists have used street theater at the very edge of the killer drone base on East Malloy Rd in Syracuse, NY.

Developing themes for each action, Dan Burgevin of Trumansburg, NY, Ed Kinane of Syracuse, John Amidon of Albany, Ellen Grady of Ithaca and many others have used a variety of scenes and song to illustrate the crimes going on inside the 174th Attack Wing.

For example, the Syracuse District Attorney's office liked to bring into court physical evidence (exhibits) to prove their case against the killer drone resisters. So, one action, called *Big Books* used huge facsimiles of anti-war books—8'x4' and blocked the gate to the Hancock weaponized drone base. The local court room didn't have room for the big books. Consequently, no big books were taken into court as exhibits by the Syracuse District Attorney's Office.



Protestors display replicas of books that point to evils of the drone war. [Source: Photos courtesy of Ellen Grady and MaryAnne Grady who designed the book replicas]



Bill Quigley
[Source: ignatiansolidarity.net]

Weaponized drones have nothing that is praiseworthy. Weaponized drones are unmanned weapons carriers used to assassinate people in foreign (for now) lands. The use of weaponized drones is immoral, illegal, racist (used mainly to

kill people of color) and pragmatically stupid.

No other nation does what the United States does frequently: assassinate with weaponized drones in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Libya. The United States is still the greatest purveyor of violence in the world and killer drones have become our deadly calling card.



Funeral for pine-nut farmer killed in drone strike in Nangarhar Province in Afghanistan in September 2019. [Source: [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)]

Armed drones make bitter enemies around the world and create insecurity as they sow hate and vengeance.



Protest against U.S. drone strikes after drone attack in Multan, Pakistan, in 2012. [Source: foreignpolicy.com]

President Biden ended his inauguration speech with “May God bless America and God protect our troops.” That’s where we’re at: praising America and beseeching God to protect our troops. The arms industry and the religious arm of the military-industrial complex are smiling. It is clear that we must reach outside our borders and build an international consensus to end drone killing and drone surveillance.

I encourage readers to join the movement to establish an international ban on weaponized and surveillance drones. Go to www.bankillerdrones.org to initiate international action while pressuring Joe Biden and the war-prone Democrats to end weaponized and surveillance drones.

***Featured Image:** Anti-drone protest outside New York Air National Guard Base in April 2013. [Source: spaceforpeace.org]

Alice's Nightmare in Droneland- Live at Hancock Air Base

Statement Read at the Alice's Nightmare in Droneland Event:

from World Beyond War Blog, published October 29, 2020

We assemble here this morning to petition our government to end its use of killer MQ9 Reaper drones piloted from Hancock Air Force Base. Hancock is home to the 174th Attack Wing of the New York State National Guard. The 174th – together with all too many troops on other US bases across the planet – has been waging murderous war, in our name, against the people of the Islamic oil lands, against Iraqis, iranians, Afghans, Pakistanis, Syrians, Yemenis, Somalis, Libyans ...



We come from across New York State and Beyond, united as the Upstate Drone Action Coalition, a grassroots assembly of nonviolent activists. For years our local members have demonstrated here weekly, protesting Hancock's role in these crimes against humanity. A score of times for the past

decade, Upstate Drone action – under cover of the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution – has engaged in civil resistance at Hancock's very gate. Dozens of us have been arrested, have gone to trial, and some have endured prison. We persist because MQ9 drone attacks are evil. They are shameful, barbaric, illegal, racist. They are unjust, immoral, cowardly. They are islamophobic.... They help generate the planet's swelling ranks of refugees as human beings are displaced, maimed, killed, orphaned, widowed. Sadly, drone attacks numb our conscience.

Weaponized drone attacks are naked terrorism. What is 'terrorism', constantly invoked but rarely defined? Genuine terrorism is violence – or the threat of violence – perpetrated on civilians for political or economic gain. Our nation is the greatest purveyor of terrorism on our planet. U.S. terrorism spawns blowback. Last January's reaper drone assassination of Iran's General Qassim Suliemani, for example, risked extreme retaliation. Given the volatility of our era, such attacks may very well spark nuclear war. That is, global annihilation.

High-tech drone terrorism generates proliferation, with many nations racing – in defense – for mastery of the skies. Weaponized and surveillance drones have already come home to roost. Hancock's Reaper drones, menacingly, have even surveilled our weekly demonstrations.

Friends, look around you. See the imagery from that brilliant 19th century fable, Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland'. We call our 21st century tableau, 'Alice's Nightmare in Drone Land'. Chesire cat, depicted here tells us drone assassination is madness. Mad Hatter, knowing that the U.S. military is one of the world's major polluters and consumers of oil, urges us to stop destroying our climate.

"Alice herself cries out, 'Please don't kill me – I'm not a terrorist.' Let us open our hearts to the anguished cries of

every 'Alice', especially those mothers and children throughout the oil lands. And if, finally, we would open our ears to our fellow humans, we might also come to hear the screams – carried by wind, fire and flood – of our anguished and very resistant planet.



James Ricks of Ithaca and Harry Murray of Rochester, long time Drone protesters and veterans of civil resistance at Hancock Field

Drone Warfare Update from Upstate Drone Action:

U.S. expanding drone strikes from Somalia into Kenya

Camp Simba is on Manda Bay, Kenya's east coast, an airbase that the U.S. command has been using for over a decade. There, private Pentagon contractors have been flying surveillance flights throughout northern Africa and for drone attacks against Islamist militants in Somalia. The contractors also operate armed drones although they don't make targeting decisions. This allows the U.S. Africa Command to maintain the quasi-legal distinction that only uniform-wearing service members, who are lawful combatants, make the decisions as to who to target and kill.

Although Kenya's President has made public statements disavowing the Pentagon's use of its territory, it is not a passive host to American military operations. It has received more military aid than any country in sub-Saharan Africa and one of the world's top 5 recipients of U.S. counter-terrorism aid.

This use of private contractors is becoming more and more common. Aerex Aerospace is a major contractor at the Manda Bay airbase, having won \$44M in federal contracts in 2019. The Paris based news site Africa Intelligence reports its pilots operate Reaper drones and other intelligence-gathering aircraft throughout West Africa. Both Republican and Democratic administrations have relied on contractors because they give some degree of plausible deniability. Last year, the Pentagon spent \$370 billion, more than half the US military budget on contractors. (Brown and Boston Universities research)

There has been an expansion of lethal airstrikes with unaccounted civilian casualties in Somalia in the last three years. Human rights groups have reported 4-10 fold more civilian deaths from airstrikes than has the U.S. Africa Command. There is no reason to believe that lethal drone attacks in Kenya would be any more transparent.

The killing of Islamist militants based on suspicions and intelligence reports that later prove false has become the common practice in Somalia. The Trump administration has gone further, giving commanders expanded authority to order lethal drone strikes. As of late September, the military had not received executive approval to begin targeting in Kenya. But putting in place the infrastructure points toward yet another effort to expand an undeclared war in yet another country.

U.S. Arms Deal Integral part of UAE recognition of Israel

A previously secret part of the United Arab Emirates

diplomatic recognition of the state of Israel has become public in recent months. The Emiratis had been pushing for at least six years to buy F-35 fighter planes and Predator and Reaper drones. Israel had objected to the sales based on its reliance on a 50-year U.S. policy of maintaining the country's "qualitative military edge" over the neighboring Arab countries. Israel has a fleet of the stealth F-35 fighters and is a leading purveyor of advanced drone technology. Since 2017, Congress has prevented arms sales to the UAE and Saudi Arabia because of the thousands of civilians killed in their proxy war with Iran in Yemen.

Previously the U.S. government had held back on selling the Reaper drones, made by Lockheed Martin, because sales are banned by an arms control pact among 35 nations. In July, the Trump administration announced it would bypass the relevant parts of the agreement and issues sales licenses.

One thing that continues to amaze me is that even prize winning journalists whose articles I pulled this information from; never refer to Israel as a nuclear weapons power. This back-story of the U.S. obsession with Iran's nuclear weapons development is the pathetic public secrecy of our maintenance of nuclear superiority in the Middle East, not to mention everywhere else in the world.

Court Rules Against Trump drone killing policy

A U.S. district court has ordered the Trump administration to lift the total secrecy surrounding its rules for drone strikes and other killings abroad. This order comes as a result of Freedom of Information Act lawsuits filed by the American Civil Liberties Union and New York Times in December 2017.

The Trump administration's rules, known as the "Principles, Standards, and Procedures," are believed to loosen Obama-era policy restrictions aimed at limiting civilian casualties in areas "outside of active hostilities," such as in Yemen,

Somalia, among others. The district court rejected the administration's claim that it could not even confirm or deny whether the new rules exist. The Trump lethal force rules reportedly include lifting a requirement that a target must present a "continuing, imminent" threat to the United States, and permitting lethal strikes against a broader category of people, including those with no special skills or leadership roles. The Trump administration's rules also reportedly eliminate the high-level vetting required for each individual strike, instead requiring only "higher-level approval" of "country plans" that will be reviewed annually.

Brett Max Kaufman, senior staff attorney with the ACLU, had the following comment:

"Just like during the last administration, a court has decided that President Trump has stretched implausible claims of secrecy over the government's killing rules too far. The government should not only acknowledge these new rules exist, but make them public. Credible media and human rights groups have made clear that the Trump administration is killing more people in more places, with civilians and their communities bearing the brunt of tragic costs. We look forward to the government's response and to ensuring the administration is held accountable for this country's lethal force program abroad."

Trump Sued Over U.S. Sanctions on War Crimes Investigation

The International Criminal Court (ICC)is in the midst of investigating possible war crimes committed by the U.S. military in Afghanistan. In June the Trump administration issued executive orders sanctioning the Court. This has resulted in legal jeopardy for four law professors who have been providing legal advice and education to the ICC. The four, Diane Marie Amann of the University of Georgia School of Law, Milena Sterio of the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law,

Margaret deGuzman of Temple University's Beasley School of Law and Gabor Rona of the Cardozo School of Law, have filed a lawsuit claiming the order violates their First Amendment rights. The federal sanctions regime threatens them with as many as 20 years in prison.

U.S. Drone Strike in Syria Kills a Child as well as two Al Qaeda operatives

Airwars, the London-based airstrike monitoring group, reports that on October 15th the U.S. military carried out a drone strike killing two senior Al Qaeda operatives in Saeed, a town west of Idlib in northwest Syria. The strike killed a child and wounded multiple other civilians. The United Nations reported that two aid workers and their driver were injured, one of them critically, when the car they were traveling in was hit by shrapnel from a drone strike on another car in Idlib the same day. The U.S. Central Command has not reported on any civilian harmed in the killings. Neither Fox News nor the Washington Free Beacon, the only two news outlets to cover this strike, mentioned the suspected civilian casualties.

Shut Down Creech 2020

by **Tobey Blome**

Amazing week resisting killer drones at Shut Down Creech, culminating in a blockade and a 30 minute delay of commute traffic into the base early Friday morning, October 2nd, and no arrests.

Ground the Drones!

Toby, Maggie and all of earth's Creechers!

Press Release

Contacts: Toby Blomé, 510-501-5412;

Maggie

Huntington, (602) 459-5257

**Peaceful Anti-drone protestors block entrance to U.S. Assassin Drone Base;
Military traffic unable to enter base for half an hour.**

A group of 15 peaceful protesters from Nevada, California, and Arizona converged for a weeklong protest at Creech Air Force Base to oppose the remote-controlled killing that takes place in the desert just north of Las Vegas. Organized by CODEPINK and Veterans For Peace, the bi-annual protest known as "Shut Down Creech" was different due to the concerns and constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially because many of the regular activists are elders, and are at higher risk of complications and death. The event included both social distancing and mask wearing at the twice daily commute hour protests at the base. Precautions were also followed during their entire stay at their base camp, "Camp Justice," down the road from the base. In spite of the risks, these activists were compelled to participate and take a strong and determined stance against the illegal and inhumane remote killing by U.S. drones that occurs daily at the Nevada air base.

Most of the activists were reluctant to engage in civil disobedience, as they often do, because of the risk of COVID-exposure during a possible jail detention. However, 2 activists, Maggie Huntington from Flagstaff, Arizona, and Toby Blomé from El Cerrito, California ultimately participated in a "soft blockade" to impede commute traffic into the base for as long as they possibly could up until the point that the time limit expired that the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police gave to warn blockaders of impending arrest. Because the activists unexpectedly chose Friday morning for their blockade of resistance, the military and law enforcement officers were caught off guard. In the early morning rush hour traffic, the women, aged 65 and 76 years old, stretched a large banner, **"Stop Droning Afghanistan, 19 years ENOUGH!"** across the entrance road into the killer drone base. They also placed in the road several small "coffins," with names of other countries that are targets by U.S. drones, to impede traffic. They then read into a megaphone the names and ages of some of

the victims of U.S. drone attacks memorialized on small pink paper drones. The activists were able to remove themselves from the road in time to avoid arrest and simultaneously communicate a clear message of objection and noncompliance to the intolerable U.S. practice of remote killing, where hundreds of children have already died as "collateral damage."

Due to the element of surprise, the alternative northerly gate, a mile up the roadway from the commuter gate, was closed, and it took significant time to open and receive traffic. As a result military traffic was backed up all the way down highway 95, to the site of the blockade. Dozens, if not hundreds, of cars were delayed into the base, for about a half hour. Activists considered the action a very successful achievement toward their goal: To shut down Creech Air Force Base for as long as possible to halt the criminal activity taking place. www.ShutDownCreech.blogspot.com

"I'm motivated to participate in this resistance, with the hope that we will teach the soldiers that they must take control of and understand the consequences of their actions," said Maggie Huntington, one of the blockaders. According to one Chinese Proverb, "To know and not to act is not to know."

Other Shut Down Creech demonstrations during the weeklong anti-drone protest included: a solemn *"funeral procession"* along the highway with black clothing, white masks and small coffins; LED light board letters in the dark of the early morning, declaring: *"NO DRONES"*;



–Observation...without judgement...is the Highest Form.....of Human Intelligence

–Drone Attacks are.....COWARDLY, BARBARIC, RACIST, WRONG, SHAMEFUL, UNJUST, IMMORAL.....

Other commute vigil themes included:

–War is Not Green/End War for Climate Justice (The U.S. Military is the #1 Global User of Fossil Fuel)

–WAR IS A LIE: PRESIDENTS LIE, CONGRESS LIES, GENERALS LIE, CIA LIES, etc.

American Atrocities Continue To This Day

by Ed Kinane, Published in the Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin, November 3, 2019

On March 16, 1968, at My Lai, a thatched-hut village in South Vietnam, demented U.S. soldiers slaughtered some 500 peasants. Fortunately – for our awareness of the savagery of war – news of this massacre leaked out.

Later, conscience-stricken veterans publicly testified that My Lai wasn't an "*aberration*" or the only GI massacre. Reports of other massacres emerged from other sources (especially the leaked "*Pentagon Papers*").

These atrocities underpinned the demolishing of a distant impoverished land – one that had never threatened U.S. people, "*interests,*" or borders.

Sound familiar?

Fifty years later, run-amuck militarism remains very much with us. On March 19, 2019 a U.S. drone killed 30 Afghan pine nut harvesters gathered at night around a campfire. A further 40 were reportedly wounded in the attack.

This, too, was no isolated event. But in the 21st century, such increasingly high-tech killing has evolved and normalized. Across the Islamic oil lands – Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia – U.S. robotic drones attack first responders, wedding parties and funeral processions. Hundreds of the innocent and unarmed are being killed, and thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, are being terrorized, spurring waves of refugees.

Given the much-touted "*precision*" of the Hellfire missiles – a Lockheed Martin product – that these soulless operations deploy, can we call such massacres "*mistakes*"? Or excuse them as due to some mystical, unaccountable "*fog of war*"?

Hundreds of the innocent and unarmed are being killed, and thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, are being terrorized, spurring waves of refugees. When do U.S. taxpayers demand: stop the killing? When will we no longer tolerate a demented

commander-in-chief and the demented Pentagon that generates such terror?

Ed Kinane, of Syracuse, spent five months in Iraq with the human-rights group Voices in the Wilderness before, during and after "*Shock and Awe*." A My Lai Memorial Exhibit will be displayed at the Broome County Public Library from Thursday through Saturday.

8 Arrested Exposing Hancock AirForce Base Terrorism

by Ed Kinane, June 22, 2019

Shortly before 8 a.m. on Thursday, June 20, our Upstate Drone Action caravan of six or seven vehicles arrived, unannounced, at the main gate of Hancock AFB in De Witt, a suburb of Syracuse, New York. Two of us – accompanied by one of our videographers – proceeded to the guardhouse 50 yards in from East Molloy Road to read aloud and deliver a statement (below). The statement called on base personnel, in accordance with U.S. and International Law, to refuse to obey their chain of command's illegal orders to commit what are ongoing drone war crimes.

Simultaneously we set about creating a street theatre tableau blocking the main entrance to the base. As we have many times over the past decade, we were calling out Hancock for hosting the 174th Attack Wing of the NY National Guard. The 174th remotely pilots missile-spewing robotic MQ9 Reaper drones over Afghanistan (and probably elsewhere). These classified

operations result in the terrorizing, maiming and killing of uncounted and uncountable numbers of unarmed and undefended children and their parents.

Until our arrest about two hours later, we held an unadorned, white 3x8-ft. banner across the driveway leading to the gate. In bold black letters, it read:

DRONE FLY, CHILDREN DIE — OUR HEARTS ARE BREAKING.

Nearby, also in the ingress, two grandmothers in traditional black dresses silently sat grieving, holding "*infants*" in bloodied swaddling clothes. Bloodied "*body parts*" and children's toys and things were strewn about. Crossing back and forth between the banner and the road, pushed by a man in a cape and death's mask, a model Reaper on wheels fleshed out the tableau. Across the road from base property, over a dozen supporters, singing and chanting, held signs like: **CHILDREN ARE NOT "COLLATERAL DAMAGE."**

Two rain-soaked hours later, the DeWitt town police and Onondaga County sheriffs, having converged in numerous vehicles, ordered us to leave base property. Those eight who chose not to do so were arrested: Tom Joyce (Ithaca); Dan Burgevin & Mark Scibilia-Carver (Trumansburg); and Rae Kramer, Julianne Oldfield, Les Billips, Ann Tiffany and Ed Kinane (Syracuse).

We were handcuffed, separated by gender and taken in two paddy wagons to the sheriffs' north station where we were held in three small cells. After a couple hours we were transported by van to the downtown Syracuse "*Justice Center*." In booking we were ordered strip, spread our cheeks, and where applicable, lift our scrotums. Our street clothes were put in a device for what seemed to be some chemical inspection and replaced with jail issue.

We were held in a chilly, dirty holding cell with other inmates all day. In the early evening we separately appeared before a Judge Murphy. Public defenders pled us not guilty. The assistant D.A. recommended we be ROR'ed and, released on our own recognizance, without bail. After being taken back to the holding cell, we were released – to the welcoming arms of support people and fellow perps – sometime after 10:30 p.m.

Five of us – LB, DB, TJ, EK, RK – must appear in the DeWitt town night court at 6 p.m. Tuesday, June 25; J0, AT & MS-C. must appear June 26, also at 6 p.m. We were each charged with two violations – trespass and disorderly conduct, and with a misdemeanor, obstruction of government administration (OGA). Thus far Hancock's crimes against humanity go insufficiently exposed.

Thanks to our videographers our entire action was live-streamed. The arrest appeared on YouTube. The next morning brief footage appeared near the top of Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now" news hour viewed by hundreds of thousands here and abroad. For a three-minute overview, check out:

Video by Heriberto Rodriguez

Arrest Video by John Amidon

*Featured photo by Heriberto Rodriguez

Voices Rising for Yemen –

Final Day

Header and photos all from Voices for Creative Nonviolence

by Kathy Kelly, published on Voices for Creative Nonviolence, November 8, 2018

Over these past three days, Voices and a coalition of justice-minded organizations have been at and around the United Nations in New York City protesting the ongoing U.S.-Saudi attack on famine-imperiled Yemen. Details are available at www.vcnv.org along with next steps for people looking for ways to get involved. Participants Kathy Kelly, Brian Terrell, and Jules Orkin write here about the third and final day of protests:

VOICES RISING FOR YEMEN: FINAL DAY



We started our NYC activities this past Tuesday in soggy style, but yesterday, under brilliant sunny skies, the action became a moving procession. About 70 people formed a single file to carry backpacks, placards, signs bearing the names of children, and various banners, past the

U.S. Mission to the UN, past the Saudi Mission, and over to the consulate. Today we did the same, anticipating that those who stood in front of the consulate would be arrested.

By 11:30 this morning, on Dorothy Day's birthday, about 90 people had gathered at the Isaiah Wall for a procession to the Saudi consulate. The mourning women led our march, garbed in large masks and veils, holding limp grey dolls that represent the thousands of children facing death in Yemen. Jun Sun and a companion followed, their drumbeats guiding us. Six people

carried placards describing the terrible attack on a children's schoolbus in northern Yemen. The attack happened on August 9, 2018.

This week in Yemen, children who had survived were going back for the first time to their classes, carrying their blue U.N. backpacks from the day of the attack, splattered with their classmates' blood. So today in New York, people willing to risk arrest carried blue backpacks and signs naming the children who had been killed. Others followed with banners. Nick Mottern joined us with a drone replica, an apt reminder of U.S. aerial attacks and drone surveillance in Yemen.



Felton Davis and Ed Kinane held a banner and blocked the entrance to the U.S. Mission to the UN. They were later released without charge.



The procession continued past the Saudi Mission to the UN and over to the Saudi Consulate on Second Avenue. Members of our group swiftly set up a presence in front of three entrances to the building, urging people not to enter because it is too

dangerous: criminal activities have been going on and all who have cause to be in the building should be aware of the crucial importance of ending the murderous, tortuous activities carried out by the Saudi government. Brian Terrell points out that, just as you would be concerned if office workers in your building were involved in human trafficking or drug smuggling, people should be alarmed over the Saudi government's murderous practices as it makes war on Yemen. As Buddy Bell intoned the names of children killed on August 9

and raised a lament for Yemeni families, our response was "*We Remember You.*"

We sang and chanted for over two hours. At least two dozen police carrying plastic cuffs arrived, along with a NYPD Detective named Bogucki, who told us he recalled arresting some of us during the late '90s and in the years leading up to the Shock



and Awe bombing in Iraq. From 1996 to 2003, we had protested the sacrifice and slaughter of Iraqi children. Detective Bogucki said we are preaching to the choir when we tell him about crimes happening inside the consulate, and other offices that prolong war in Yemen. Recognizing our complicity, we believe "*the choir*" must unite by resisting child sacrifice, child slaughter.

Word arrived from one of the blockade groups that the New York Police Department had decided not to arrest anyone in our group. We eventually formed a circle, confirmed our collective determination to continue outreach, witness and resistance, expressed many thank yous, and dispersed.

Our hearts remain with Yemeni families agonizing over the dire plight of loved ones in Yemen. We thank Yemenis who have stood up, in more precarious settings, to call for an end to the fighting. And we look forward to supporting their calls for peace in every way we can, until this dreadful war is over.

Kathy Kelly interviewed outside the Saudi Arabian Consulate:



November 8th 2018 – protest gathered outside of Saudi Arabian Consulate in Midtown Manhattan, East 47th street and 2nd Ave. Protest spoke of Yemen bombing, deaths, Jamal Khashoggi, Trump and other issues. Large police response with various specialized units, carrying multiple zip ties and hand cuffs for the arrests. ***Click image to watch video.*** Full video and photos available [oliya\(at\)scootercaster.com](mailto:oliya(at)scootercaster.com), www.scootercaster.com

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Kathy Kelly is an American peace activist, pacifist and author, one of the founding members of ***Voices in the Wilderness***, and currently a co-coordinator of ***Voices for Creative Nonviolence***. She has traveled to Iraq twenty-six times, notably remaining in combat zones during the early days of both US–Iraq wars. Her recent travel has focused on

Afghanistan and Gaza, along with domestic protests against US drone policy. She has been arrested more than sixty times at home and abroad, and written of her experiences among targets of US military bombardment and inmates of US prisons.

UNAC joins “Stopp Ramstein!” Protests

by **Phil Wilayto**, originally published on **End the Wars at Home and Abroad**, July 1, 2018

It's a beautiful evening here in Kaiserslauten, a city of some 100,000 in southwestern Germany. There's a light breeze blowing, gently nudging the thousands of multi-colored flowers that seem to line every street. Couples, young families and older folks are strolling through this city whose beginnings go back to the time of the Roman Empire.

And tomorrow. thousands of people are expected to gather here and attempt to block the entrance to the U.S. Ramstein Air Force Base. I'll be one of them.

Ramstein is one of the largest of the Pentagon's 800 military bases established in more than 70 countries. South Korea has the largest number (could this be why North Korea is a little suspicious of U.S. intentions?). Japan is number two, and Germany comes in third.

Ramstein serves as headquarters for the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, Air Forces Africa and also NATO Allied Air Command. The military base is really huge, with some 54,000 military personnel, plus their families, which means this U.S. base pretty much dominates this German town. In fact, German

officials and politicians are not allowed to enter the base without permission from the U.S. commander.

But, just like with the Navy in Norfolk and Virginia Beach, the base is an important source of local employment, business contracts and trade, which is probably why the Catholic Church where around 40 protest organizers have been meeting this week came under heavy local pressure not to allow us to gather there. But the church stood its ground and there have been no problems – so far.

The reason the German peace movement has targeted Ramstein is not only because of its massive size, but because of the critical role it plays in the Pentagon's strategy of fighting wars using pilotless drones. These expensive little machines can drop bombs on targets all over the world, with no threat to U.S. lives, and so no risk of stirring up unpleasant antiwar feelings back home.

It's nice, clean warfare, in which the only people who die have brown skins. And if the intended target happens to be at a wedding, a funeral or praying in a mosque on Friday night, then there might be what the Pentagon quaintly calls "*collateral damage*" – a very sanitized word that seems obscene when applied to a lifeless child torn apart by a bomb we paid for with our taxes.

The drones do have human pilots, but they work in air-conditioned buildings back in the States. The pilots send instructions to Ramstein, where they are then routed to the many drone bases around the world. No Ramstein, no drones. And that is why there have been huge annual protests here.

When the base's key role in drone warfare first came to light in 2015, the German government claimed it hadn't been informed about this function of the U.S. base. The reports were later supported by data provided by whistleblower Edward Snowden and investigative reporter Glenn Greenwald from classified

documents from inside the U.S. administration.

I'm here representing the United National Antiwar Coalition, which the Virginia Defenders helped found back in 2010. I've been meeting lots of German peace activists, as well as folks from Italy, Spain, South Korea, France, Ireland, the United Kingdom and several from the U.S., including Ann Wright, the former U.S. Army colonel and State Department official now known worldwide for her antiwar activities. She'll be a featured speaker at the main rally outside the base tomorrow.

Also here are Pat Elder, a longtime antiwar activist from Maryland who has done some incredible work countering military recruitment in our public schools. And Dave Webb from the United Kingdom, who works with the U.S.-based Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. And John Lannon, a professor at Ireland's University of Limerick, who will be a key organizer of an international conference called to oppose U.S. and NATO foreign military bases that will take place this November in Dublin.

This week's peace activities are being sponsored by the German organization "**Stopp Air Base Ramstein.**" Beginning on June 23, there have been discussions, workshops and a "*peace camp*" that reminds me of Occupy Richmond, with its many small tents and communal spirit. Today there was an all-day meeting at which Ann, Pat, John, Dave and I were among the many speakers. At the end of the meeting the organizers released a statement calling on the European Union to open all its borders to refugees, arguing that it has been the U.S. and NATO wars in North Africa and the Middle East that have caused the refugee crisis in the first place. The right-wing in Europe has seized on the refugee crisis to whip up hatred of immigrants, much like the Trump regime is doing in the U.S.

Tonight there's a large public event held at the Reconciliation Church Kaiserslautern. And then the highlight of the week will be a large demonstration and rally tomorrow,

followed by a mass blockade in front of the main entrance to the base, followed by a cultural event with a party in the peace camp. (See <https://www.ramstein-kampagne.eu/.../stopp-airbase-rastein-2.../>)

So what am I doing here, thousands of miles from home, when I could be protesting any number of injustices back in Richmond? Well, it's because all these things are related. Like the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr, said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." That saying is featured on the front page of the current issue of The Virginia Defender.

Today the U.S. is openly at war in at least seven countries in the Middle East and Africa: Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Libya and Somalia. It's conducting covert wars in other countries, from the Philippines in Asia to Mali and Niger in West Africa. It carries out provocative military exercises on the very borders of Russia. All this is in the name of "*national security*," although there are no Russian bases in Canada, no Chinese ships off the coast of San Francisco, no joint North Korean-Mexican maneuvers in the Gulf of Mexico.

And man, are these wars expensive! The U.S. military budget is larger than that of the next seven or eight countries combined, and that includes both China and Russia. Military spending sucks up half our federal tax dollars. (They tell us it's only 25 percent, but the Defense Department budget doesn't include nuclear weapons, which come under the Department of Energy; or care for the hundreds of thousands of veterans, which comes under the Veterans Administration; or interest payments on the national debt – largely the result of borrowing money to pay for past wars. Those payments are now nearly equal to the Defense Department budget.

So when they tell you there's no money to fix Richmond's decaying public schools, no money for more bus routes, no money to create public jobs at living wages and that we're

running out of money for Social Security and Medicare, please remember where half your federal tax dollars are going. For war.

I'll be on the road here in Europe for the next couple of weeks, trying to learn as much as I can about the progressive movement here and how activists are addressing poverty, racism and war. I'll post my reports here as often as I can.

Meanwhile, if you'd like to help support this work, please think about kicking in a little something for travel expenses.

You can do this at: unacpeace.org.

Until next time,

Phil Wilayto

Editor, The Virginia Defender

Member, UNAC Administrative Committee

The Wars Abroad Meet the War at Home

by Felton Davis of NYC Catholic Worker

Below is the announcement sent out by Isaac at Action Corps NYC, and a couple of the photo sets from Monday's demonstration across from the United Nations.

It was a long twenty hours "*in the system*," as the process from the precinct through the labyrinth of basement holding cells, to the courtroom at 100 Centre Street is known. My vest photo of Nora Al-Awlaki was

taken by the officers of the Strategic Response Group at the US Mission, and put into an envelope with my house keys, belt and shoelaces, then returned to me outside the courtroom. The officers told me that unless someone showed up at court with my real ID, I would not be released or get any property back.



August 20, 2013

The guys in the holding cell, most from a drug sweep in Washington Heights, were among the rowdiest group of arrestees that I have ever had the privilege of doing time with. Jumping up and down to stay warm, calling out to the correctional officers for toilet paper, smacking each other around, slamming down the pay phone trying to get through to friends and family, and last but not least, going around the cell to figure out who in their circle was going to get

charged with what. They assured me that the DA would not ask for bail in my case, whether or not I identified myself, but in fact, when we were all brought upstairs and into the courtroom, the DA did ask for \$1000 bail, given my numerous open cases, and *“extensive interstate contacts.”*

A much more thorough discussion of the issues involved in present-day antiwar efforts took place in the holding cell than will ever take place in the courtroom, as I tried to explain the context for our demonstration for the suffering people of Yemen. We’ve been at war – undeclared, unauthorized, whatever – for so many years, with so many countries, none of whom are a threat to us, that it has become a permanent condition, and takes a special effort to bring into awareness. The guys had no disagreement with that, and as far as war constituting theft from urgent social needs, they cited numerous examples in their personal lives.

“You know how many of my neighbors I have had to rob on the street just so my kid will eat?”

I refrained from attempting to answer that question, instead offering the opinion that on the international scene, this robbery is having a devastating effect all throughout the Middle East, as nation after nation is targeted. *“People are going to hate us...”*

“They already hate us! You don’t know that?” They shook their heads in bewilderment.

“Everything we got in this country is because it was stolen, and stolen by force! Where the FUCK have you been?”

Twenty hours was not enough time for me to go through all the demonstrations over the years that have concluded with a trip to Central Booking, but I did explain to the guys that in the 1980's, before some of them were



born, there was no toilet in the men's cell, and arrestees would have to pee on the floor in the corner. Then I accidentally compared that little bit of progress with the abolition of slavery, and received another instantaneous verdict from the jury.

"Fuckin bullshit! You think slavery was abolished? You're crazy! Slavery was not abolished, it was just..."

The discussion continued in Spanish as the guys searched for the most accurate word for what happened to the institution of slavery. And slowly (very slowly without caffeine), the day dawned and we were moved along through the labyrinth. I told the legal aid attorney who I was, and the DA already seemed to know – probably from my fingerprints – and so there was no need to inquire whose *"extensive interstate contacts"* were under review, mine or John Does. The judge would not order bail, and so I was released on ROR, and scheduled for trial on Wednesday, January 17th.

#LetYemenLive Emergency Protests Break Out Across US

Monday the NYPD arrested 15 people for blocking entry to the US Mission to the United Nations, while others protested at the Saudi mission, the Saudi office in Los Angeles, and at the Hart Senate Offices in DC, all under the **#LetYemenLive** protest name. Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK, reported there was a demonstration in Houston, too. The demonstration in New York included approximately 50 people, while the one in DC included 15, and the one in LA 10. Those in DC sang Christmas

carols with original lyrics to US Senators.

*NYC: 14 arrested at Yemen solidarity protest by Erik McGregor
#YemenSolidarity #HandsOffYemen #LetYemenLive #EndTheWars
pic.twitter.com/jIdS5DljMw*

– Pacific Press Agency (@PPA_NewsPhoto) December 12, 2017

Friday the White House reiterated its call for humanitarian access in Yemen. As the world's worst famine approaches, 19 organizations participated in the emergency protest at the UN Monday. Participants performed civil disobedience against the US-backed Saudi war, visually representing Yemeni children killed and orphaned from the war. They called for an end to humanitarian and commercial blockade against Yemen, and for a cease fire by all sides.

*Yemen is starving. At the UN today to say #LetYemenLive. The Trump regime is fueling& ramping up this humanitarian crisis.
#TrumpPenceMustGo pic.twitter.com/plDFmjaPK9*

– #TrumpPenceMustGo (@RefuseFascism) December 11, 2017

The Catholic Worker organized the NYC demonstration. Speakers included two-time presidential candidate David McReynolds, Kate Alexander from Peace Action New York State, and Carmen Trotta, of the Catholic Worker. Dr. Debbie Almontaser provided a statement that was read by a representative of Action Corps NYC. Supporting organizations include: *Voices for Creative Nonviolence, World Beyond War, Code Pink, Pax Christi Metro NY, Peace Action New York State, NYC Raging Grannies, Kairos Community, KnowDrones.com, Action Corps NYC, Granny Peace Brigade, Uptown Progressive Action, Sander Hicks for Congress, Rise and Resist NY, Veterans For Peace – NYC Chapter 034, NYC War Resisters League, Women in Black Union Square, 15th Street Quakers Peace & Social Justice Committee, and World Can't*

Wait.

Statement from Action Corps NYC:

“Time is running out for the people of Yemen, who are experiencing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. With seven million people on the brink of starvation, the country will face the largest famine since WWII if Saudi Arabia continues the war and blockade. This blockade cuts access to much-needed medical supplies. Over half of healthcare facilities in the country are nonfunctional, worsening Yemen’s cholera outbreak with total cases possibly reaching one million by the end of this month. The US must use its influence to stop the blockade and must ultimately stop supporting the war.”