

Bring Drone Warfare Out of the Shadows

Guest Post by Beth Harris, 3/11/16

On Thursday evening, March 10, 2016, members of the Upstate New York Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars from Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Corning, Enfield and Ithaca met at the DeWitt Town Courthouse to celebrate Mary Anne Grady Flores being released from jail on bond and to provide support to Professor Harry Murray as he faced sentencing for a trespass conviction. Mary Anne's and Harry's arrests occurred during protests at the Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in DeWitt, New York, where drone operators sit in computer rooms directing drone assassinations in Afghanistan, Pakistan and possibly other countries.

Before Harry's sentencing, there was a [press conference](#), where Ed Kinane, Mary Anne, Harry and I spoke while other members of the Upstate Ground the Drone Coalition held signs with pictures of drone victims and messages protesting US drone warfare. Ed reminded us that the week had an ominous beginning with the news that US drone strikes had [killed 150 people in Somalia](#), where the US has not declared war. We had a moment of silence for these unnamed victims.

For President Obama, the global network of US drone bases and the targeted assassinations from unmanned aerial vehicles have created a foundation for maintaining and expanding the reach of US empire. In "[Garrisoning the Globe](#)," David Fine argues, "Although few Americans realize it, the United States likely has more bases in foreign lands than any other people, nation, or empire in history." The US government asserts its authority to police the world without any system of accountability within the US or internationally.

The February 2016 [report](#) from the bipartisan Stimson Task Force on US Drone Policy describes the scope of the US drone program:

Since June 26, 2014, lethal UAV strikes have been reported in Yemen, Pakistan, Libya, Afghanistan and Somalia, and against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The use of such targeted strikes is expanding as demand for drones increases to support US military and counterterrorism operations around the world. At least twelve countries are believed to host US drones bases: Afghanistan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Niger, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

In addition there are now drone bases throughout the US, including the Hancock air base. In 2012, [Public Intelligence compiled a list](#) of 64 drone bases within US borders, including 12 with Reaper or Predator unmanned aerial vehicles that can be armed.

[Under Obama's watch US drone warfare has killed](#) approximately 5000 people, and due to the government's refusal to provide meaningful information about casualties, it is impossible to determine how many victims have been civilians, though researchers have estimated at least 1000. According to the leaked [Drone Papers](#), during a five-month period in Afghanistan 90% of those killed by drone attacks had not been targets.

A shroud of secrecy, based on claims of executive privilege and national security, has been central to US drone warfare. The grotesque use of "Orders of Protection" against nonviolent protesters intends to silence their opposition to drone warfare and witnesses to the victims of drone attacks. In Mary Anne's case, she had been issued an "order of protection" on behalf of the base commander after she participated in a protest at the Hancock air base in 2012. She was told that he wanted protesters away from his base. At a later protest, she

was arrested for criminal contempt of this order of protection when she photographed demonstrators from the road in front of the Hancock air base. DeWitt Judge Gideon sentenced her to a year in prison for this terrible crime.

As we all know, secrecy about a government's kill policies provides the perfect foundation for a complete lack of accountability and threatens the fabric of the societies of both the killers and those killed. For activists committed to justice, conventional means of reform have been thwarted. Consequently, whistle blowers and protesters have become essential to bring the drone kill policies to the attention of the public, to expose the military infrastructure and personnel responsible for the killings, to stop the murders, and to pressure our politicians to create a system of accountability that adheres to national and international law.

On Tuesday the New York Times published an [op ed](#) calling on President Obama to bring his drone warfare policy "out of the shadows to constrain the power he had unleashed before a new president takes power." ACLU lawyers Jameel Jaffer and Brett Max Kaufman write that while government supplied data concerning drone strikes is inadequate, we do know that President Obama has approved of strikes far from combat zones and authorized the CIA to carry out "signature strikes," which are aimed at people the agency does not know, but who are suspected of militant activities.

Jaffer and Kaufman warn, "President Obama has established a dangerous precedent, and consequently whoever prevails in November will inherit a sweeping power to use lethal force against suspected terrorists and militants, including Americans. The new president, whether a Democrat or a Republican, should also inherit policies that limit that power."

Frontrunner Republican candidate Donald Trump brags that he is willing to carry out war crimes, such as [torture](#) and the

killing of family members of those suspected to be terrorists. Furthermore, he is ready to fight and kill for [US access to oil extraction](#) in other countries. The establishment Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton has helped [to develop and defend Obama's drone policies](#) and has been an avid supporter of [US military intervention](#) throughout her political career. Sanders supports drone warfare, used [in a selective way](#), which is consistent with Obama's political rhetoric, and Sanders does not explain how the government can be held accountable to this notion of selectivity.

While the Obama administration releases some information to the public, it also continues to fight against FOIA requests for documents about the policies and impact of the drone program. The ACLU has called on the government to release the Presidential Policy Guidance, a document that has provided the legal and administrative framework for the drone campaign since 2013. The government has agreed to release sections of this document, but until the key legal terms are defined clearly, it will be impossible to determine whether there are meaningful constraints to the government's kill policies. In addition, the ACLU argues that legal memos that justify drone strikes away from battlefields should be revealed. Finally, data about individual strikes, including dates, times, locations and casualties, should be public. Those strikes that kill "innocent civilians" should be investigated, and the results, including compensation for families, should be publicized. While compliance with the ACLU requests would not end drone warfare, it would provide information for the American public to understand the drone policies and create the possibility of informed public discussion about the legality, ethics and impact of US drone warfare.

Prior to Harry's January trial, a Hancock base lawyer argued to quash the subpoena, which Judge Gideon had signed, for the base commander to produce information about Hancock drone strikes. [Harry recounts](#),

“He told the judge that the information I had requested, including the number of children killed by drone strikes piloted out of Hancock, was classified and that Col. Semmel could be prosecuted if he answered any of those questions. If letting the people know how many children its military has killed threatens the security of our nation, what does that say about the US as a country and as a democracy?”

Judge Gideon decided not to send Harry to jail, but not for any ethical or legal reason. He likes the professor and appreciates his respect for the judicial process. Sadly the U.S. government’s drone assassination policy was treated as irrelevant to Judge Gideon’s reasoning. The judge made an appeal to the protesters in the courtroom to respect the institution of the judiciary while ironically he undermined the legitimacy of his own role by refusing to grapple with concerns about truth, justice or equal treatment under the law in his explanation of his sentence.

It is alarming that shooting photos of protesters has become a criminal offense deserving incarceration while drone massacres are hidden from public view by our government. The US courts, Congress and mainstream media have normalized this impunity, paving the way to the continual expansion of US military threats throughout the globe. Ultimately the unchecked US role as global bully may undermine the possibility of security for anyone in the world.

Press Conference: Drone

Resisters Speak

Harry Murray to be sentenced at 8pm Mary Anne Grady Flores released on bail

Press Conference:

DeWitt Town Court, E. Syracuse, N.Y.

March 10, 7:15pm

Syracuse, N.Y. The [Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars](#) invites the press and public to hear from drone resisters Mary Anne Grady Flores, released on bail Monday night, and Prof. Harry Murray. Judge David Gideon will sentence Nazareth College Professor Murray in the DeWitt Town Court on Thursday at 8pm. Convicted of a trespass charge, Murray faces 15 days in Jamesville Correctional Facility. His conviction stems from the Hancock 31 action (April 28, 2013) denouncing drone killings in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are directed by drone operators sitting in computer rooms at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on E. Molloy Rd. in DeWitt, NY.

After completing 49 days in the Jamesville jail, Mary Anne Grady Flores, grandmother of 3, was released on \$5,000 bail. She had been convicted of criminal contempt of an order of protection signed by a DeWitt judge on behalf of the Hancock base commander who claimed that he wanted the protesters away from his base. Grady Flores' attorney Lance Salisbury submitted an appeal of her conviction to the NYS Court of Appeals, the highest state court. He writes, "*There exists a split within the decisions of the Onondaga County Courts on the validity of the order of protection at issue in this case,*" and that the Court of Appeals must resolve this

difference. Salisbury argues that the New York Criminal Code requires that orders of protection be issued only on behalf of a crime victim or witness, not for the protection of property, including a military base, as happened in the case of Grady Flores.

Hancock air base commanders have used orders of protection to silence First Amendment protected rights to protest the crimes committed by entire chain of command of the US drone program. These crimes include violation of sovereignty laws, extra-judicial killings, violation of due process rights, and the killing of innocent civilians. *"We know from leaked government documents, [the Drone Papers](#), during a five month period in Afghanistan, 90% of all drone victims were bystanders. If the American people knew the impact of the drone program, they would shut it down,"* said Grady Flores. [Four former drone operators](#) wrote President Obama,

"This administration and its predecessors have built a drone program that is one the most devastating driving forces for terrorism and destabilization around the world. When the guilt of our role in facilitating this systematic loss of innocent life became too much, all of us succumbed to PTSD."

Prior to Professor Murray's January trial, a Hancock base lawyer argued to quash the subpoena, which Judge Gideon had signed, for the base commander to produce information about Hancock drone strikes. Professor Murray recounts,

"He told the judge that the information I had requested, including the number of children killed by drone strikes piloted out of Hancock, was classified and that Col. Semmel could be prosecuted if he answered any of those questions. If letting the people know how many children its military has killed threatens the security of our nation, what does that say about the US as a country and as a democracy?"

Grandma Drone Protester's Second Jail Letter

Grandma Drone Protester's Second Jail Letter:

>> Talk Nation Radio with David Swanson: [One-Hour Special: Mary Anne Grady Flores from Jail on Why She Protested Killer Drones](#)

On January 19, 2016 I was remanded after a county court decision upheld a lower court verdict that I was guilty of violating the terms of an order of protection while photographing 8 Catholic drone protestors at Hancock Air force Base. Orders of protection were originally created to protect domestic violence victims and witnesses who might be subject to intimidation.

A month later while in jail I realized that Friday, Feb. 19 was important to me for four reasons. *First*, it was the seventh anniversary of my brother-in-law Peter DeMott's sudden passing, leaving my widowed sister Ellen with four daughters to raise. Peter was a rock in our family and is sorely missed. We miss his energy, his wit, his deep bass radio voice, his random acts of kindness, his recitation of poetry, his mixing hot sauce with all his food. We miss his tireless efforts of putting his body at many gates, or climbing over fences or driving into military bases or witnessing at corporate military contractors' facilities like Lockheed Martin, to end the madness of the never ending racist colonial wars of the U.S. empire. I hold Ellen, the tireless organizer of anti-killer-drone actions at Hancock Airbase, and each of their gifted daughters in prayer and in love.

Second, on that Friday, our 88-year-old mom, Teresa Grady, was

officially accepted into Hospice. This past December, mom broke her hip and has declined since then. My siblings and I have been blessed caring for her 24/7 in her home for almost two years. It's been a struggle since January 19, when I entered jail, especially as she nears her final days. My mother, along with my dad taught us that our faith meant we were supposed to stand up for human rights and justice. I learned that the jail might provide a death bed visit. First, they told me I had to prove that mom is my mother by getting my birth certificate. My counselor, Ms. Kash, has to handle a caseload of about 140 cases. Nevertheless, doing the best she could, she responded to my request to speak about mom's decline, coming to the busy hub of the Pod – the guard desk – instead of the counselor's office two feet away respecting confidentiality or sensitivity to the situation. The counselor asked me

“What's your mom's name and her doctor's name? “What's your mom's date of birth where is she? Who's caring for her? When I explained that Mom is being cared for at home by the family she responded. “Oh, that's going to be a problem! It's a security risk. You can't have any family members with you while you're there.” I said, “Mom can't be left alone. I'll be in shackles!”

Some other sergeants said it's highly unlikely they would let me go to the house. Whether I stole a band aid, murdered someone, or photographed non-violent drone protesters, my transport guards would treat me the same.

Within the jail, there are different security levels designated to us inmates, but it doesn't apply as we leave the prison walls.

This past Friday, Feb. 25, I was surprised by the jail authorities announcing they were taking me to see mom at home! I couldn't believe it! I couldn't tell anyone ahead of time. When the unmarked car pulled up by mom's house Clare, who was

on duty for mom, noticed us and ran in to tell mom, who was in the living room in her hospital bed. When we entered the house Clare was jumping up and down with tears streaming down her cheeks. The two officers informed her that she couldn't call anyone or the half-hour visit would be over. I walked, shackled, wrists to waist and ankles, to be at mom's side, leaning over her to kiss her big smiling face. I told her over and over that I loved her, my tears wetting her soft cheeks. I asked if she was in any pain. "No, I'm not in pain. I'm o.k." She kept smiling and fell asleep. What a precious, blessed moment. Mom slept through the rest of the visit. We left Clare with mom and drove back to Jamesville in brilliant sunshine passing Lake Cayuga in gratitude, marveling at all of creation and in thanksgiving for mom's life.

This situation reminds me of when Peter was in federal prison in Brooklyn. Before the sentencing of the St. Patrick's Four, Peter and Ellen had been caring for his brother, Father Steve DeMott, who died two months after Peter's sentencing.

The prison officials wouldn't allow Peter to come 45 minutes north of New York City to the funeral in Maryknoll, New York. During this Lent we remember Uncle Steve's passing, on March 30, 2006, and all the loving care that fell on Ellen's shoulders till Steve passed.

A few weeks ago, the mother of one of the women in my pod, 19-year-old Clairrissa, died on a Wednesday of a heroin overdose. Clairrissa only learned on Saturday that her mom had died. While shackled and in an empty funeral home she was allowed to spend one half hour with her mom's body. She wasn't allowed to be at the funeral. The New York State Department of Correction rules and regulations state that inmates have the right to both a death bed visit and to be at the funeral dependent upon the discretion of the jail or prison officials.

And who is in prison? The poor! Disproportionately, people of color! Who isn't in jail? You don't see the bankers who pulled

down our economy in 2008! You don't see the mortgage company swindlers who stole millions from poor and hardworking people. You don't see those committing war crimes – those who have killed with drones and Hellfire missiles sent from U.S. air bases, nor those who gave them their orders. You don't see the officials who poisoned the water in Flint, Michigan or the corporate executives who kill people with their unsafe products. You don't see the cops who murder unarmed black men, women, teenagers and children.

Thirdly, on Friday, February 19, my appeal was submitted to the New York State Court of Appeals, the highest court in the state by my attorney Lance Salisbury. Lance also submitted a request that I be released on bail pending the decision on whether the court will take my case. If the court decides in a month that it won't take the case, I return to Jamesville to finish my six months' sentence. I've witnessed many of the women anxiously awaiting court or jail administrators' decisions of whether or not, or when, they'd be released. Going in and out of prisons is not a simple matter. It takes a tremendous amount of energy to get in and get acclimated each time.

The main points of my appeal challenge the validity of the orders of protection that have been given to 50 people, including myself. These orders of protection have been designed to block our First Amendment right; to ask our government to redress our grievance, specifically, to end the killer drone policy, which killed over 6,000 people in 2015 alone. As Colonel Evans, who requested the original 17 orders of protection, including mine, testified during my trial, he just wanted the protesters away from his base.

The appeal contends that you can't ask for an order of protection on behalf of a military base. The order must be given on behalf of a victim or a witness. A separate appeal was submitted by Attorney Kathy Manley on behalf of 13 of us (originally the Hancock 17) addressing the same issues of the

improper application of the orders of protection.

And finally, the *fourth* reason, this day is special is the very good news for both drone resisters and fracktivists that attorney Jonathan Wallace, who has been successfully defending many of the Hancock resisters has now proposed legislation to limit the scope of these orders so they do not apply to peaceful protestors. This legislation would exempt military and corporate personnel in New York State from using the orders of protection to deprive people of their First Amendment rights. The proposed legislation is as follows:

“Nothing herein contained shall be construed to authorize issuance of a temporary order of protection or order of protection, designating as a “victim” or “witness” any federal, state or local government employee (including serving or reserve members of the military or members of any police force), or any corporate employee, against any individual arrested at a demonstration or protest against the employer of such victim or witness, in the absence of an actual or threatened act of physical violence, or a true threat issued, by such individual against such victim or witness.”

We hope to have a New York State legislator to propose this change in the law and a statewide petition for you to sign and circulate encouraging our legislators to support the bill when it is ready for a vote.

Again, I'd like to thank all of you who've sent great letters and cards lifting my spirits each morning. Even the guards laugh at some of the jokes you've sent especially Scott Schaeffer Deffy. It is so wonderful to feel the waves of love through your letters, poems, art work, etc. I'm thrilled with great hope when I receive your letters telling me of actions you take for justice's sake combatting the triples of militarism, racism and economic exploitation. My friend Russell Rickford calls these the 3 w's – war, wealth inequality and white supremacy.

I'm especially moved by the love and motivation expressed by young people hearing of my jail witness, like my California friend Sequoia Cohen. Sequoia is a student at Sierra Nevada College in Lake Tahoe where she is organizing 3 events to raise awareness of drone warfare and its consequences. Two whistleblower drone pilots, Cian Westmoreland and Stephen Lewis, have accepted her invitation to speak. Soon after, students and community members will join the "Shut Down Creech Air Force Base" rally, at the base, outside of Las Vegas, Nevada. Since 2005 this facility has been the place from which remotely controlled drones take off on killing missions for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Many of those killed are civilians.

Go Sequoia! This is a fine example of the 3 A's, awareness, acceptance, and action.

On March 30th at the University of Nevada there will be a symposium titled "**Inside Drone Warfare: Perspectives of Whistleblowers, Families of Drone Victims and Their Lawyers.**" The participants will also go to Creech Air Force base to join the protest there. For more information go to <http://www.knowdrones.com/>.

You are invited to be part of the Creech AFB protest, joining with peace activists from the Northeast, including a number from the Syracuse area.

I send you my greetings and thanks to you all and to the ever widening awareness and embracing of the beloved community.

Not by might

Nor by power

But by spirit

Mary Anne

To make a donation

–Checks are preferred. Please make them out to the Ithaca Catholic Worker, 514 North Plain Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Put Mary Anne Grady Flores in the memo line.

–Donations will be accepted at the GoFundMe page: <https://www.gofundme.com/bjmk9gf8>. They take 5% of the donation.

To write to Mary Anne

–Put your return address in the body of your letter or in your card; envelopes are removed before Mary Anne receives correspondence.

–Please don't send cards with glitter or stick ons.

–Send letters to:

Mary Anne Grady Flores #12001966
Onondaga County Department of Correction
PO Box 143
Jamesville, NY 13078

Please Get Involved in the Resistance to Drones:

Grandma Drone Resister's

Letter from Jail

**Ithaca Catholic Worker Mary Anne Grady Flores' first letter,
Feb.11, 2016**

Greetings, Dear Friends—

Joy swept through our cell block, Jamesville County Jail, Pod 4, Thursday, January 28.

That evening some of the fifty-nine women in our Pod rushed up and knocked on my cell door. They reported the six o'clock news had shown twelve drone resisters handcuffed, sitting on a roadside curb, waiting to be taken into custody.

I just started my six-month sentence on January 19, for photographing protesters of the drone warfare directed out of Hancock Air Base in nearby Syracuse, New York. These eight protesters, many of whom are Catholic Workers, were later acquitted. (See my January 19 press conference [statement](#).)

The resisters had fastened together thirty larger-than-life cut-out photos of the late Jerry Berrigan, standing bold in a blue scarf. This line of cut-outs of Jerry was held by the twelve resisters, blockading the main gate at Hancock Air Base, where Jerry had protested for years on a bi-weekly basis.

Shortly before he died at 95 last year, Jerry was asked during a *Syracuse Post-Standard* news interview what he would have done differently. He said: "I would have resisted more and gotten arrested more."

"The Jerry Berrigan Memorial Drone Blockade" was done to honor Jerry's wishes. It was to protest the ongoing 24-7 drone assassinations initiated by drone operators at Hancock as part of the Obama administration's "kill chain."

Hancock is presently only one of twenty U.S. drone-warfare

bases across the U.S., Germany and the U.K. The [“Drone Papers”](#)—leaked by an internal military whistleblower—confirm what whistle-blower drone pilots as well as drone victims have reported: The outrageous fact that 90% of all drone victims are bystanders, among them, many children.

That day my friend Carissa from Pod 4 returned excited from the downtown Syracuse “Justice” Center (Jail) because there she ‘d met the four drone protester women—Beth Adams, Joan Pleune, Bev Rice, Joan Wages—who were among the twelve at the “Jerry” action.

Carissa learned that Joan and Bev had knowingly violated the same order of protection that fifty other drone protesters have. I had unintentionally violated it, landing me in jail for six months.

The “order of protection” has been issued on behalf of the commander of Hancock Air Base against drone protesters. Usually such orders are issued to protect people from physical violence and even death from their abusive domestic partners.

Currently “protected” by the order is the commander in charge of Hancock Air Base and its 2,000 personnel and armed soldiers—making him the “victim” instead of the real victims, the many people killed by the base’s MQ9 Reaper drones, firing “Hellfire” missiles.

The base commander, testifying at my trial, said: “No, I don’t know Mary Anne Grady. No, I’ve never had a conversation with her. I’m not afraid of her. *That’s* just a piece of paper. I just want these protesters away from my base.”

Carissa told me: “You folks should be protesting in the courts for the misuse of the order of protection. I’d go with you to protest.” That sentiment has been echoed by others here in the pod.

In fact, a team of attorneys is finalizing the points of

appeal of my case to the New York State Court of Appeals, to challenge the use of the order of protection. This is the highest court in New York State. The appeal decision will set a precedent for upcoming cases of anyone else charged with violating the order of protection.

Joan and Bev are willing to risk long jail sentences to fight the drones and expose the absurdity of this use of orders of protection. Joan has been part of resistance movements since the Freedom Rides challenged racist segregation during the Civil Rights era.

In a previous drone protest, [Catholic Worker](#) Mark Colville and two Yale Divinity students brought a bouquet of roses and the People's Order of Protection on behalf of drone victims to the Hancock's main entrance. The People's Order reads in part: "Stop the terrorizing, menacing, maiming and killing of the children, women, and men of Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen."

Raz Mohammad of Maidan Shahr, Afghanistan, and a friend of drone resisters locally, requested an order of protection on behalf of his village after his brother-in-law was killed by a drone. Raz wrote: "When my nephew was 5 years old, he asked his mother "Where is father?" My sister replied, "He was killed by a computer." [Drones are piloted by people sitting at computers]. These negative effects persist on all of us to this day."

This is a critical moment in the six years of Hancock Resistance. Stopping killer drones is our #1 continued focus, no matter what tool is used to try to chill the movement. We must keep our focus on the [voices of the drone victims](#).

I don't ask for pardon, nor do my fellow drone resisters, because as people of conscience we must speak out, as Jerry did, to stop the death-dealing by our government and military. It is our first amendment right to stand at the gate of

Hancock Air Base, asking our government for redress of our grievances, specifically, to end this killer-drone policy, which in 2015 alone killed over six thousand people.

Immediately after the Paris attacks, the [four whistleblower drone pilots](#), sent a letter of criticism to President Obama, defense secretary Ashton Carter and CIA chief John Brennan. In part, [their letter](#) said: “We came to the realization that the innocent civilians we were killing only fueled the feelings of hatred that ignited terrorism and groups like Isis, while also serving as a fundamental recruitment tool, similar to Guantánamo Bay. This administration and its predecessors have built a drone program that is one of the most devastating driving forces for terrorism and destabilization around the world.”

I am filled with gratitude that the local resistance continues, joining drone resistance around the world, We here in Central New York have had 172 arrests since 2010 and over 1000 people have protested and vigiled at Hancock Air Base. I affirm the statement of “[The Jerry Berrigan Memorial Drone Blockade](#).”

From my jail cell, I invite us all to take a step beyond our comfort zones into deeper solidarity with all those struggling for justice, including the Black Lives Matter movement, ending climate change, ending immigrant deportations and the Free Palestine movement. Keep in mind the drone killing is only one tool to keep the people here at home and around the world under U.S. control. We must reject the death dealings of empire, and are called to celebrate love, life and creativity, seeking to live nonviolently. As [Cornel West](#) says, “Justice is what love looks like in public.”

Many thanks to all of you who have written to me in jail, sending poems, articles, artwork and jokes, bringing light and laughter to me and the women here. Thanks for your photos and reports of your anti drone witnesses! Thanks to all the vets

old and young sending me letters of their peace witnesses. Thanks for the MLK quotes and others and your own as well. I'm a slow writer, so forgive me if I don't get back to you. Each of your letters (except the ones held back) are read and treasured.

Thanks to folks bringing meals to Mom. I know many of you have written to me at my home and I look forward to reading your cards when I return. Also thanks to folks who have generously donated towards my home and jail expenses and Mom's care. Thank you for those gifts. I'm feeling so much gratitude for all that you have showered upon me.

I am warm. I am fed. I have good people around me. I'm so grateful for all your prayers and thoughts. I feel so lifted by you and God's grace. I hold you in my thoughts and prayers.

I'll be sending more letters, please keep an eye out for them
In gratitude,
Mary Anne Grady Flores

Please Get Involved in the Resistance to Drones:

For information on how to get involved, please refer to upstatedroneaction.org and [knowdrones](http://knowdrones.com).

Watch the film [Unmanned: America's Drone Wars](#) and share it with your friends.

View a short video on [Drones of Upstate New York](#) (English, with Spanish subtitles)

March 30, 2016 Symposium in Nevada : [Inside Drone Warfare: Perspectives of Whistleblowers, Families of Drone Victims and Their Lawyers.](#) This will be videotaped and is part of [Shut Down Creech Air Force Base](#) (March 27-April 2)

Get involved with ongoing drone resistance at these following air bases:

- Beale (outside Marysville, California), [Occupy Beale](#)
- Creech (Indian Springs, Nevada), [Shut Down Creech!](#)
- Hancock (outside Syracuse, NY), [Syracuse Peace Council](#) and [Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars](#)
- Horsham (Horsham, Pennsylvania), [Brandywine Peace Community](#)
- Niagara Falls (Niagara Falls, NY), [No Drones Niagara](#) and [Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars](#)
- Volk (Camp Douglas, Wisconsin), [Wisconsin Coalition to Ground the Drones](#)

Start resisting drones at these following air bases:

–Arizona Air National Guard; Cannon (New Mexico); California ANG; Davis-Monthan (Arizona); Ellsworth (South Dakota); Grand Forks (North Dakota); Holloman (New Mexico); Nellis (Nevada); Ohio ANG; Hickam (Hawaii); Randolph (Texas); Tennessee ANG; Texas ANG; Whiteman (Missouri); also RAF Waddington (United Kingdom), and Ramstein (Germany); and—with plans for 110 new bases throughout the U.S.—more, coming to a neighborhood near you.

Join a few friends, and come out to your town's busy corner holding signs like "Stop Killer Drones" or whatever message you want to end the wars. (Ithaca's route 13 bridge has 39,000 cars which pass daily. Our local vigil is Saturdays from 10-11am).

More suggestions will be included in upcoming letters.

For Jail Correspondence:

- Put your return address in the body of your letter or in your card; envelopes are removed before Mary Anne receives correspondence.

- Please don't send cards with glitter or stick ons.
- Send letters to:

Mary Anne Grady Flores #12001966
Onondaga County Department of Correction
PO Box 143
Jamesville, NY 13078

To make a donation:

- Checks are preferred. Please make them out to the Ithaca Catholic Worker, 514 North Plain Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Put Mary Anne Grady Flores in the memo line.
- Donations will be accepted at the [Go Fund Me Page](#) (they take 5%)

To Hancock Reaper Drone Workers

HANCOCK REAPER DRONE WORKERS: HONOR YOUR OATH

To the men and women of the 174th Attack Wing of the NYS National Guard:

Each of you, when you joined the United States Armed Forces raised your right hand and solemnly swore to uphold the United States Constitution. Article VI of that Constitution states:

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

This clause is known as the Supremacy Clause. The Supremacy Clause declares that when the U.S. ratifies international treaties, those treaties become the “supreme law of the land.” This means they trump all local and federal law – including the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice.

One such treaty is the United Nations Charter. Signed by the U.S. president in 1945 and ratified by a Senate vote of 89 to two, that Charter remains in effect today.

The Charter’s Preamble states that its purpose is to “save future generations from the scourge of war.” It further states, “all nations shall refrain from the use of force against another nation.”

This U.N. Treaty applies to all levels – federal, state, and local – of the three branches of our government – Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The personnel of all these entities must act consistent with U.S. treaties and obey the U.S. Constitution, including Article VI.

Under the U.N. Charter and under long-established international law, anyone – civilian, military, government official or judge – who knowingly participates in or supports illegal threat or use of force against another nation or its people is committing a war crime.

Men and women on duty at Hancock AFB: Four of your colleagues, veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, formerly operating weaponized drones at other U.S. bases, have – courageously – gone public about drone war crimes they acknowledge committing.

The 174th Attack Wing of the NY Air National Guard deploys hunter/killer Reaper drones 24/7 over Afghanistan and probably elsewhere. These weaponized robotic drones are instruments of terror. They perpetrate extrajudicial killings, violate due process, violate national sovereignty, and kill non-combatants

and civilians. They bring dishonor on the United States and upon its armed services.

Under the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice you must not be complicit in these crimes against peace, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In fact, you are required to disobey unlawful orders from a superior.

Those protesting here today are exercising our First Amendment right to petition our government for a redress of grievances (the vile use of our tax money). We urge you to do the honorable thing. We urge you to heed your conscience.

From the Upstate Drone Action Coalition: Ground the Drones and End the Wars, 28 January 2016

[PDF](#)

Press Conference: Grandma Drone Resister Goes to Jail

A press conference was held for Mary Anne Grady Flores at 4:30 on Tuesday, Jan 19 before she was taken away to serve her six month sentence in the Jamesville Correctional Facility.

Mary Anne is a life long activist, mother and grandmother and daughter, proprietor of a small Latino catering business in Ithaca, NY. During her absence, Mary Anne will be will be greatly missed her family, and most likely some hungry customers as well. But, Mary Anne would prefer to draw your attention to the victims of targeted killing in the Middle East and Africa, who receive death sentences from the US drone program without a trial or even, in many cases, evidence of criminal activity.

What follows are some of the high points of the press conference.

Ann Wright Calls in:

Mary Anne Grady Flores speaks:

Attorney Lance Salisbury, on Mary Anne Grady Flores' appeal and jailing:

Drone Pilots Open Letter, Telling the Truth

Drone Pilots' Open Letter to President Obama, Ash Carter and John Brennan

To:

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Secretary Ashton B. Carter
Department of Defense

Director John O. Brennan
Central Intelligence Agency

November 18, 2015

Dear President Obama, Secretary Carter and Director Brennan:

We are former Air Force service members. We joined the Air Force to protect American lives and to protect our Constitution. We came to the realization that the innocent civilians we were killing only fueled the feelings of hatred that ignited terrorism and groups like ISIS, while also serving as a fundamental recruitment tool similar to Guantanamo Bay. This administration and its predecessors have built a drone program that is one of the most devastating driving forces for terrorism and destabilization around the world.

When the guilt of our roles in facilitating this systematic loss of innocent life became too much, all of us succumbed to PTSD. We were cut loose by the same government we gave so much to sent out in the world without adequate medical care, reliable public health services, or necessary benefits. Some of us are now homeless. Others of us barely make it.

We witnessed gross waste, mismanagement, abuses of power, and our country's leaders lying publicly about the effectiveness of the drone program. We cannot sit silently by and witness tragedies like the attacks in Paris, knowing the devastating effects the drone program has overseas and at home. Such silence would violate the very oaths we took to support and defend the Constitution.

We request that you consider our perspective, though perhaps that request is in vain given the unprecedented prosecution of truth-tellers who came before us like Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange, and Edward Snowden. For the sake of this country, we hope it is otherwise.

Sincerely,

Brandon Bryant
Staff Sergeant
MQ1B Predator Sensor Operator
SERE Instructor Trainee

USAF Joint Special Operations Command
3rd Special Operations Squadron
Disabled Iraq and Afghanistan Veteran
Founder of [Project RED HAND](#)

Cian Westmoreland
Senior Airman
RF Transmissions Systems
USAF CENTCOM
73rd Expeditionary Air Control Squadron
Disabled Afghanistan Veteran
[Project RED HAND](#)'s Sustainable
Technology Director

Stephen Lewis
Senior Airman
MQ1B Predator Sensor Operator
USAF Joint Special Operations Command
3rd Special Operations Squadron
Iraq and Afghanistan Veteran

Michael Haas
Senior Airman
MQ1B Predator Sensor Operator Instructor
USAF Air Combat Command
15th Reconnaissance Squadron
Iraq and Afghanistan Veteran

Col Ann Wright Addresses Col. Evans' OOP

Colonel Ann Wright's Statement 1-19-16

As Grandmother Mary Ann Grady Flores is taken to jail today for violating an "Order of Protection" requested by the Commander of the U.S. National Guard Hancock Drone base, Syracuse, NY, I, as a retired U.S. Army Colonel with 29 years in the US military find it quite embarrassing and ludicrous that a U.S. military commander decided that his personal security so threatened by peaceful, non-violent protesters of the drone policies of the United States that he applied for an "Order of Protection" from the courts—and that the courts issued the "Order" without any evidence that any protester had ever even seen the Commander, much less constituted a threat to him.

I would have expected a U.S. military commander to have had the courage to meet with the group of concerned citizens rather than obtaining a cowardly "Order of Protection." Had I been the commander, I certainly would have met with the citizens and would never have contemplated getting an "Order of Protection."

I have just returned from South Korea and Okinawa where citizen protesters daily block gates to military bases where highly contentious runways and ports are being built. Each day police remove non-violent protesters from the gates, but they have never been prohibited from exercising their rights to protest, a right that is under siege by the military and the courts in Syracuse, New York.

As further evidence of how contorted the law enforcement and judicial process in the U.S. is about protests, while armed, white militia hold a federal wildlife reserve in Oregon in protest of the government having too much land and are not even arrested, Mary Ann Grady Flores, a peaceful grandmother who stepped on a double line and therefore violated an "Order of Protection" is going to jail for six months.

The actions by the U.S. military at Hancock drone base and the town courts of DeWitt, New York are blatant measures taken

unconstitutionally to silence dissent against the assassin drone weapons policy and intimidate protesters. They both should be ashamed.

Ann Wright

US Army Colonel (retired)

Peace Not War

Peace is the Way

Guest post by Rob Mulford, cross-posted from the [News-Miner Community Perspective](#)

The Daily News Miner of Interior Alaska, Jan 3, 2016

Editor's note: Some of us met Rob in Pakistan where we both participated in a peace delegation which took us into Waziristan and gave us an opportunity to talk to people from different segments of society in Pakistan. Rob has been watching the growth of the drone program in Alaska, and his initiative to infiltrate the planning has resulted in an inside perspective on the overweening hubris behind US militarism and the imperialist drive to rule the world.

What our Leaders are Saying

On Nov. 15, the News-Miner quoted Alaska Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan as well as former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton regarding the recent "terror" attacks in

Paris.

“The truth is... they hate us for who we are, what we stand for. Democracy, religious freedom, tolerance, equality... What we need to do is ... take the fight to them, so they don't show up on our shores.” – Senator Dan Sullivan

“The desire of radical Islam to attack our nation remains ever so present. This is not the time to reduce investment in our national security, whether abroad or here in the homeland.” – Senator Lisa Murkowski

“This election is not only about electing a president, it's about choosing our next commander in chief. All the other issues we want to deal with depend on us being secure and strong. We are at war with violent extremism.” – Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

An Inside View of the Military Planners



In December 2011, I attended the Institute for Defense and Government Advancement (IDGA) Special Operations Summit in Tampa, Florida, a yearly event held for the military, private contractors and government agencies involved intelligence and special operations. I did this surreptitiously as a control systems integrator. The conference forbade members of the press from attending, and we were assured that no one was recording the sessions so the attendees were free to

openly discuss their clandestine programs.

One of the presentations, covering the technology end of the summit's focus, Human Geography, included PowerPoint slides depicting automated models of human communities. These models look somewhat like organic molecules. I learned that

individual atoms in the models represent actual individual human beings, although dehumanized by reclassification as agents. Clusters of atoms represented actual groups of human beings such as villages, tribes, families, professional associations, businesses and religious groups. Each agent and cluster had associated with it data, both historical and dynamic, of that particular object's cultural, religious, economic, political and military characteristics. The interconnecting lines represented interrelationships between the various objects. Near real-time dynamic data driving these models was supplied by: "human intelligence" like that gathered by Human Terrain Systems field teams; signals intelligence coming from sources like the monitoring of cell phone traffic and drone sensors.

This technology, known as Dynamic Network Analysis, is one of the instruments used to generate drone targets. The people that do this they call "human geographers" and "targeters." I receive several help-wanted ads every week from companies looking to fill these positions.

During the session's discussion period, one of the special operators said the term "high value target" is generally misconceived to mean a leader of a terrorist cell or someone responsible for acts of terror. He said, "If we take out a leader, they just replace him in short order." He explained they found it much more useful to use the models to find inter tribal and inter familial connections, like those made by marriage. He said when we take out one of these connections, it disrupts their network (i.e. inter-tribal and inter-familial relations) and has more tactical value. He explained that they were using this method presently to target the Haqqani (tribal) network in Pakistan.

Meeting the Victims

In the fall of 2012, I had the honor and privilege to be a member of a Code Pink peace delegation, invited to Pakistan by

Pakistani human rights attorney Shahzad Akbar, to witness the devastation caused by U.S. drone warfare there.

One of the highlights of our visit was an 11-hour caravan to Waziristan. En route we stopped at many villages where we were greeted by crowds of Pakistanis, most in their youth, returning our peace sign salutes in kind. When we reached Dera Ismail Khan, in Pakistan's Federally Administrated Tribal Area it was glowing in the moonlight. Once again crowds of youth lined the street. I placed my hands on the window of the bus. A Pakistani placed his opposite mine. Soon the bus was rocking from others on the bus and in the crowd sharing this loving expression. The next morning we joined thousands of Pakistanis on a farm near the village of Tank chanting, "We want peace". My tears welled.

If we symptomatically diagnose "their" reaction to "their" pain, how can we in all honesty claim, "They hate us for who we are", if our actions toward "them" have indeed been guided by, "Democracy, religious freedom, tolerance, equality"? To do so defies logic as well as common decency.

Peace Not War

US "investment" in military solutions from 2001 to the present total more than \$8.7 trillion. The world is no less broken today. If your car were malfunctioning, how long would you go on paying a mechanic to beat it with a sledgehammer, 14 years plus? The world "invested" more than 75 million lives in World War II. That's the equivalent to 40,000 violent deaths per day for five years. Do we really want to go there again? Are these, in themselves, not examples of violent extremism?

I believe that we can do very well without a commander in chief. After all, the Department of Defense is no older than I am. We cannot, however, even begin to address those issues that we need to deal with, like global climate change, while we remain on this deathly path. Let's begin forging swords

into ploughshares by demilitarizing our local economy. As the ever spiritually mindful A. J. Muste said, "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way."

Rob Mulford is an Interior resident and peace activist.

Kiiller Drones: 2015

Guest Post by Charles Piers0n; Originally published on Counterpunch.org, January 1 2016 as 'The Year in Drones, 2015'

2015 was another glorious, blood-soaked year for US killer drones.

One story began in 2014, but it was not until 2015 that we knew how it ended. In February 2014, the Associated Press reported that the Obama Administration was contemplating a drone strike on a US citizen, an al-Qaeda member living in Pakistan and known by the *nom de guerre* Abdullah al-Shami (Abdullah the Syrian). Al-Shami had been born in Texas, but had not been in the United States since he was a toddler.

We did not hear of Al-Shami again until the following April. Al-Shami still lived but had been captured by Pakistani security forces and turned over to the United States. In April, al-Shami (now identified by his real name, Mohanad Mahmoud Al Farekh) was arraigned on terrorism charges in federal court in Brooklyn.

Other US citizens have been less fortunate than Al Farekh. On January 14, a 73 year old aid worker, Warren Weinstein, was killed in a US drone strike on an Al-Qaeda compound in Pakistan. His family had been trying to negotiate ransom for

Weinstein who had been abducted from his home in Lahore in 2011. Also killed in the strike were an Italian aid worker, Giovanni Lo Porto, and an American member of al-Qaeda, Ahmed Farouq.

Eight US citizens have been killed in US drone strikes. The best known is Anwar al-Awlaki, a US-born high-profile al-Qaeda spokesman. Al-Awlaki was killed by a US drone in Yemen on September 30, 2011. Al-Awlaki's 16-year old son, Abdulrahman, was killed in a separate drone attack a month later. All other US citizens killed by drones have been members of Al-Qaeda. Al-Shami's tale proves that the Obama Administration continues to be willing to execute Americans without due process of law.

Proliferation

Israel is the world's number one exporter of drones, followed by the US, then China. (US companies sell more drones than does Israel, but Israel exports more.) Israeli and Chinese success is due to US restrictions on selling drones abroad. Export restrictions mean that US drone manufacturers have to sell most of their armed drones to just one customer: the Pentagon.

On February 17, the Obama Administration announced that it was easing restrictions on the sale of US-manufactured drones abroad. Prior to this, only the United Kingdom had in 2007 been allowed to purchase armed drones from the United States.

Purchasers must promise to use the drones only in accordance with international law, just like the US does. Purchasers must also promise not to use killer drones against their own people. Ignore these unenforceable restrictions. More encouraging is the fact that it was not until November that the US State Department approved the first sales of killer drones to Italy.[\[1\]](#) Included in the deal are 156 Hellfire missiles. All this for a low, low price of \$126 million.

In the past, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United

Arab Emirates had all asked the US for armed drones. All were rebuffed. Since then, Saudi Arabia has reportedly purchased armed drones from South Africa and China. Turkey announced on December 21 that it had successfully tested an armed drone developed by Turkish defense companies.

Pakistan has developed its own armed drone, the Burraq, which it unveiled in March. By September, the Burraq had tasted blood. Pakistan's military announced on September 7 that the Burraq had taken out three Islamist militants in Pakistan's tribal areas.

Pakistan joins a short but growing list of nations which not only possess armed drones but have killed with them. The US is in the forefront. Britain has made drone kills in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq has killed ISIS fighters with the Chinese-manufactured CH-4B "Rainbow" armed drone. Israel has used armed drones against Gaza. Hamas claims that it possesses armed drones, although what Hamas has displayed in videos may not be a drone, but rather a small single-use missile which can only be controlled while within the operator's line of sight. Iran's so-called "suicide" or "kamikaze" drones are similar. Iran, however, also has developed an armed drone similar to the Predator or Reaper which it calls the "Ambassador of Death." You have to hand it to the mullahs: we may not like them, but they do have a flair for the dramatic.

The race for killer drones is on!

"The entire program was diseased"

In 2015, *The Intercept* broke two important stories on drones. In February, [Jeremy Scahill](#) reported on the US base in Ramstein, Germany. Leaked US slides and their confidential source confirmed what had long been suspected: that Ramstein Air Base is the global hub for relaying signals which allow pilots in the United States to control US drones in South and Central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula and Africa. The slides put

the lie to US and German attempts to minimize Ramstein's crucial importance to the drone war. The slides raise the possibility of US personnel at Ramstein facing prosecution under German law for assisting drone assassinations in violation of international law.[\[2\]](#)

Then in October, *The Intercept* published [The Drone Papers](#): a series of classified documents on the US government's drone assassination program. *The Drone Papers* were leaked to *The Intercept* by an unidentified source inside the intelligence community who is being called the new Edward Snowden. The new source can look forward to getting his face on the cover of *Time* and his ass in a prison cell—that is, unless he gets out of the US before the Obama Administration finds out who he is.

The Drone Papers confirm every horrifying thing we have learned about drones' indiscriminate killing. For every intended target, about six unintended targets are killed. Civilians killed by American drones are counted as enemies killed in action (EKIA), unless they are subsequently proven *not* to be militants. Internal criticism of the drone program is rife. Insiders say that drones are successful only at boosting terrorist recruitment.

Four other whistleblowers—former drone operators in the US Air Force—went public in an [open letter](#) to President Obama in November. The four lashed out at the drone program's callous disregard for human life. Drone operators call children “fun-size terrorists” and refer to killing children as cutting the lawn before the grass gets high. One of the whistleblowers, former Staff Sergeant Brandon Bryant has said: “We killed people who we really didn't know who they were, and there was no oversight.”

True that. After Warren Weinstein was killed the *New York Times* ran this headline: “Drone Strikes Reveal Uncomfortable Truth: *U.S. Is Often Unsure about Who Will Die.*” “The entire program was diseased,” Bryant says. For speaking out, Sgt.

Bryant and his colleagues have had their bank accounts and their credit cards frozen.

Perhaps the most appalling revelation in *The Drone Papers* was that during one five-month period in Afghanistan 90% of drone victims were not the intended target. The civilian death toll is not always that high, but it is high enough. An op-ed in the July 14 *New York Times* gives these figures:

In 646 probable drone strikes in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen recorded by the [British NGO] Bureau of Investigative Journalism, as many as 1,128 civilians, including 225 children, were killed—22 percent of deaths. The New America Foundation's estimates are lower, but suggest a civilian death rate of about 10 percent. [\[3\]](#)

US killer drones have taken lives in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Libya, and Somalia, Syria, and the Philippines. US drone strikes on Yemen have continued even during the country's civil war, providing de facto assistance to Saudi Arabia's criminal aggression in bombing Yemen.

Drone missions take their toll on those drone operators who still have a conscience. Substance abuse is common. So are burnout and PTSD. "Guilt-ridden American drone pilots continue to quit in unprecedented numbers," according to RT, the Russian news service. Yet the Obama Administration wants to increase daily drone flights by 50% over the next four years. Good luck finding enough pilots.

Other veterans are also speaking out. In June, forty-four veterans representing each of the four service branches with ranks from private to colonel signed a letter urging armed forces members to refuse to fly drone missions. The "Refuse to Fly" campaign is also running a series of fifteen-second anti-drone TV [ads](#). The ads show graphic scenes of death and destruction taken from Madiha Tahir's documentary [Wounds of Waziristan](#) about Pakistanis killed by US drones. Each ad ends

with a voice urging drone operators to “refuse to fly.”

According to a poll conducted in May by the Pew Research Center, 58% of Americans support US drone strikes. The same poll shows that one-third (35%) of Americans disapprove of drone strikes, up from 26% two years ago. Americans need to learn the truth about drones. Yet coverage of *The Drone Papers* and the four whistleblowers in the mainstream media has been spotty to nil. The word needs to go out if there is to be the sort of public pressure that it will take to ground the drones.

Notes.

[1] Italy already owns the unarmed version of the MQ-1 Reaper. Under the November deal, Italy will receive kits to convert its unarmed MQ-1 Reapers to armed drones. The Italians will assemble the drones themselves, not unlike buying killer drones from IKEA.

[2] In October 2014, human rights groups brought a civil lawsuit in Germany to force the German government to end drone strikes directed from its territory. The suit was brought on behalf of Yemeni victims of US drone strikes. The suit was dismissed on May 27, 2015. The claimants have appealed.

[3] Pratap Chatterjee, [*Our Drone War Burnout*](#), N.Y. TIMES (July 14, 2015). Regularly updated spread sheets showing US drone kills by country for Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and Afghanistan can be found on the Bureau of Investigative Journalism's [website](#).

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