

# Veterans and Activists Arrested Protesting Drone Terror at Creech AFB

## Veterans and Activists Arrested Protesting Drone Terror at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada

**Veterans For Peace national President Barry Ladendorf, Board member Tarak Kauff, and Advisory Board member Ann Wright** were among eight peace activists who were arrested early Thursday morning, after physically blocking the main gate to Creech Air Force Base near Las Vegas, Nevada.

**Also arrested were VFP members Barry Binks (long time, often arrested drone protester),** Ken Mayers, Chris Kundson and Leslie Harris, along with Joan Pleume of the New York Granny Peace Brigade.

**Drone pilots based at Creech AFB, directed by the CIA and the Pentagon,** regularly carry out drone strikes against targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan, killing many civilians and terrorizing the population.

***A larger civil disobedience action is planned for Friday.***

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March 31, 2016 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Military Veterans Arrested at Creech Air Force Base Trying to Stop Drone Warfare**

Indian Springs, NV – During peak rush hour traffic on Thursday March 31st at Creech AFB, military veterans and friends were

arrested while waving Veterans for Peace (VFP) flags and nonviolently blocking traffic at the East Gate on Hwy. 95, the primary commuter gate into the base. As the traffic was impeded, Las Vegas Police diverted cars up the highway to less used, alternative gates.

At the same time, 20 people held vigil between the frontage road and US Highway 95 as four other peace and justice activists greeted the diverted traffic with a second peaceful anti-drone blockade expressed as a sitting silent meditation in front of the second gate.

The arrests at 7:50 AM today were part of a week-long orchestrated effort by over 100 activists from over 20 states in the country, mobilized to oppose the U.S. drone program that uses remotely controlled planes controlled at Creech to indiscriminately drop missiles on some of the most vulnerable populations in the world. Thursday's traffic was delayed for fifteen minutes, as Creech employees and contractors were diverted to the 2nd gate, and then to the 3rd gate once demonstrators blocked the 2nd gate. The prayer-activists at the 2nd gate were not arrested.

This was the first of several civil resistance actions planned during the week-long National Mass Mobilization against Drone Warfare known as SHUT DOWN CREECH. All of the demonstrators who were arrested were taken to the Las Vegas Metropolitan County Jail.

Meanwhile the remaining activists at "Camp Justice" across from the base continue the regular schedule of nonviolence training and strategy sessions for creative and nonviolent ways to stop the illegal assassination program at Creech Air Force Base for as long as possible.

The 8 activists arrested were:

Barry Binks, VFP, California  
Leslie Harris, VFP, Texas

Tarak Kauff, VFP, New York  
Chris Knudsen, VFP, CA, California  
Barry Ladendorf, VFP, California  
Ken Mayers, VFP, New Mexico  
Joan Pleune, NY Granny Peace Brigade, New York Col.  
Ann Wright, VFP and retired 29 year army veteran, and former  
U.S. diplomat, Hawaii

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## [Dorothy Day Archivist Found Guilty of Trespassing in Wisconsin](#)

**Phil Runkel, Dorothy Day Archivist and Activist, Found Guilty of Trespassing in Wisconsin**

By Joy First

On Friday February 19 Phil Runkel was found guilty of trespassing in Juneau County, WI by Judge Paul Curran after a 22 minute trial. Phil had joined nine other activists in attempting to walk onto the Volk Field Air National Guard base and meet with the commander to share our concerns about the training of drone pilots that takes place there.



District Attorney Mike Solovey followed his standard procedure of calling Sheriff Brent Oleson and Deputy Thomas Mueller to the stand and identifying Phil as one of the people who walked onto the base on August 25, 2015 and refused to leave.

Phil cross-examined Sheriff Oleson asking him about the purpose of the space between the gates and guard house. Oleson

responded that the space was used so that cars waiting to enter the base didn't back up onto the county highway. Phil asked when it was legal to be in that area, and Oleson responded that it was when you are given permission. But that isn't true. Cars drive through the gates and about a block to the guard house and wait to talk to the guard without getting permission to wait in that space.

Phil asked Oleson if we were asked why we were there so the base officials could determine if we were there for a valid reason, and the sheriff responded that he knew we weren't there for a valid reason.

The state rested their case and Phil told the judge he would like to be sworn in to testify and then give a brief closing statement.

## **Testimony**

Your Honor:

I am employed by Marquette University, where it has been my privilege to have served since 1977 as archivist for the papers of sainthood candidate Dorothy Day. She has often been lauded for her performance of the works of mercy—most recently by Pope Francis—but scorned for her equally steadfast opposition to the works of war. This led to her arrest and imprisonment on three separate occasions for failure to take cover during civil defense drills in the 1950s. I am one of many who have been inspired by her example to seek peace and pursue it.

I respectfully plead not guilty to this charge. Following World War II the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg declared that "*Individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience imposed by the individual State.*" (Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, vol. I, Nürnberg 1947, page 223). This was one of the Nuremberg Principles adopted by

the International Law Commission of the United Nations in 1950 to provide guidelines for determining what constitutes a war crime. These principles are arguably part of customary international law and part of domestic law in the United States under Article VI, paragraph 2 of the US Constitution (175 U.S.677, 700) (1900).

Former US attorney general Ramsey Clark testified under oath, at a trial of drone protesters in Dewitt, NY, that in his legal opinion everyone is obligated under the law to try to stop their government from committing war crimes, crimes against peace and crimes against humanity

([http://www.arlingtonwestsantamonica.org/docs/Testimony\\_of\\_Elliott\\_Adams.pdf](http://www.arlingtonwestsantamonica.org/docs/Testimony_of_Elliott_Adams.pdf)).

I acted out of a conviction that the use of drones for extrajudicial, targeted killing constitutes such a war crime, and I sought to apprise base commander Romuald of this fact. I intended to uphold international law. (As Ms. First noted at her trial last week, Judge Robert Jokl of Dewitt, New York, acquitted five resisters for their action at the Hancock drone base because he was persuadd that they had the same intention.)

Article 6(b) of the Nuremberg Charter defines War Crimes—violations of the laws or customs of war— to include, among other things, murder or ill treatment of civilian population of or in occupied territory. Weaponized drones, assisted by reconnaissance and surveillance drones piloted from bases such as Volk Field, have killed between 2,494-3,994 persons in Pakistan alone since 2004. These include between 423 and 965 civilians and 172-207 children. Another 1,158-1,738 have been injured. This is data compiled by the award-winning Bureau of Investigative Journalism, based in London

(<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones/drones-graphs/>).

According to the legal scholar Matthew Lippman (Nuremberg and American Justice, 5 Notre Dame J.L. Ethics & Pub. Pol'y 951 (1991)). Available at:

<http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndjlepp/vol5/iss4/4>) citizens have "the legal privilege under international law to act in a non-violent proportionate fashion to halt the commission of war crimes. " *He contends that "Nuremberg... serves both as a sword which can be used to prosecute war criminals, and as a shield for those who are compelled to engage in conscientious acts of moral protest against illegal wars and methods of warfare."*

Lippman counters the common admonition for protesters to confine themselves to legally-sanctioned means of dissent, such as lobbying congresspeople. He cites Judge Myron Bright, of the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals. Dissenting in *Kabat*, Judge Bright stated that: "We must recognize that civil disobedience in various forms, used without violent acts against others, is engrained in our society and the moral correctness of political protesters' views has on occasion served to change and better our society."

Examples he gave included the Boston Tea Party, the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and the more recent disobedience of "Jim Crow" laws, such as the lunch-counter sit-ins. *Kabat*, 797 F.2d at 601 *United States v. Kabat*, 797 F.2d 580 (8th Cir. 1986).

To Professor Lippman, "*Today's obscenity may be tomorrow's lyric.*"

I'll conclude, then, with these words from a song many of us know: "*Let there be peace on earth. And let it begin with me.*"

Note that Phil was stopped in the fifth paragraph, giving statistics on the number of people killed by drones, when DA Solovey objected citing relevance and Curran sustained the objection. Phil was not able to complete his statement, but it

is included in this report because he provided valuable information that could be useful in future cases.

Curran asked Phil what his testimony has to do with trespassing and Phil began to talk about why he walked onto the base when the DA interrupted and said there is nothing about intent in the statute. As Phil persisted in trying to explain his actions to the judge, Curran became increasingly agitated and angry. He said he didn't need to be lectured by Phil about Nuremberg.

Phil tried to explain he was acting under the belief that he was obliged to enter the base, and that we are compelled to engage in resistance to illegal warfare. Again, Curran made his same old argument that his court is not going to tell Obama that what he is doing is illegal. That continues to be a false argument that the judge makes in many of our trials.

Phil was very persistent in trying to get his point across and continued to argue his case, but the judge could not hear anything he was saying.

Finally the judge said guilty and \$232 fine. Phil said he wanted to give a closing statement. Curran said it was too late, it was over, and got up and quickly left the courtroom. I am concerned about a judge who refuses to allow a closing statement. Is that legal?

**This is the closing statement Phil would have liked to present.**

I stand with my co-defendants in the conviction that silence in the face of the injustice of the immoral, illegal and counterproductive drone warfare being carried out by our government makes us complicit in these crimes. And I fully endorse and support their testimonies before this court.

In his book *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism*, Rahul Mahajan wrote, *"If terrorism is to be given an unbiased*

*definition, it must involve the killing of noncombatants for political purposes, no matter who does it or what noble goals they proclaim.” I ask your honor to consider which poses the real threat to peace and right order—the actions of groups such as ours, or those of the CIA and other agencies responsible for our drones policy.*

Again, a very disappointing outcome, but Phil reminds us of the importance of what we are doing and why we must continue as he states,

*“I was disappointed, of course, that Judge Curran didn’t allow me to finish my testimony or make a closing statement. But such rulings won’t deter us from continuing to speak our truth to the powers that be.”*

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## **Press Release: Hancock Drone Base Gates Closed, Drones Kill Children**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

**Date:** September 21, 2015

**Contacts:** John Amidon: 518-312-6442

Ellen Grady: 607-279-8303

**Drones Kill Children**

**Hancock Drone Base Gates Closed**

**FIVE ARRESTED HOLDING HUGE “DRONES KILL CHILDREN” BANNERS**



## ACROSS HANCOCK REAPER DRONE BASE MAIN ENTRANCE

This morning, September 21, the U.N.-designated World Day of Peace, five members of the grassroots human rights coalition, Upstate (NY) Drone Action [upstatedroneaction.org], were arrested as they held aloft three large banners together spanning the Hancock's main entrance and exit driveways.

Hancock is on East Molloy Road in the town of DeWitt just north of Syracuse, NY. It hosts the 174<sup>th</sup> Attack Wing of the New York Air National Guard, home of the "hunter/killer" [the Pentagon's phrase] MQ9 Reaper drone.

Reapers are unmanned robotic assassins flying missions 24/7 over Afghanistan and other Islamic nations.

One of those arrested noted,

*"The Reaper not only kills and maims humans, it destroys homes, and displaces and terrorizes whole communities. U.S. taxpayers pay for such terrorism which perpetuates violence and generates enormous ill will against the United States."*

Today's event at Hancock's main gate is only one incident there in Upstate Drone Action's persistent nonviolent campaign to expose the Hancock war crime. Since 2010 there have been over 165 anti-war-crime arrests at the base, resulting in extreme bails, maximum fines, incarcerations, and Orders of Protection...as well as some acquittals.

Those arrested: **Bonny Mahoney, Ed Kinane & Julienne Oldfield** of Syracuse and **Dan Burgevin and James Ricks** of Ithaca. All were detained but released by Onondaga County Sheriffs around noon with appearance tickets charging them with trespass and disorderly conduct. Their court date is 6 p.m., October 14, in the DeWitt (NY) Town Court.

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## **DRONES KILL CHILDREN – DRONES FLY, CHILDREN DIE**

The United Nations General Assembly has declared today, September 21, 2015, as International World Day of Peace. As we stand here at the main gate of Hancock Air Base, its “hunter/killer” MQ9 Reaper Drone arrogantly patrols Afghan skies 24/7—killing innocent children there and likely elsewhere.

We, US citizens and taxpayers, look on with horror at the millions of refugees fleeing airborne terror and are shamed by our unconsented complicity. Too many drone victims are precious and beloved children. We bring their images and their silenced voices to Hancock today.

As members of the Upstate Drone Action Coalition/To Ground the Drones and End the Wars, we come to this War Base—home of the Reaper and the 174th Attack Wing of the NY National Guard—seeking to prevent the murder of these innocents, both on this day and for all days.

Our intent is to uphold law, both domestic and international. Our intent is to bring the images of their victims both to the Hancock chain of command and to the US public.

Specifically, our intent is to day NO to the maiming, murder and terrorizing of children.

Since 2010, this grassroots Coalition has sought to expose state-sponsored drone war crime. This crime is multi-layered. It includes extrajudicial execution/assassination, contempt for due process, the undermining of international law and national sovereignty, the murder of the undeniably innocent—both within and beyond any recognized zone of war.

Unjustified on any level, save “might makes right,” such terrorism prepares fertile ground for perpetual conflict. This

criminality benefits few besides war-profiteering corporations.

To the extent that WE, THE PEOPLE ignore our laws and our Constitution—allowing our government to kill whomever it wants, wherever it wants, however it wants—we make the world less safe for children here and everywhere. We demand that the Hancock chain of command and the United States STOP THE KILLING!

Upstate Drone Action Coalition/  
To Ground the Drones and End the Wars  
Town of Dewitt, New York  
21 September 2015

For more information on the Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the wars can be found at <http://upstatedroneaction.org/>.

Coverage in Syracuse Post Standard:  
[http://www.syracuse.com/crime/index.ssf/2015/09/five\\_anti-drone\\_protesters\\_arrested\\_at\\_hancock\\_airfield.html](http://www.syracuse.com/crime/index.ssf/2015/09/five_anti-drone_protesters_arrested_at_hancock_airfield.html)

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## No Justice for Drone Protesters

**Gagged and Censored:**

**Justice is not Served for Drone Protester in Wisconsin Court**  
*by Joy First*

In May of 2014 Bonnie Block and Jim Murphy were arrested at Volk Field, a Wisconsin Air National Guard Base where they train operators to pilot Shadow drones with cameras to do

surveillance and "target acquisition" so that the Predator and Reaper drones (remotely piloted from other US military bases) can drop Hellfire missiles on presumed militants in multiple countries. Bonnie and Jim are both part of the Wisconsin Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars and have been protesting drones at Volk Field every month for more than three years.

Last May Bonnie and Jim went on a bus tour of Volk Field as part of an open house to which the public was invited. When the bus stopped at a museum on the base, they got off and tried to hand out flyers to others who were on the tour. They were told to stop handing out their "propaganda" and leave the base. Since they had come by the tour bus they had no way leaving on their own and yet they were arrested for trespassing and taken to the Juneau County Jail. They were released on bail and the ultimate charge was an ordinance violation of "trespass to land".

In September, Jim was found guilty in a bench trial and ordered to pay a fine.

Bonnie asked for a jury trial and, in response, the Juneau County District Attorney filed a Motion in Limine, asking that Bonnie be prohibited from making "any argument that is known to be false or irrelevant to the issues before the Court" including among other things the policies of the US Government, International laws, the Charter or certain Resolutions of the United Nations, or moral or ethical strictures believed in by the defendant. She was also prohibited from commenting in any way "that her prosecution was a violation of any Constitutional or International Right or privilege." This hearing was on March 3, 2015 in Mauston, WI.

It is common for prosecutors to file a Motion in Limine when a jury will be hearing a case against protesters, and this is something that we must continue to vociferously object to. In

this case, the prosecutor had 25 points listed in his Motion, including 19 that asked the Court to prohibit Bonnie's possible defense in some way. It looked like he used a boilerplate document that was more applicable to a criminal trial and he actually withdrew 8 of them when Bonnie objected. Many of the points were simple procedural issues that Bonnie didn't object to and the judge quickly granted.

Of course, the important matters of the motion revolved around whether Bonnie could raise Constitutional free speech issues or provide any of the reasons she has for opposing drone warfare and handing out a leaflet raising four questions about drones. The judge also forbade Bonnie to make any reference to jury nullification i.e. asking the jury to ignore the facts and nullify the jury instructions in reaching their verdict. He did allow that juries have this right, but Bonnie is not allowed to raise it.

In arguing for her right to speak about drones, the US Constitution, or why she was handing out leaflets, Bonnie said that she needs to be able to tell the whole truth for there to be a fair trial. Otherwise the jury could presume she was on the base for no good reason. Prohibiting this in a pretrial order prevents her from presenting a defense for her action. She argued that the prosecutor can object during the trial if something is improper and the judge can make a ruling at that point. Bonnie said that these pretrial motions are overbroad and will have a chilling effect because she will have to wonder if something inadvertent will result in her being found in contempt.

The judge responded saying that this charge is about trespass and that is all that is going to be tried. Political beliefs are not going to be allowed. If Bonnie talked about drones or international law or the US Constitution, it could mislead the jury. He went on to say that there is no way they will get through the trial without referencing the leaflet that Bonnie and Jim were attempting to distribute, but neither side, nor

any witness, can say anything about the actual content of that leaflet. If these rules are not followed the judge will grant a mistrial and impose sanctions.

Bonnie said that this trial is about a constitutional free speech issue and the jury should be the ones to decide on whether she was trespassing or had a constitutional right to be on the base sharing her literature. The judge responded that deciding about constitutional issues is not up to the jury and Bonnie will not be allowed to bring that up.

Bonnie will now be going to trial on April 1 without being able to offer a strong defense. Her ability to do so has been taken away by the prosecutor and the judge before the trial even begins. This happens so many times in trials for protestors and it is outrageous. We are gagged and then we are censored.

As we consider this grave miscarriage of justice in Wisconsin, we realize it is all part of a bigger system of illegal actions by our government. Our hearts and minds hold the images of the children, the mothers and fathers, the grandparents who have been murdered by US drone strikes, remembering that the training for this program of targeted assassination begins at places like Volk Field, and knowing for certain that the resistance must continue.

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**[Stop U.S. drone warfare now](#)**



An unmanned U.S. Predator drone flies over Kandahar Air Field, southern Afghanistan, on a moon-lit night.(Photo: AP)

**I just spent** two months as a prisoner in Jamesville Penitentiary.

I was jailed for my involvement in an April 28, 2013, solemn funeral procession at Hancock Air Force drone base in Syracuse. I joined 30 others to carry the message to “stop the killing.” Hancock’s 174th Attack Wing of the New York State National Guard flies missiles and drops bombs via satellite from drones thousands of miles from Syracuse. The targets are suspected “terrorists” somewhere in the Middle East.

Stanford University Law School’s International Human Rights Conflict Resolution Clinic and New York University Law School’s Global Justice Clinic, working independently with The Bureau for Independent Journalism, spent years collecting data on U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan. The findings are grim. In their report titled “Living Under Drones,” only 2 percent of the killings have been confirmed “suspected terrorists” by the law schools’ study.

Thousands have been killed, thousands wounded – body parts scattered in cities and countryside by our killer drones. There are no estimates of psychological damage to millions who live under drones 24/7. The killings by American drone

missiles may be the best recruitment tool for more Middle East terrorists.

My "crime" was being a nonviolent messenger outside the main gate to Hancock. I was convicted of trespass and obstructing government administration. I was handcuffed and sent to Jamesville Penitentiary in Syracuse. As the oldest prisoner at Jamesville at 79, I was also the only political prisoner – a prisoner of conscience.

Before my sentence, I was offered a plea bargain: Plead guilty and have all charges dropped, or go to trial and face a year and 15 days in Jamesville Penitentiary. As a former high school teacher of Participation in Government classes, I could not say I was guilty of a crime for practicing my First Amendment rights of assembly, speech, press and religion.

Thankfully, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio did not support arresting Wall Street demonstrators during the U.N. Climate Summit in September of this year. "I think the First Amendment is a little more important than traffic," de Blasio said when asked about disruptions caused by the Wall Street demonstration. "The right of people to make their voices heard, regardless of their views, is a fundamental American value, and we'll protect that value."

It should be noted that those of us arrested did not block traffic at Hancock Drone base on April 28, 2013.

The refusal of the DeWitt town court in East Syracuse to recognize First Amendment rights of assembly is akin to the medieval act of killing the messenger of bad news. The insistence of the DeWitt court to collaborate with the military to stop nonviolent protest near the Hancock Attack Wing is in violation of the U.S. Constitution. The DeWitt court order of protection to stay away from the assassination base begs the question: Is there collusion between the DeWitt court and the military to suppress constitutional rights?



Gilroy is a lifetime anti-war activist who has been working with the [Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars](#). He is a resident of Endwell, NY.