

# The Environmental Consequences of the Use of Armed Drones

*It is suspected that a small drone carrying a thermite grenade may have caused a massive arms depot blast near Balakliya, Ukraine in March 2017. The 350 hectare site near Kharkiv is around 100km from the frontline of the conflict in the eastern Donbas area. 20,000 people were evacuated and the blast is likely to have left a significant environmental footprint of heavy metals and energetic materials.*

*by Doug Weir and Elizabeth Minor, Originally published on [Toxic Remnants of War Blog](#)*

To date, debate over the implications of the growing use of armed drones has focused on human rights, on the expansion of the use of force into new contexts, and on the imbalances created by the newfound ability to project violence at a distance. Reaching Critical Will invited Doug Weir and Elizabeth Minor to consider the environmental dimensions of the use of drone warfare for a recent publication '[The humanitarian impact of drones](#)'. They found the literature to be largely absent of considerations over the environmental and derived humanitarian impacts of drone operations, and so this blog, which is excerpted from the report, should be viewed as a starting point for efforts to assess the environmental consequences of the use of armed drones.

In armed conflict, and its aftermath, legal protection for the environment is weak, and systems for accountability and environmental remediation are largely absent. Those protections that do exist have been most clearly articulated in relation to massive levels of environmental harm. They primarily focus on the "natural environment"—without

articulating the linkages between environmental quality and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. However, the risks of the generation of toxic remnants of war—conflict pollution that threatens human and ecosystem health—should be an important consideration in taking steps and measures to progressively limit harm in the use of force.

During the last decade, there has been a renewed effort to clarify and codify the relationship between environmental obligations stemming from international humanitarian law (IHL), international environmental law, and international human rights law, before, during, and after armed conflicts. The topic is currently under consideration by the [International Law Commission](#), and states have expressed their [growing concern](#) over the environmental and derived humanitarian consequences of armed conflict at the UN Environment Assembly.

Obligations to address the environmental legacy of pollution from armed conflicts and military activities have been [proposed](#) by the International Law Commission, and have recently been articulated in the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), adopted in July 2017. These and other initiatives could support the advancement of both law and practice with respect to addressing toxic remnants of war.

The expansion of the use of armed drones by states to conduct airstrikes both within and outside of armed conflict has coincided with this increased interest in enhancing the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts. However, very little research has been undertaken into any possible relationship between the use of armed drones and environmental harm. Whilst not arguing that the environmental impact of armed drones is a central component of the harms that they cause, this short perspective proposes that air strikes conducted from drones could have environmental implications for communities, and that these should be considered in any discussions about the further regulation of

drones. In addressing the problematic aspects or potentials of armed drones as a set of technologies, and current trajectories in their use, states should at least consider that:

- The use of explosive weapons has the capacity to generate toxic remnants. One key concern surrounding armed drones is that these technologies have facilitated the expansion of the types of contexts in which states have been willing to use explosive force deployed from aircraft. If such trajectories are permitted to continue, potential environmental harms risk being seen in a greater variety of contexts;
- The legal standards of armed conflict have been applied in these particular uses of force, though these standards have been widely argued to be the inappropriate framework. With the low standards of environmental protection associated with armed conflict, this could also present risks in terms of greater environmental harm from the use of force; and
- Given the low standards of environmental protection in armed conflict, it should be investigated whether drone technology through its unique characteristics could help facilitate the striking of environmentally risky targets during armed conflicts, and contribute to harmful practices in this way.

Given the lack of research in this area, this blog does not propose definitive conclusions on these points. Rather, it proposes that these are areas where there may be questions and concerns that states and others should be encouraged to consider, as part of any discussion on the broader picture of harm caused by armed drones.

## **Environmental impacts from the use of explosive weapons**

Airstrikes from armed drones typically use [explosive weapons](#).

The use of explosive weapons can produce pollutants that pose risks to human health following their initial impacts, particularly when these weapons are used in populated areas. These toxic remnants—the effects of which are not well documented—may derive from the constituents of munitions[1] or from the destruction of buildings and damage to infrastructure, such as power, water, and sanitation facilities. Whilst potential toxic impacts will be greatest where the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has been widespread and sustained,[2] even limited use (such as individual air strikes) can bring risks to health in communities. As such, the environmental impacts of explosive force are a relevant concern in the context of airstrikes conducted using drones.

Several widely used munitions that states have fired from drones present toxicity concerns, such as Hellfire missiles and GBU-12 and GBU-38 bombs. These contain conventional explosive fills that utilise TNT and RDX. Both explosives are mobile in the environment, meaning that, for example, they can spread from soils into groundwater, and are toxic. The metals dispersed from these munitions are environmentally persistent. Where use is intense or sustained, evidence suggests that these can reach sufficient levels to pose a threat to civilian health.[3] There may also be specific concerns from novel materials that are being used in munitions deployed from drone platforms. For example, Dense Inert Metal Explosive (DIME) munitions, the long-term health impacts of which are unconfirmed, have [reportedly](#) been deployed from drones. A lack of transparency over the deployment of advanced weapons by drones limits efforts to study and assess their potential health and environmental risks from a perspective of limiting harm.

## **Challenging boundaries in the use of force**

The specific capabilities offered by certain drones have been used by some states to facilitate an expansion in the range of

contexts in which they use explosive force. These states have used drones in a way that pushes at the legal and conceptual boundaries where certain types of violence generally associated with armed conflict are used. The technological features relevant here include the range, persistence, and surveillance capabilities offered by drones, and the ability to use force without physical risk to the attacker. The interplay between the potentials provided by these characteristics, and problematic patterns in use—particularly the killing of those associated with particular groups across borders—provides a basis for international discussion on preventing harm from drones as a specific set of technologies.

As a result of this particular pattern of airstrikes launched from drones, harms to people known to result from the use of explosive force in conflict—including deaths, injuries, psychological impacts, and the destruction of homes—have been documented in novel contexts. This transposition of known impacts in to different situations could also therefore apply to environmental harms. In turn, if some current use of armed drones by states has sought to redefine where particular sets of laws governing the use of force apply, such as the law of armed conflict, this also has clear implications for the protection of the environment.

Along with other impacts, potentials for environmental damage in communities that can affect human health therefore bear consideration in evaluating what the acceptable limits on the use of armed drones by states should be, and for setting standards against the facilitation of expansions in the contexts where certain types of force are used.

## **Environmentally risky targets**

In addressing drones as a development in weapons technology, states should consider which features of systems could facilitate problematic practices or expansions in the use of force, and how the implications of these could be contained.

If one aspect of this is to consider how certain capabilities have enabled expansions in the contexts in which certain forms of force have been used, another may be to consider the potential implications of the enhanced surveillance capabilities offered by drones for facilitating attacks on targets whose destruction carries particularly severe risks of generating conflict pollution. Numerous target types have the potential to harm the environment and human health when damaged or destroyed. These include industrial, petrochemical, or pharmaceutical sites; electricity production or distribution networks; water treatment and distribution facilities; and military bases and ammunition storage areas.

The existing thresholds for what constitutes unacceptable environmental harm under IHL are [widely acknowledged](#) as being both too high, and poorly defined—though the relevant general principles of distinction and proportionality nevertheless apply in the selection of targets and of weapons, as does the principle of precaution. Reliably predicting the outcome of strikes on environmentally risky targets requires advanced knowledge of the design, state, and contents of the facility, and the ability to reliably predict the health and environmental consequences of the damage caused; factors that will be balanced against the military advantage gained from disrupting or destroying it.

While aerial surveillance data may increase the confidence of mission planners, it is unlikely that it would contribute substantially to prior knowledge of the intrinsic risks within a facility or the often unpredictable environmental outcome of its destruction. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that access to enhanced surveillance data could encourage the expansion of strikes against such targets, particularly when combined with precision weapons. This potential risk merits further investigation. In the majority of cases, the weak legal provisions protecting the environment in conflict make it unlikely that the consequences of such actions would breach

existing thresholds—even where contamination creates persistent localised risks to communities and their environment.

The lack of transparency over the use of armed drones in recent conflicts makes it difficult to determine whether access to enhanced surveillance data has facilitated the targeting of environmentally risky civilian and military infrastructure. It has been reported that drones are being used to some extent in strikes on ISIS oil operations in Syria and Iraq by the international coalition for example, [\[5\]](#) but the role and impact of the use of drones in terms of potentially raising—or reducing—environmental risks to local populations in these operations is not clear. Recent [reports](#) of the use of a small drone to destroy an ammunition dump in Ukraine with grenades, which has likely caused extensive environmental contamination, are also relevant to assessing the picture of use against sensitive industrial targets.

In identifying risks and issues, and considering potential restrictions on armed drones, states should also consider therefore whether the technology could help facilitate practices that pose particularly high environmental risks in communities, and seek data on how this and other risks may have played out in practice.

## **Conclusion**

The environmental impacts of the use of force in general, and the use of armed drones in particular, remain under-documented as a form of harm that is relevant to assessing the limits that might be placed on different weapons technologies.

In considering how state violence should be constrained, and the contexts in which certain impacts of violence may be considered permissible or not, environmental effects with implications for human health must however be factored

in—including with respect to armed drones. The lasting environmental impacts and long-term risks to human health from the use of force must, in turn, be curbed through more robust international rules.

*Doug Weir Manages the Toxic Remnants of War Project. Elizabeth Minor is an Adviser at Article 36, a UK-based organisation that works for the development of new policy and legal standards to prevent the unintended, unnecessary or unacceptable harm caused by certain weapons. This chapter first appeared in ‘[The humanitarian impact of drones](#)’, a report published in October 2017 by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Article 36, and the International Disarmament Institute of Pace University*

## References

[1] So far most research into the health risks and environmental fate of the residues from explosive weapons has been restricted to domestic training ranges, and may not be representative of their use in populated areas in conflict and other settings. See for example: Koponen, K, “Development of Guidance Values for Explosive Residues;” and Walsh, et al. “Energetics Residues Deposition from Training with Large Caliber Weapon Systems,” in *European Conference on Defence and the Environment, Proceedings 2015*, [http://www.defmin.fi/files/3353/ECDE\\_Proceedings\\_2015.pdf](http://www.defmin.fi/files/3353/ECDE_Proceedings_2015.pdf).

[2] See for example the UN Environment Programme’s assessment in 2009 of the impact of the Cast Lead offensive in Gaza, which documented dioxins and asbestos in the conflict rubble: “Environmental Assessment of the Areas Disengaged by Israel in the Gaza Strip,” United Nations Environment Programme, 2009, [http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP\\_Gaza\\_web.pdf](http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP_Gaza_web.pdf).

[3] See for example “Lebanon Post-Conflict Environmental



Assessment,” United Nations Environment Programme, 2007, [http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP\\_Lebanon.pdf](http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP_Lebanon.pdf).

[4] See for example Manduca P, Naim A, and Signoriello S, “Specific Association of Teratogen and Toxicant Metals in Hair of Newborns with Congenital Birth Defects of Developmentally Premature Birth in a Cohort of Couples with Documented Parental Exposure to Military Attacks: Observational Study at Al Shifa Hospital, Gaza, Palestine,” *Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2014 11:5208-5223.

[5] See for example, “RAF Tornados launch first strikes against Isis in Syria”, *The Times*, 3 December 2015, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/raf-tornados-launch-first-strikes-against-isis-in-syria-rqppq2qd88m>. Attacks have frequently been carried out by the coalition on facilities for extraction, processing, and transportation—see coalition daily reports archived by Airwars at <https://airwars.org/daily-reports>.

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## People’s Indictment (Update with video)

**FOR WAR CRIMES PERPETRATED BY THE 174TH ATTACK WING  
OF THE NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD AT HANCOCK AIR FORCE BASE,  
SYRACUSE, NY**

*Video recorded by Charley Bowman of Buffalo, NY. Speaking:  
Ed Kinane, Julianne Oldfield, Dan Burgevin.*

Since 2010 the 174th Attack Wing, via satellite, has been remotely piloting weaponized MQ9 Reaper drones over

Afghanistan – perhaps the poorest and most vulnerable nation in the world. U.S. weaponized drones are also known to target people in Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and elsewhere in the Islamic oil lands. Those who participate in these operations may believe they are fighting “terrorism”; in fact they are unwitting cogs in a war – on behalf of corporate profiteers – whose main instrument is terrorism.

The Reaper maims and kills untold numbers of human beings and terrorizes whole communities. Reaper aggression generates both internal and external refugees; generates hatred toward the U.S. (bolstering recruitment for hostile groups); heightens global insecurity as other state and non-state powers join the weaponized drones arm race; and, by blatantly violating such law, undermines both U.S. and international law.

U.S. drone killing violates due process and national sovereignty. It involves intentional, premeditated extrajudicial murder and the massacre of civilians.

These crimes violate Article VI of the United States Constitution: ***“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 of every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or Laws of the U.S., including treaties made under authority of the U.S. shall be the supreme law of the land.”***

One such treaty, since 1945 the supreme law of the United States, is the United Nations Charter. The Charter’s Preamble states that its purpose is to ***“save future generations from the scourge of war ”***. It further states that ***“all nations shall refrain from the use of force against another nation.”*** This Treaty applies to federal, state and local branches of U.S. government as well as to law enforcement and to U.S. Armed Forces personnel – all of whom are sworn to uphold the Constitution.

Since 2010 Upstate Drone Action – impelled by our conscience – has sought to expose Hancock AFB war crimes and to awaken Hancock AFB personnel and their chain of command to their role in perpetrating these crimes. Today, as on many former occasions, we come to Hancock to renew that wake-up call. **People of Hancock: we urge you – we implore you – to stop the killing.**

[UPSTATE DRONE ACTION](#)

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## **Are We the Terrorists?**

Are we the terrorists? This is the subject of Ed Kinane and Dave Kashmer's informative Workshop on Drone Warfare at SUNY Cortland. Students were informed about the actions of military drones around the world then engaged on the subject of 'Are We the Terrorists'. Very interesting result. A good model for introducing the subject to those who have not had an opportunity to see things as we do.

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## **Hancock Litany for Good Friday**

*Written by Jack Gilroy...[www.bensalmon.org](http://www.bensalmon.org)*

# Good Friday Prayer for 174th Attack Wing

Video by *Judy Bello*

Men of the 174th Attack Wing, **Stop the Killing**

Women of the 174th Attack Wing, **Stop the Killing**

Men & Women of the 174th Attack Wing, **Stop Drone Crucifixions**

Men & women of the 174th Attack Wing, **—Leave the Military**

People of Iraq

**Forgive us our Killer Drones**

People of Afghanistan

**Forgive us our Killer Drones**

People of Pakistan

**Forgive us our Killer Drones**

People of Syria

**Forgive us our Killer Drones**

People of Yemen

**Forgive us our Killer Drones**

People of Libya

**Forgive us our Killer Drones**

People of Somalia

**Forgive us our Killer Drones**

People of Gaza

**Forgive us our Killer Drones**

Our Tax Dollars for Death

**Forgive Us**

Slaughtered Native Americans

**Forgive Us**

Teaching Hate

**Forgive Us**

Our Sins against our Black brothers and sisters

**Forgive Us**

Tortured people of the Philippines

**Forgive Us**

United States invasions of Mexico

**Forgive Us**

United States invasions of Haiti

**Forgive Us**

United States invasions of Nicaragua

**Forgive Us**

United States imperialism in Latin America

**Forgive Us**

United States killings in the Great War

**Forgive Us**

60 Million dead in World War II

**Forgive Us**

Calling 60 Million dead a 'Good War'

**Forgive Us**

Believing War can be Just

**Forgive Us**

Christian Churches' Silence in Nazi Germany

**Forgive Us**

German Catholic Bishops' silence

**Forgive Us**

Lutheran Church Silence

**Forgive Us**

Dresden Fire Bombed

**Forgive Us**

Hiroshima Incinerated

**Forgive Us**

Nagasaki Destroyed

**Forgive Us**

Nagasaki Cathedral Ground Zero

**Forgive Us**

All Christian Crews Do Bombing

**Forgive Us**

38,000 Americans Died in World War II

**Forgive Us**

1 Million North Korean Soldiers & Civilians Killed

**Forgive Us**

United States Kills 3 Million Vietnamese

**Forgive Us**

58,000 American Troops Killed in Vietnam

**Forgive Us**

Dow Chemical's Agent Orange Devastates People and Land of Vietnam

**Forgive Us**

American Napalm Burns Vietnamese Children

**Forgive Us**

Trillions Spent on Nuclear Weapons & War Preparation

**Forgive Us**

United States Supports El Salvador Death Camps

## **Forgive Us**

United States CIA Helps Assassinate 250,000 People in Guatamala

## **Forgive Us**

United States Creates a Torture & Assassination School at Fort Benning, GA

## **Forgive Us**

Graduates of the School of the Americas Kill Peasants and Union Leaders

## **Forgive Us**

Graduates of the School of the Americas Kill Priests & Nuns

## **Forgive Us**

US Troops IN 180 Countries Around the World

## **Forgive Us**

US Led Sanctions Kill 500,000 Iraqi Children

## **Forgive Us**

United States Slaughters Fleeing Iraqi Soldiers

## **Forgive Us**

US Troops Stationed in Muslim Countries

## **Forgive Us**

Invasion and Occupation of Afghanistan

## **Forgive Us**

Shock and Awe Bombings of Iraq Kill Civilians by the Thousands

## **Forgive Us**

Two Million People Flee American War Making in Iraq

## **Forgive Us**

American Violence Spreads Throughout The Middle East

## **Forgive Us**

Refugees Die in the Deserts & on the Sea Fleeing Wars Promoted  
by the United States

**Forgive Us**

United States Rejects Middle East Refugees

**Forgive Us**

Islamophobia Sweeps the Nation

**Forgive Us**

United States Drones Assassinate People in Seven Muslim  
Nations

**Forgive Us**

One Half Our National Spending is for Death & Weapons

**Forgive Us**

Weapons Are Our Largest Export

**Forgive Us**

United States in Year 2017 Will Cut Assistance to the Poor &  
Children's Programs

**Forgive Us**

Building Walls Instead of Empathy and Generosity

Forgive Us

Our Bloated Military Budget Will be Increased \$54 Billion This  
Year

**Forgive Us**

Republicans & Democrats Praise Trump for Killing Syrians

**Forgive Us**

**Aaaaa men....Aaaaaa men....Amen Amen Amen**

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# War Crimes Indictment for Good Friday

## WAR CRIMES INDICTMENT

[WAR\\_CRIMES\\_INDICTMENT\\_Good\\_Friday\\_2017.pdf](#)

Indictment read by Matt Ryan, recorded by Judy Bello:

[http://upstatedroneaction.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/Audio/Good\\_Friday\\_Indictment-Matt\\_Ryan.mp3](http://upstatedroneaction.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/Audio/Good_Friday_Indictment-Matt_Ryan.mp3)

To President Donald Trump, to Secretary of Defense Secretary James Mattis, to the full Military Chain of the Command, including Command Chief Michael Will, to all Service Members and civilian staff of Hancock Air Base, and to the local police and Sheriffs Department of the Town of Dewitt, NY:

Each one of you, when you became a public servant, serving in a government position or when you joined the United States Armed Forces or police, you publicly promised to uphold the United States Constitution. We take this opportunity to call your attention to Article VI of the US Constitution, which 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 because it provides that the Constitution and laws of the U.S., including treaties made under authority of the U.S. shall be supreme law of the land.

The Supremacy Clause provides part of the Supreme Law of the Land.

One Treaty duly ratified by the U.S. is the United Nations Charter. It was ratified by a vote of 89 to 2 in the U.S. Senate, and signed by the President in 1945. It remains in effect today. As such, it is part of supreme law of the land.

The Preamble of the U.N. Charter states that its purpose is to "save future generation from the scourge of war" and it further states, "all nations shall refrain from the use of force against another nation."

This Treaty applies both collectively and individually to all three branches of government, on all levels, U.S. federal, state and local governments, starting with the executive branch: the U.S. President and the executive staff; the judicial branch: all judges and staff members of the judiciary; the legislative branch: all members of the U.S. Armed Forces and all departments of Law Enforcement and all civilian staff, who have sworn to uphold the Constitution, which includes Article VI.

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

Today you must recognize that when you promised to uphold the Constitution, you promised to obey Treaties and International Law – as part of the Supreme Law of the Land and furthermore, under the Uniform Code of Military Justice of the U.S., you are required to disobey any clearly unlawful order from a superior.

Based on all the above,

*WE, THE PEOPLE, CHARGE THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENT, DONALD*

## *TRUMP AND THE FULL MILITARY CHAIN OF COMMAND*

*TO COMMAND CHIEF MICHAEL WILL, EVERY DRONE CREW, AND SERVICE MEMBERS AT HANCOCK AIR BASE, WITH CRIMES AGAINST PEACE & CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, WITH VIOLATIONS OF PART OF THE SUPREME LAW OF THE LAND, EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS, VIOLATION OF DUE PROCESS, WARS OF AGGRESSION, VIOLATION OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND KILLING OF INNOCENT CIVILIANS.*

We charge that the Air National Guard of the United States of America, headquartered at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, home of the 174th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard, under the command of the 174th Fighter Wing Commander, Command Chief Michael Will, is maintaining and deploying the MQ-9 Reaper robotic aircraft, called drones.

These drones are being used not only in combat situations for the purpose of assassinations but also for killings far removed from combat zones without military defense, to assassinate individuals and groups far removed from military action.

Extra judicial killings, such as those the U.S. carries out by drones are intentional, premeditated, and deliberate use of lethal force to commit murder in violation of U.S. and International Law.

It is a matter of public record that the US has used drones in Afghanistan and in Iraq for targeted killings to target specific individuals which has nearly always resulted in the deaths of many others.

There is no legal basis for defining the scope of area where drones can or cannot be used; no legal criteria for deciding which people can be targeted for killing, no procedural safeguards to ensure the legality of the decision to kill and the accuracy of the assassinations.

In support of this indictment, we cite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, who has said that the use of drones creates “a highly problematic blurring and the law applicable to the use of inter-state force... The result has been the displacement of clear legal standards with a vaguely defined license to kill, and the creation of a major accountability vacuum... In terms of the legal framework, many of these practices violate straightforward applicable legal rules.”

See [United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council Study on Targeted Killings](#), 28, May 2010.

The drone attacks either originating at Hancock or supported here are a deliberate illegal use of force against another nation, and as such are a felonious violation of Article VI of the US Constitution. By giving material support to the drone program, you as individuals are violating the Constitution, dishonoring your oath, and committing war crimes. We demand that you stop participating in any part of the operations of MQ-9 drones immediately, being accountable to the people of United States and Afghanistan.

As citizens of this nation, which maintains over 700 military bases around the globe, and the largest, most deadly military arsenal in the world we believe these words of Martin Luther King still hold true, “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today is my own government”.

There is hope for a better world when WE, THE PEOPLE, hold our government accountable to the laws and treaties that govern the use of lethal force and war. To the extent that we ignore our laws and constitution and allow for the unchecked use of lethal force by our government, allowing the government to kill who ever it wants, where ever it wants, how ever it wants with no accountability, we make the world less safe for children everywhere.

We appeal to all United States citizens, military and

civilian, and to all public officials, to do as required by the Nuremburg Principles I-VII, and by Conscience, to refuse to participate in these crimes, to denounce them, and to resist them nonviolently.

Signed by: THE UPSTATE COALITION TO GROUND THE DRONES AND END THE WARS

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# Good Friday Statement at Hancock Base

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Ann Tiffany (315) 478-4571 Syracuse, NY  
Mary Anne Grady Flores (607) 280-8797 Ithaca, NY  
John Amidon (518)-312-6442 Albany, NY

[upstatedroneaction.org](http://upstatedroneaction.org), [www.knowdrones.com/](http://www.knowdrones.com/)

## **GOOD FRIDAY HANCOCK DRONE ACTION STATEMENT**

*April 14, 2017* ~ Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Recognizing that 70% of our nation identify as Christian, we come to the gates of the Hancock drone base to make real the crucifixion today. As Jesus and others were crucified by the Roman Empire, drones are used by the U. S. Empire in a similar fashion. In Roman times, crosses loomed over a community to warn people that they could be killed whenever the Empire decided. So too, our drones fly over many countries threatening extrajudicial killings of whoever happens to be in the vicinity.

On this Good Friday, we recall Jesus' call to love and nonviolence. We're asking this air force base and this nation

to turn away from a policy which amounts to a modern-day crucifixion. Let's embrace Jesus call to build the Kingdom of God on Earth instead of killing suspected enemies and innocents, including children. In the process, we are crucifying Children, Families, Love, Peace, Community, Diplomacy, the Rule of Law, the US Constitution, the UN Charter, US Treaties and Due Process.

What if our country were constantly being spied upon by drones, with some of us killed by drones? What if many bystanders, including children, were killed in the process? If that were happening, we would hope that some people in that attacking country would speak up and try to stop the killing. We're speaking up to try and stop the illegal and immoral drone attacks on countries against which Congress has not declared war.

**Those arrested today:** Ex-CIA analyst of 32 yrs. Ray McGovern, Jessica Stewart, Ed Kinane, Tom Joyce, James Ricks, Joan Pleune, Mark Colville, John Amidon, Brian Hynes.

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## **SHUT DOWN CREECH- A Success!**

**Successful Week at SHUT DOWN CREECH!**

[Democracy Now, April 4, 2016](#) (At 11.50)

[Democracy Now, April 1, 2016](#) (At 11.27)

25 Activists Arrested in Two days of Nonviolent Blockades at Gates to Creech AFB;

Activists from over 20 states participated in week-long Mass

## Mobilization to End Drone Warfare

### Videos of action by Holly Severson:

1- Full Length kids action:

<http://smallworldradio.net/doubletap.mov>

2- Edited shorts from the action:

<http://www.smallworldradio.net/DN.mov>



Anti-drone protesters executed waves of multiple non-violent peaceful actions at Creech Air Force Base throughout the morning last Friday, April 1, with the intent of interrupting the drone killing activities that take place there. Creech AFB, in southern Nevada, is the

primary Command Center for the CIA's and President Obama's Drone Assassination program. At the most heavily used eastern gate, a total of 13 people were arrested in 4 separate actions. After military personnel re-opened the main base gate in the later morning after the 1st action there, three more waves of blockades occurred. The 3rd and 4th waves breached a barricade near the gate and continued to block the road, ultimately stalling gate operations for nearly an hour totally, counting all actions at that gate. Another 4 were arrested at a 2nd gate.



Shut Down Creech

The first incident at the eastern gate occurred at approximately 7:00 AM when a group of six children and eight adults all dressed as angels, performed a mock drone attack on a funeral. The activists were demonstrating the gruesome U.S. practice of firing drone missiles into funerals for victims previously killed by U.S. drone attacks, with hopes that militants might also be killed. A ballerina led the procession, laying red roses on the entry road of the main gate, followed by the other children carrying a casket. The funeral procession was interrupted by a simulated drone attack that killed and injured many of the mourners. Ultimately seven adults were arrested after they refused to leave the roadway after a 5 minute warning.



At approximately the same time, actions took place at the other two base gates, leading to

more arrests. The blockade at the 2nd gate focused on the criminal aspects of the U.S. drone assassination program. Activists stretched yellow crime scene tape around the base sign and across the entrance to the gate, preventing vehicles from entering. One protester laid across the roadway to portray a drone victim. And at the seldom used most western



gate a small group held a silent meditation vigil for peace. Activists successfully delayed Air Force personnel (and presumably some drone pilots and technicians), from entering the base throughout the morning.

“Many Creech personnel arrived to the base before the normal 6-8am rush hour on Friday, presumably to avoid the protest. Activists who participated in this collective effort consider even that a success because the protest is having a direct impact on daily drone



operations. These sustained actions are forcing the military to change their daily routines, and potentially stimulating more discussion about the drone policies in question and the growing national opposition to drone killing,” says Toby Blomé, one of the organizers. “We deeply hope that our voices will one day soon be heard, and the expanding use of these deadly and destabilizing weapons against the most vulnerable people in the world will cease.”

On Thursday, the day before Friday’s gate blockades, 8 activists, including 7 veterans were arrested in a earlier blockade at the heavily used eastern gate, blocking morning traffic as well.



The two days of actions were part of a week-long protest at the base, culminating in a total of 25 arrests during the 2nd Annual National Mass Mobilization against Drone Warfare known as SHUT DOWN CREECH. Activists from over 20 states converged at “Camp

Justice,” the peace camp directly across from Creech AFB, for

daily rush hour vigils, nonviolence training workshops, and strategizing meetings to prepare for these nonviolent blockades to impede drone killing.

[www.ShutDownCreech.blogspot.com](http://www.ShutDownCreech.blogspot.com)

These activities were done to highlight the Obama administration's drone killing program that leads to many civilian deaths and violates international law.

### **Friday's arrestees:**

Leslie Angeline  
Fred Bialy  
Toby Blomé  
Cynthia Papermaster  
Dennis DuVall  
Arla Ertz  
Rene Esplanade  
Ron Faust  
John Ford  
MaryKate Glenn  
Chris Nelson  
Mahai'a Oliveira  
Shirley Osgood  
Flora Rogers  
Tyler Schaeffer  
Brian Terrell  
Susan Witka



(Photos by Holly Severson and Toby Blomé)

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# 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.

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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.

**###**

### **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 say 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)