

Pre Analysis of “Big Books” Trial #1

Our three-day Hancock trial in De Witt ended around midnight Thursday (3/2) and, exhausted, we scattered to the winds – some of us with long trips home. Hence only minimal debriefing or analysis. but here I’ll mention some of what I think are relevant factors in our acquittals.

~ First, obviously our cause is essential – not that that usually guarantees anti-drone activists victories in court...

~ One of our four defendants (JR) is African American with Native American ancestry.

~ The trial began last fall, but – at our insistence – was postponed til February 28 in order to get a new jury pool that wasn’t drawn only from the almost-lily white suburb of De Witt. our sense was that this time we got a sympathetic jury (mostly women) – perhaps drawn from a population newly awakened to the trump horror.

~ We also were blessed with two dedicated, political, savvy pro bono attorneys (JW, DI) who have made multiple trips from afar (Long Island and Buffalo) to defend us in previous Hancock drone trials – they knew us, the issue, the charges and the judge (DG). They were skilled in voir dire; their presence served as a check on an unfriendly judge. The judge knows that, given our skillful legal support, abridgements of our rights might well be reversed on appeal.

~ The defendants are seasoned activists, each having been tried before in the De Witt court (as well as in other courts for other issues over the years). Our goal was not necessarily to “win” or to avoid prison, but rather to put weaponized drones on trial. Maybe our action and our defense radiated a certain integrity.

~ Three of the defendants (JR, DB, BH) went pro se; this gave our defense added flexibility and allowed the jury to see us as human beings. one of us (EK), who usually goes pro se, deliberately allowed JW to represent him, which allowed that attorney to play key roles in the defense.

~ The defendants acted and spoke more or less with unanimity both during the trial and during our planning sessions before each trial session.

~ Although Hancock AFB and the town of De Witt are in Greater Syracuse, local media and even many local liberal activists – being in denial about how pivotal militarism and the pentagon budget are to the issues they work on – pretty much ignore our coalition’s scrupulously nonviolent and protracted (since 2010) civil resistance campaign. Nonetheless we got valuable support from other locals providing food and lodging to sustain the defense.

~ I can single out here such support, typical of all our trials, of Friends of Dorothy, the local catholic worker house. [in previous trials another catholic worker house, Slocum House, has played a key hospitality role...and we expect it will continue to do so in the future. Also, former Hancock Defendants (AT, RK) provided key lodging and logistical support.

~ While no mainstream media attended the trial (despite our pre-trial press releases), we had our own videographers (CB, EG, ER) who will be getting out footage of opening and closing statements. We were also fortunate in having our videographers (JA, CB, ER) on hand on march 19, 2015, when we did our “big books” action. they soon circulated footage on YouTube. this was helpful in court, showing not only our “books”, but our obviously *un*-disorderly deportment throughout the action and the arrest.

~ Each evening of the trial there were dozens of supporters.

they came from NYC, Ithaca, Buffalo, Albany, Rochester, New England and points in between. The jury might well have been favorably impressed by the community there on our behalf. not to mention the presence in court of JR's six-year old grandson and DB's two youngsters – all cute as a button.

~ A word about the prosecutor: unlike some of the past De Witt prosecutors, ADA Albert played fair. He indulged in neither cheap tricks nor pandering rhetoric, nor was he obstructionist or hostile. He even allowed us to show the jury ten oversize color photos of the “big books” action and of victims and relatives of drone victims.

~ ADA Albert's only witness was Hancock Master Sergeant Ramsey who has been a prosecution witness at probably all of our trials. Ramsey seems to be a pretty straight shooter; we've remained on good terms with him over the years. Even after he testifies, he generally stays to watch the rest of our trial. Who knows? Maybe this career military man has been able to hear our testimony.

~ Others were arrested with us on march 19, 2015. but JO and BR, with the additional charge of violating their Order of Protection, a bogus misdemeanor, still await a trial date. it'll be interesting to see if this jury's verdict will dispose the DA and Hancock to drop that charge. Their next court hearing is march 9.

. stay tuned.

CONNECTING THE DOTS... NO BAN,

NO WALL, NO KILLER DRONES at Hancock Airport/Air Base

Thank God for the great crowd of 1,000 protesting Trump's Ban of Immigrants at Syracuse International Airport, as thousands flooded airports all across the US last Saturday night, Jan. 28th, when the ban first went into effect!

We have a beautiful foto of a member of the Afghan Youth Peace Team with a poster saying "We Wish to Live Without War". The youth sent a bolt of the sky blue fabric to US drone activists to wear as blue scarves to remember their wish for blue skies...skies safe without killer and surveillance drones hovering over them and assassinating them causing people to flee and become refugees.

Ironically on the other side of the same Hancock Airport campus of Syracuse is Hancock Air National Guard Drone Base. Many locals are not aware that the US assassinates people from Hancock Drone Base. Our US drone policy of execution without due process is a part of the driving force for the refugee crisis throughout the seven countries Trump has listed in his ban of people from the Middle East.

Lets work together to connect the dots...drone assassinations cause people to flee...who become refugees... who need asylum in other countries...countries who shut their borders to refugees...like the US under Trump.

I invite that great crowd of 1,000 to come around the corner to the other entrance of the same airport campus...to the Hancock Drone Base on East Malloy Rd, in DeWitt, East Syracuse, and demand that Hancock end their drone killings with MQ9-Reaper drones. We violate our US Constitution and International Law when we kill with drones.

We, who gather, would be giving a message of peace to the

world and to the parents and children of the Middle East, saying "You can stay and live in peace in your own homes. You don't have to flee the drones and become refugees. We, too, wish that you live without war."

Please join us as we continue to say #NOKILLERDRONES Hancock Air National Guard Base -4:15-5pm 1st Tues. every month @ 6001 East Molloy Road, Mattydale, NY 13211.

You are welcome to attend the trial of the Big Books defendants, who were arrested March 10, 2015. They are charged with Trespass, Disorderly Conduct and Obstructing Government Administration
A jury trial is scheduled for:

5 PM, February 28th, 2017

@ DeWitt Town Court

5400 Butternut Dr, East Syracuse, NY 13057

Codefendants in the trial (from the left): Ed Kinane (Syracuse, NY), Fr. Bill Pickard (Scranton, PA), Brian Hynes (Bronx, NY), Daniel Burns (Ithaca, NY) and James Ricks



(Ithaca, NY) on the far right, Attorney's Jonathan Wallace and Daire Irwin of Buffalo, NY. (2nd and 3rd from the right) will advise them.

For info call: (607) 280-8797 -Mary Anne Grady Flores

upstatedroneaction.org

#dirtywars

#loveistheonlysolution

#groundthedronesandendthewars

Prosecution Rests in Hancock Trial

June 25, 2015, DeWitt, NY: Four concerned citizens are on trial before Judge Joseph Zavaglia in the DeWitt Town Court for their action at Hancock Drone Base, a suburb of Syracuse, NY, on April 28, 2013. The four are Jules Orkin of Bergenfield, NJ, Ellen Barfield of Baltimore, MD, Beverly Rice, and Joan Pleune of NYC.

Jury selection was yesterday. The jury of six and two alternates, were chosen from the Town of DeWitt. One of the jurors said he thinks Edward Snowden should be executed and that weaponized drones are good.

The Assistant District Attorney, Peter Hakes started his case today, with only one witness taking the stand. After a full day of questioning of the witness, Chief Master Sergeant Ramsey, the prosecution rested their case.

The four defendants are facing four charges, Obstruction of Governmental Administration, Trespass, and two Disorderly Conducts. If found guilty the activists could be sentenced to a year.

On April 28, 2013, 31 people were arrested as they tried to bring to the base an image of what a drone strike could look

like. The defendants participated in the action.

The Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and Stop the Wars along with colleague organizations Veterans For Peace and the Granny Peace Brigade to which the defendants belong, believe the killing is immoral and illegal, violating the United Nations Charter, and international treaty laws which under Article 6 of the US Constitution are part of the supreme law of the United States and supercede local and Federal law.

Since 2010 anti-drone activists have experienced nearly 200 arrests and numerous jail sentences at Hancock for scrupulously-nonviolent protests, as part of a national campaign to resist drones at a number of bases.

The trial will continue with the defense starting it's case on Friday morning. Please come support the defendants.

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