

Hancock Drones and Grass Roots Street Heat

Why Street Heat?

Back in the eighties when the U.S. anti-apartheid movement was at a boil, “Doonesbury” had a sequence satirizing the “activists” who spent all their time at their computers. At the time I thought those geeks were a pretty odd bunch.

Though I’ve yet to succumb to Facebook, etc., now as an activist I too have become computer-domesticated. I spend lots of time generating or responding to email or chasing after links. For better or worse, on-line is now one of my comfort zones. Maybe too comfortable.

Historically and currently, here and abroad, much, maybe most, necessary grassroots change only really begins when people join in solidarity and indignation in the “street.”

What is this thing we here in Central New York call “street heat”?

It’s a way of making it easy to start getting out into the street. It’s a way to get off our duffs, to break out of our cocoons – overcoming that seemingly deep hesitation about going public.

Since 2010 at 4:15 p.m. every first and third Tuesday of the month a handful of us have been going out to the main entrance of Hancock Air Base, the hunter/killer Reaper drone hub in our back yard, on East Molloy Road in the Syracuse suburb of DeWitt. There for 45 minutes we stand facing the traffic with our anti-militarism signs. This time slot is the civilian rush hour on East Molloy and shift change at the base.

From early November through the end of March, our cold and

dark season, we're only out there on first Tuesdays. That day has its macabre significance: each Tuesday Mr. Obama and his advisors choose the targets for the next six months for drone assassination in the Islamic oil lands – assassinations which are immoral, illegal and, while tactically clever, are probably strategically stupid.

We place ourselves across the road from those Reaper drone robots remotely operated over Afghanistan by 174th Attack Wing of the NY National Guard based at Hancock.

We seek to prick the conscience of the Hancock personnel, cogs in Hancock's criminal role in the war machine. We also seek to reach the public driving by. Our signs declare variously,

*"DRONES FLY,
CHILDREN DIE"*



and

"BAN WEAPONIZED DRONES" and "STOP DRONE TERRORISM"

and

"U.S. OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST,"

etc.

Without our persistent presence week in, week out, year in, year out, it's all too easy, given U.S. mainstream media, for folks to forget that the U.S. is engaged in perpetual war – a war not “on” terrorism, but “of” terrorism. And it's all too easy for airbase personnel, leading their classified, insulated, indoctrinated lives to forget they are part of a war machine.

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.

Terrorism is Killing or
Instilling Fear – No Matter

Who Does It

We watch proliferating terror and violence. . . Mourning and fear come too. What's the remedy? More of the same?!

Peacemakers on retreat were playing a game where the caller, standing in the middle of a circle of seated people says, "The Big Wind Blows on anyone who . ." All for whom it's true – including the caller – must find another seat. The person left standing is the next caller.

My friend said, "The Big Wind Blows on anyone who has ever been part of a Terrorist Organization." I was shocked. Why did he ask that? And was the room bugged? Would the FBI, who bugs peace groups, think that meant we're terrorists? Why would he ask that?

Since I wasn't the only confused-looking person, he said, "Well, I was part of a terrorist organization: the U.S. military."

The Buffalo News said in its December 4 headline story "Massacre again raises question of when to define it as terrorism,"

Federal law defines terrorism as dangerous acts intended to intimidate a civilian population, influence government policy or affect government conduct "by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping."

Some examples are

- our weaponized drone program, where, per Intercept based on leaked U.S. internal documents, nearly 90% of those killed were not the intended targets (assassination, mass destruction and community intimidation included);
- night raids in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, which terrify surprised families and whole communities.

War is state terrorism.

- “policing” murders, especially of black people. People of color, activists, and innocents know and are highly intimidated because even moving (Amadou Diallo); questioning (Sandra Bland); or failing immediate obedience (12-year-old Tamir Rice) – could result in one’s getting killed.

Terrorism is killing and/or instilling fear. Let’s kill the people who are killing people? Which causes more people to kill? How can that work? It doesn’t make sense. (Don’t hit your sister. *Whap!!*) Restraining and preventing aggression is necessary. Instilling fear and Islamophobia promote a police state.

The U.S. treatment of whistle blowers confirms governmental intimidation. Hero Edward Snowden caused policy improvements, yet he faces espionage charges. Drone pilots revealing program truths have had their bank accounts and credit cards frozen. Police have generally been protected from charges of murder, wrongful death, or brutality until quite recently. State violence is excused.

State terrorism is still terrorism, and like violence, Terrorism begets more Terrorism. In fact, besides our government’s above-described intimidation of civilian populations, the U.S. efforts to influence other governments’ policies and/or affect their conduct are well known worldwide. The Project for the New American Century espoused our challenging policies or conduct of other governments that are not aligned with our interests and prominence.

Do we need more or less violence? Hope we can agree we need less.

We need faith, courage, and resolute adherence to principle. Let’s work cooperatively, fearlessly, to mainstream nonviolence, including petitioning our government. You can

join organizations like the WNY Peace Center and allies on specific campaigns.

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