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Hancock Drone Resister Convicted on Unexpected New Charge

January 16, DeWitt Town Court, 5400 Butternut Drive, East Syracuse, NY

DEWITT, N.Y. Bonny Mahoney of Syracuse, New York was convicted by Judge David S. Gideon in DeWitt Town Court on a single count of trespass stemming from her arrest during a nonviolent protest at Hancock Air National Guard Base on April 28, 2013. When Drone Resister Bonny Mahoney arrived in court on January 15 for her jury trial on charges of obstructing governmental administration (OGA) and 2 counts of disorderly conduct (DisCon), she was arraigned on a new charge (trespass) stemming from the same event where she was arrested 17 months earlier with 30 other protesters. Her reasonable request for some time to modify her preparations was refused.

Lawyers Jonathan Wallace of New York City, and Daire Irwin of Buffalo, NY drove in from their hometowns to assist Ms. Mahoney during her 2 day trial. Asked to comment on his interest in these cases, Wallace said

"The steadfast commitment, personal integrity and humility of these activists, which echo the beliefs of Dorothy Day even though not all are Catholics, have made it an honor, and even more than that, a personal imperative, for me to help them in any way possible".

Regarding Ms. Mahoney's determination to defend herself, Irwin said,

"They may be peaceful but that doesn't mean they aren't going to fight injustice everywhere; and that includes in court."

Ms. Mahoney brought the trial back to her concerns about drone victims, saying,

"I consider myself lucky to be able to defend myself against charges I feel are unjust. US drone policy does not provide this opportunity for its victims."

Judge Gideon granted a pretrial motion by the attorneys to dismiss the OGA charge on the grounds that it didn't specify who was obstructed, or how, and the jury was also dismissed. In the end, the only charge Ms. Mahoney was convicted of was the new trespass charge. Attorney's Jonathon Wallace and Daire Irwin, who attended the trial to support Ms. Mahoney made arrangements to argue another motion before her sentencing hearing on February 12.

People have been protesting at Hancock National Air Guard Base since 2011 when the 174th began flying lethal Reaper drone missions over Afghanistan. During the past year, protesters opposing weaponized drones were arrested at Hancock, Creech, Whiteman, Beale and Vandenberg Air Force and Air National Guard Bases, as well as RAF Waddington in the UK and in Germany at USAF Ramstein. There are monthly trials coming up in DeWitt this spring beginning with John Honeck on trial for OGA and DisCon February 12 and 13, followed by a consolidated Jury trial for Bev Rice, Ellen Barfield, Joan Pleune and Jules Orkin who are facing the same charges from the same action on March 10, 11 and 12.

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