

Some of the Testimony at Mark Colville's Trial

Transcribed by Judy Bello

In prior testimony it was established that Mark had walked up to the gate with two companions, and asked to speak with Colonel Evans. They said that they had brought flowers for him, and a letter, the People's Order of Protection, which was also written on the large sign he carried. When they were told that Col Evans would not come and speak to them, they set down the flowers, but they didn't leave. They were standing very close to the closed gate which made those responsible nervous. They sang hymns. Eventually the Sheriffs deputies arrived, and when they still declined to leave, arrested them.

It was established that the mission of the base is MQ-9 Reaper operations and training, including both air school training and maintenance training. It was established that Col Evans and Mark had never met or spoken to one another and Evans did not come down to the gate on that day, or on the day when the Order of Protection was requested and served. Evans is not afraid of Mark or any of the protesters. None has ever, to his knowledge, been violent. He doesn't recognize or know any of them. He requested the Order of Protection on behalf of the base installation. Mark had him read the Order of Protection which contains a graphic list of various forms of physical aggression to be avoided, as well as a closing demand to 'stay away'.

Judge Jokl intervened and said that Judge Gideon was actually responsible for the Order of Protection as he signed it (actually Judge Jokl signed the order). Then, Judge Gideon testified for the prosecution. He talked to the jury about the Orders of Protection. His presence made up for the emptiness of the text. He spoke of the Order in a very serious tone, and played on the jury's fears, citing instances where 'witnesses' have been threatened. He took responsibility for preparing the order and said that it was created in response to Col Evans' complaint. He dismissed the validity of the Appeal that struck down another protester's Order of Protection. Mark debated the issue, but Gideon is a judge. They debated at some length the vagueness of the Order, but Gideon insisted that it is the recipient's responsibility to figure out where to stay away from and how far.

Mark had Chief Master Sergeant Ramsey, head of base security, read the People's Order of Protection. He had Col Evans, who requested the Order of Protection to protect his base read the actual Order of Protection and he had Judge Gideon who has read the Order to us repeatedly, read our Indictment. Col Evans testified in civilian clothes this time, but Judge Gideon took his place as final authority.

Mark presented himself well. The jury, however, was hearing the barrage of personal attacks before and after it. The following is taken from my notes.

I am 53 years old, married and have 4 children, 12-25 years old. I have raised my nephew as well. I have been doing hospitality since I was a child. I studied to be a priest, but finally found my calling in a lay ministry. I grew up in suburban Connecticut, was raised Irish Catholic, but religious faith kicked in much later. I was searching through most of my 20s for a way to live my faith. Finally, I found others like myself in the Catholic Worker Movement. The movement has many young people who come in for a while then move on with life. I didn't move in until I was married with 2 children. For me it was a landing place.

When you have been working with the poor long enough, you find that charity isn't enough. There is a systemic reality to poverty and violence. In order to fully be with the poor, you have to invest in justice. For the last 20 years I have lived in a Catholic Worker House in the hill area of New Haven. We don't own the house, but we live the Hospitality. We serve 2 meals a day, 5 days a week, and take in people as we are able.

How long do they stay? Sometimes one night, sometimes ten years, as long as they can tolerate us. The Catholic Worker integrates service into life. He moves from 'charity' to 'solidarity'. I share this life of simplicity and voluntary poverty. That is my background and my life now.

How did I get here? I have ties to this community. I have friend here in Syracuse. Catholic Worker is very active here in Friends of Dorothy, Slocum House, Jail Ministry and Ithaca Catholic Worker. They started a campaign to address the horrible violence perpetrated from Hancock Base. It is hard for us to do our work, so see the faces of the dead children. They believe that if you knew what is happening there, you would immediately stop it.

I also do work with veterans. We are labeled as people who don't respect soldiers, but who is respecting veterans when I take them into my home? The government uses them. It props them up to use them as justification for further war and violence.

So that's what I was thinking when I came to Hancock that day, December 9th. I did come to the base with two divinity students that day. I'm proud of it. We were respectful. It was a work of meaning, a specific idea as well as a general problem. My community knew, knows a person who has suffered a loss from the drones, he lost family members. I can't match the particular drone to the particular incident. But I know drones are causing horrible suffering. Raz sent a request bac with the message that innocents are being killed by drones. He wants an answer. He is asking for redress.

I came to the base. What did we do? Each item we brought symbolized something. There are two roads, lanes, for entry and egress. We walked up and stood in front of the gate. At no time did we even think or talk about blocking the gate. We had a specific intent. The 174th didn't use to be an 'attack' wing. it was a National Guard Unit. That is an important sea change in the national stance towards war.

We asked to see the commander. When we were told that he wasn't coming, we said we had a document, Raz Mohammad's complaint and request for an Order of Protection for his family, we wanted to deliver. When we asked them to take it for him, the men at the gate refused to accept the document. We were told that our presence at the gate was unusual, might even be considered improper, particularly by people on the base. We put the document into the link of the fence. It wasn't an optimal action, but it was the only one available.

We didn't go there to block the traffic. We didn't go to stop people carrying guns. No one intentionally leaned on the gate. There was no intention to shut down the base. This wasn't a mass action. We were just three people going to deliver an urgent message. Raz Mohammad's request for an Order

of Protection was later submitted to the court. The D.A. took it at a meeting some of us attended.

I am a friend of the law. I believe in the law. People like me want to change the law to do what it is intended for. The law is supposed to serve the people, not to be served by the people. Laws have been manipulated to protect things as they are. I have been arrested more than once, more than twice over the years, but always out of respect for the law and what the law is supposed to be doing.

I have an old saying, "The closer I get to the scene of a crime, the closer I get to being arrested." This has to do with manipulation of the law to protect people with power. I had the Order of Protection. This made it difficult for me to go to the base, first, because of my obligation to respect the law, and next because of another obligation to protect my own right under the First Amendment. So I went, at substantial personal risk.

When I went to the base last year, I didn't know Col Evans. He testified that he doesn't know me. There was no address anywhere, and I wouldn't know the Colonel if I saw him. Just because he's in the military, does that imply he works on Hancock Base? It wasn't my intention to violate the Order. But yes, I took a calculated risk. I went to deliver a particular message to those who can do something about it.

The cross went something like this. You drove 290 miles to come to our town. You were at the front gate of the base. You were holding flowers. You had been issued the Order of Protection on October 30 (it was reissued through the mail after the original one expired at the end of year waiting for trial).

But there was another issue, raised in earlier testimony by Chief Ramsey. A reporter from an alternative news website had written that Mark was planning to violate his Order of Protection because it was unjust. Mark says he gave many interviews and he doesn't remember saying just that. He said that he has noticed that reporters often write your words not exactly as you said them. He said "I came to exercise my first amendment rights in the context of an Order that is so vague I don't know how to apply it."

The prosecution raised the fact that Mark has a record from arrests at other protests, and raised a particular instance. Mark replied "We had one hundred people sitting in the driveway. They were selling helicopters to the most violent people in the world. I personally saw children draw pictures of Sikorsky helicopters slaughtering people on the ground."