

The Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars

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September 19, Syracuse, NY Carrying flowers and three documents to Hancock drone base can result in severe consequences. Drone resister, Mark Colville, of the Amistad Catholic Worker, in New Haven, Connecticut, was found guilty, after a two day trial and fifty minutes of deliberation by a De Witt Town Court jury.

On December 9th, 2013, Colville and two Yale Divinity students, brought a People's Order of Protection to the front gate of the base to prevent further victims of drone attacks perpetrated from inside Hancock Airbase. This action was in response to a request on Nov. 25th, 2013, by Raz Mohammad, an Afghan, who's brother-in law was killed by a U.S. drone strike. Gate personnel rejected the petition.

Colville, who's not an attorney chose to represent himself. He faced five charges, including violation of the Order of Protection, (O.O.P.'s) (max - 1 yr) given on behalf of Colonel Evans. Activists are challenging the validity of these O.O.P.'s, which the Colonel acknowledged in court, in two separate cases, are served "to keep the protesters away from my base". Colville was also charged with Obstruction of Government Administration (max. 1 yr), 2 Disorderly Conduct charges (15 days max each), and Trespass (15 days max).

Colville's action is a part of a global campaign to ban weaponized drones. Locally, the five year Upstate Drone Coalition campaign has resulted in multiple trials, acquittals and convictions, including the sentencing of grandmother, Mary Anne Grady Flores, to one year for taking photos of an Ash Wednesday witness from the cross walk in front of the base. She was found guilty of violation of her O.O.P.'s.

After trial Colville stated, "This court, by its conduct, continues to condemn itself by manipulating and misapplying the law, intentionally disregarding the cries for justice from those who the law is supposed to protect. The petition that we brought to the base, the People's Order of Protection, demanding that we give relief to the innocent victims of these horrible drone killing machines remains unresponded to. We will continue to tell the truth in the streets of the Town of De Witt and in its court room until true justice flows down like a mighty river."

An hour before trial, in judge's chambers, Assistant District Attorney McNamara and Mark Coville met with Judge Jokl, who promised to sentence Colville to the maximum penalty allowed. When Colville asked "Why?" The judge responded, "Because I think you deserve it."

Sentencing will be on Dec. 3rd, at 4pm, at 5400 Butternut Drive, De Witt Town Court, E. Syracuse. For more information go to upstatedroneaction.org

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