

By Ed Kinane

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[\*Anti-Drone Protests at the NY Air National Guard Base at Hancock Field\*](#) About 250 activists took part in an Anti-Drone Protest, outside the NY Air National Guard Base on East Malloy Road on Sunday April 28, 2013. The protest started in front of the Thompson Road entrance to the base. After several speeches, the protestors marched down East Malloy Road to the base's main entrance, where 30 were arrested by Onondaga County Sheriff's Deputies. Sunday's rally was part of the three-day weekend event 'Resisting Drones, Global War and Empire: A Convergence to Action'. Video by Stephen D. Cannerelli | [scannerelli@syracuse.com](mailto:scannerelli@syracuse.com) (1:40)

Here in upstate New York, pretty much below the radar, a tragedy unfolds. But not without resistance.

For several years the unmanned robotic Reaper drones of the 174th Attack Wing of the New York National Guard have been piloted from Hancock air base. These weaponized robots kill and maim - and terrorize - the people of Afghanistan. Many - maybe most -- of these hapless Afghans are non-combatants: infants, children, mothers, elders, unarmed men; also livestock.

The Attack Wing does its killing by remote control from its safe perch at Hancock just outside Syracuse thousands of miles from where the Reaper's Hellfire missiles and 500-pound bombs strike. Nonetheless the Attack Wing technicians and their chain of command play judge, jury and executioner. They play God with human life. Few of these players know anything about the culture, politics, or people of Afghanistan. Few, if any, know whom they slay or even why. Robotically, drone-like, they follow orders.

Hancock's cowardly remote control tactics not only wreak havoc "over there," they are mirrored here. By deploying their influence on - their remote control of -- local law enforcement agencies and the judges of the DeWitt Town Court, Hancock tactically targets those seeking to expose its war crimes.

Let me explain.

Citizens from all over New York state and beyond have coalesced into a grassroots group seeking to alert the public to the dirty work Hancock perpetrates in our name, with our tax money, in our backyard. Upstate Drone Action's efforts are scrupulously nonviolent. In the tradition of Gandhi and King, before each demonstration we take a pledge of nonviolence.

Our legitimate actions supposedly are protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That Amendment guarantees our right to speak, assemble and petition our government for a redress of grievances. Further, our actions comply with the Nuremberg Protocols, signed by the United States after World War II, mandating citizens to expose and even impede their nation's war crimes.

The most outrageous tactic is the issuing of dozens of orders of protection against those arrested at Hancock.

Nonetheless, thanks to Hancock's disregard for the U.S. Constitution (which its personnel presumably swear to defend), our peaceful protests against the Reaper have led to over 150 arrests. Some of these have been pre-emptive and so inappropriate that even Onondaga County prosecuting attorneys have called for the dismissal of the charges "in the interests of justice."

All the arrests are just one facet of Hancock's efforts to use local law enforcement and the court to silence us. In doing Hancock's bidding the DeWitt Town court:

- incarcerates numerous anti-drone activists,
- levies maximum fines (\$375 each) totaling many thousands of dollars,
- sets unnecessary and exorbitant bails (as high as \$3500), again totaling many thousands of dollars,
- mandates needless court appearances in which no relevant court procedures occur. These are especially onerous for those defendants --most of us go pro se -- having to keep returning to court from afar.

Such judicial hardball isn't about enforcing law; but more likely about misguided yet otherwise good men with a murky sense of justice acquiescing to pressure.

Certainly the most outrageous Hancock/court tactic is the issuing of dozens of orders of protection against those arrested at Hancock. Such orders "protect" specific commanders at Hancock against threats, never specified. The orders make it a felony punishable by up to seven years in prison for those so ordered to continue assembling outside Hancock to oppose drone atrocities originating there.

The brave colonels who obtain those orders of protection command an Attack Wing (their proud phrase) surrounded by barbed wire fencing guarded by men with guns, trained to kill.

Upstate Drone Action is not menacing. We are not unruly or disorderly. We are no threat to anyone. We have never attempted to enter the base. Despite our requests to meet with them, we have never met the commanders who claim to fear us. Our people are not armed.

Nor do we commit civil disobedience. We do not break the law, but rather seek to enforce the law - the international law against war of aggression, violation of national sovereignty, extrajudicial execution, and other forms of terrorism.

Orders of protection are usually an anti-, not a pro-violence, tool, often used to shield battered wives and girlfriends. But in DeWitt, the court uses them instead to quell our First Amendment right to petition these mighty warriors to end their brutal lawlessness. Our petition - which we keep attempting to deliver to the base -- takes the form of a citizens' war crimes indictment (co-authored by former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark).

For a quick tutorial on these issues, check out [the indictment at our website](#) .

As Hancock wages its cowardly wars on the people of Afghanistan and on Upstate Drone Action, we will persist in exposing the drone war crime in our midst.

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