

By The Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars

Syracuse July 30, 2014 - Vietnam Veteran and Buffalo resident Russell Brown's trial began today in Dewitt Town Court in East Syracuse. Mr. Brown is representing himself and is facing charges stemming from his arrest during a nonviolent protest at Hancock Air National Guard Base on April 28, 2013. Mr. Brown laid down peacefully with red paint to symbolize the death of drone victims in a roadway across from the Airbase. He is charged with Obstruction of Governmental Administration (OGA), a misdemeanor carrying up to a year incarceration and up to \$1000 fine, as well as Disorderly Conduct charge, a violation.

Mr. Brown's trial is one of 20 upcoming trials of drone resisters working with Upstate Drone Action facing prosecution.

Mr. Brown also has an Order of Protection (OOP) against him by the presiding Judge David S. Gideon, on behalf of Colonel Greg Semmel, commanding officer at Hancock Base. The OOPs have been imposed on more than 50 nonviolent civil resisters arrested in DeWitt since October 2012. Under oath, a military official acknowledged that the protesters were acting non-violently and posed no threat to the Airbase or military personnel.

With a 6-person jury chosen, defense witness Jessica Azulay testified today that Mr. Brown was well beyond the military base and was not obstructing traffic as the roadway had been blocked by local police ahead of the demonstration. She spoke in support of his constitutional right to protest.

Russell said that the wars of the last decade brought back his experiences in Vietnam. "Lying in that road was the most peaceful moment I experienced since I left Vietnam," he said.

In other news of drone resistance, 2 upstate drone resisters had their bail drastically reduced after being arrested one week ago from another action against killer drones on July 23, 2014 at Hancock. Clare Grady of the Ithaca Catholic Worker and Martha Hennessy from New York Catholic Worker were arrested and charged with violating an Order of Protection. Judge Jokl of the Town of Dewitt had originally set their bail at \$10,000 each. During a bail reduction hearing Ms. Hennessy's bail was reduced to \$100 on Monday. Today, Ms. Grady's bail was also reduced to \$100. Both women have been released.

Three others, Joan Pleune, 75 years old, former Freedom Rider from the Civil Rights Movement and a member of the Granny Peace Brigade, and NYC Catholic Workers Erica Brock and Felton Davis remain in jail and are still being held of \$2,500 bail each. Ms. Pleune has a bail reduction hearing tomorrow morning in Syracuse.

Hancock Air National Guard Base, home of the 174th Attack Wing, is a domestic hub for drone assassinations, support and operation, particularly in Afghanistan. The Niagara Falls Air Base is also embarking on a mission to operate weaponized drones.

The Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars, supported by local organizations such as the WNY Peace Center, works nonviolently to stop the scourge of assassination and community terror perpetrated by weaponized drones. The Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones is in coalition with the global movement to end the drone assassinations and to stop US imperialism and militarization.

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Vietnam Vet Drone Resister Acquitted

By The Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars

From [Common Dreams](#) | Original Article

SYRACUSE, NY - After two hours of deliberation, Vietnam Veteran and Buffalonian Russell Brown, was acquitted tonight by a six person jury in the DeWitt town court, East Syracuse in Upstate New York. Brown faced charges of Obstruction of Governmental Administration (OGA), a misdemeanor carrying up to a year incarceration and up to \$1000 fine, as well as Disorderly Conduct charge, a violation. Mr. Brown who went before the court Pro Se (he served as his own counsel) was assisted by Buffalo Attorneys Daire Irwin and Paul Fallon.

Mr. Brown was arrested during a nonviolent protest at Hancock Air National Guard Base, home of the 174th Attack Wing, on April 28, 2013. In a roadway (blocked off by police) across from the base, he lay down to symbolize the death of drone victims. There are twice-monthly demonstrations at Hancock Airbase. On at least six occasions there have been arrests, leading to six trials since 2011. Currently there are 20 activists, working with Upstate Drone Action, facing jury trials in the DeWitt town court.

A U.S. marine from 1965 - 1967, Brown testified that his participation in senseless killing and brutality in Vietnam informed his understanding of the Drone War Program at the 174th Attack Wing.

Lying in the south lane of East Molloy Rd with "blood" spattered clothes lifted a weight of guilt from Russell. Brown's testimony was closely attended by the jury. Brian Hynes, a fellow anti-drone activist, said, "The jury saw the human power of the message and the public value of the method used to deliver it. Drones kill senselessly and illegally and traumatize our airmen."

Russell said that the wars of the last decade brought back his experiences in Vietnam. "Lying in that road was the most peaceful moment I've experienced since I left Vietnam," he said. "I was silent then in the face of those atrocities and I can't be silent anymore."

The jury was smiling as they returned to give the verdict. Later one juror asked a supporter to "Thank Russell for us! My brother was in the Vietnam War and lost his leg. We know what the vets went through." The juror also acknowledged the PTSD drone pilots experience. Another juror said, "We did what was needed to be done. It was fair and just."