

By David Quinn-Jacobs

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BRUNSWICK, GA – We're underway. A jury some feel hopeful about and opening defense statements illustrating the humanity of the seven Kings Bay Plowshares activists completed the first day of the Plowshares trial.

At the end of the day reactions were mixed among supporters who traveled far to this southern Georgia resort town for the trial. Jury selection resulted in nine women, including three African-American women, and three men seated for the trial.

The four charges against the seven include conspiracy, destruction of government property, depredation of government property, and trespassing. The combined penalties for those federal charges total more than two decades' imprisonment.

In his opening statement, Assistant US Attorney Karl Knoche summarized the expected testimony of five witnesses from the naval base who he said will describe how the KBP7 snuck onto the base and split into groups to hold banners, pour blood, hammer on a monument of the Trident missile, and other actions.

Defense attorney Bill Quigley led off the defense's opening statements. "If I were you," he told the jury, "I'd have three questions: One, who are these people? Two, what did they do? And three, why did they do it?"

He described how each of the seven defendants has devoted their lives to voluntary poverty, feeding and serving the poor, and working for peace. He described his client Elizabeth McAlister's life as a nun, and how she later co-founded Jonah House with her husband Philip Berrigan. He told of her three children and six grandchildren, her protesting and being

imprisoned for peace activism, and their supporting themselves by painting houses. "Liz has been working for peace for 60 years," he said.

Quigley told the jurors the seven brought hammers to the action because they believe the prophesy of Isaiah, that peoples "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

He told the jury that defendants Carmen Trotta and Patrick O'Neill wore GoPro cameras to document the action and acknowledge what they did.

The seven were motivated by the commandment "thou shalt not kill" as well as by their children and grandchildren. "They are full of faith, hope, and charity," he said.

"The government will ask you to convict them," Quigley said in closing. "The defendants will ask you to do justice."

