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**AMY GOODMAN:** This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](#), *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman, with Part 2 of our discussion with an Ithaca, New York, peace activist, who happens to be a mom and a grandmother, heading to jail today to begin a six-month sentence for photographing a protest at a base where U.S. drones are piloted remotely. Mary Anne Grady Flores has been issued an order of protection aimed at keeping her away from Hancock Field Air National Guard Base after she participated in an act of civil disobedience in 2012. The next year, Grady Flores says, she attended another peace action but didn't participate, instead photographed it from the roadway beyond what she believed was the base's boundary. She was later told the base's property extended into the road. Grady Flores was later sentenced to a year in prison for violating the protection order. Earlier this month, she was told her conviction had been upheld but her sentence reduced to six months, and was ordered to report to prison today. She'll go to Syracuse to turn herself in.

Well, Mary Anne Grady Flores joins us now from Ithaca, member of the Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars, a group that staged this series of protests against the drone war over the past six years. And we're joined by Jonathan Wallace, an attorney who has worked extensively with the drone resistance movement.

Mary Anne Grady Flores, can you first talk about what exactly you were doing?

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** I went—thank you, Amy. I went as a support person to be there to help take people, pick them up after they were arrested. I went there to take photos. And usually, I send *Democracy Now!* the press releases. And so, I feel it's really important to get the word out of what's going on at the base, which are war crimes. And so, we go usually with a war crimes indictment. But the folks that went that day were standing there, four people on one side and four on the other. They were Catholic Workers. We were—we, as a community—we do everything as a community. We don't do it just—and so, I was in a support role that particular day. And I was out with my back to the traffic, and I was not aware—we weren't told until I was being taken out in handcuffs that the—a friend of mine stood up and said, "Judge, where is the base boundary?" And the judge said, "The double yellow line in the middle of the road." And that—I have never heard of anything like that.

And anyway, that's what I was doing that day. I was there as a support person. And I had specifically said to the folks that were acting, I said, "I am not participating, I'm not a part of the planning, because I have—my intentions are not to break or violate this order of protection," even though when I got it, I protested. I said, "Who is this colonel? I don't even know who this is." And when the colonel spoke during my trial, it was really ironic to hear him say, "No, I don't know Mary Anne Grady. No, I've never had a conversation with her. I'm not afraid of her. That's just a piece of paper. I want—I just want these protesters away from my base." So, that's basically—he outed himself.

**AMY GOODMAN:** So, Jonathan Wallace, how did it happen that Mary Anne Grady Flores got first a year sentence and now actually going to prison for six months? And can you compare that to other crimes? You know, it's interesting. The presidential primary debate just took place, and one of the things Bernie Sanders talked about was you have Goldman Sachs being charged, I think it was, a \$5 billion fine—no one went to jail, when you look at how they helped to bring down the economy. And he said—he compared it to a kid with marijuana going to jail. Six months in prison is a long time.

**JONATHAN WALLACE:** Yeah, it certainly is. This is a classic free speech confrontation. The speech of these protesters is inconvenient to the base. And the purpose of these protective orders, which would more normally be used to protect a battered spouse or a frightened witness to a violent crime, is to chill speech. That's why these orders are being issued.

And the reason that we have a sentence of this nature is because you had a small town jury in a town in which the base is a very, very important presence, operating with a defendant that the jury really did understand that the prosecution—and possibly the judge—did not like, but with a lack of guidance as to what the specifics of the law were. The jury actually sent a question out to the judge asking what the words "stay away" that they saw in the order meant. And the judge was not able to answer the question, just basically responded that "You are the trier of fact. It's up to you to decide." We don't know which line, in the jury's mind, was the line that Mary Anne crossed that they convicted her for. And for all we know, her crime, in their minds, could have been being in Syracuse that day. So, the prosecution, the way it was submitted—the way the case was submitted to the jury was just impossibly vague and broad.

**AMY GOODMAN:** A few weeks ago, we talked to [Tim DeChristopher](#), founder of the Climate Disobedience Center. He spent 21 months in prison for posing as a bidder in 2008 to prevent oil and gas drilling on thousands of acres of public land in his home state of Utah. Again, he spent almost two years in prison. DeChristopher said the government has treated nonviolent protesters like himself harsher than they've treated, well, like the militia leading an ongoing

armed occupation of the federally owned wildlife outpost in remote Oregon.

**TIM DECHRISTOPHER:** You know, a lot of people have made a big deal out of the fact that I was punished for my acts of civil disobedience, which were entirely nonviolent, and the Bundy clan, even almost two years now after pointing their weapons at federal agents, have had no consequences. And, you know, I think the—part of the reason for that is that I think civil disobedience is actually more threatening to the authority of government than armed action is. I mean, part of the reason that I do civil disobedience is that I think it's actually stronger than violent resistance. I think it's more effective. I think it's more powerful. And I think our government realizes that, which is why they're often more willing to punish nonviolent civil disobedience activists than they are to punish folks like the Bundys, that just flash weapons but don't really undermine the moral authority of our government. In fact, they reinforce it by spreading fear in our society and lifting up the government as an institution that is somehow keeping us safe from people like that. ...

I think it's a little ironic that myself, as a convicted felon for doing a nonviolent civil disobedience action, is never allowed to touch a gun for the rest of my life. I'm never allowed to touch a firearm. But the Bundys, who actually committed a felony with a firearm, are still able to flash their guns and kind of get whatever they want.

**AMY GOODMAN:** That's nonviolent environmentalist Tim DeChristopher, spent 21 months in prison for participating in a public auction, the government said fraudulently, to try to prevent the sale of public lands to oil drillers. Jonathan Wallace, that comparison Tim is making?

**JONATHAN WALLACE:** I agree with his concern. For much of its existence, the Second Amendment was presented as if it were kind of a twin of the First. But we're seeing them starting to separate, in the sense that free speech tends to be dealt with in a balancing kind of way. The legalese is that the government, in order to interfere with speech, has to show a significant interest and that its measures, whether it's an arrest or an ordinance, are narrowly tailored to that interest. And it has to allow ample alternative means of communication. By picking up a gun, we see people now achieving a much more absolute kind of treatment, where the government just backs off entirely. Civil disobedience is a radical act of trust and cooperation. Picking up a gun and threatening to kill a federal officer or employee with it is an act of betrayal, in my opinion, of subtracting yourself from the system.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Why do you represent these anti-drone activists?

**JONATHAN WALLACE:** I love these people. They combine gentleness, compassion, intelligence and pacifism in a way that I personally find beautiful. And I am a working litigator in New York, but I spend between a third and a half of my time just working for them for free. And a big part of the reward is being in their company.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Mary Anne Grady Flores, can you talk about your family's activism?

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** Yes.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Your peace activism goes way back.

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** Yes, it does, Amy. But before I go there, I'd just like to make a distinction about civil disobedience versus civil resistance. So, for example, the eight Catholics that I was photographing from the road, they were all acquitted, because when they went into trial, they were able to say, "We went to the base to uphold law. That was our intent, to uphold law, to say we have to sound the alarm of what's going on at the base. There's war crimes going on there." You were in the courtroom, Amy, with some of your other producers when Ramsey Clark came in and described the international laws that are being violated there, which are very connected. There's a whole chain of laws that connect the local statutes of trespass and also disorderly conduct, which were the charges that we've been given there, all the way up to the federal rules decision and then on to the international law, which are the treaties that we have signed onto, including the U.N. Charter and other laws which protect life.

And so, we go there, and my family has been doing this for generations now, and my children have participated in this. My sister Clare is going on trial with Harry Murray. There's a whole list of people that are coming up on trial, trials that are happening in the near future. Harry Murray is going on trial, I think, on the 26th. But go to the Upstate Drone Action [website](#), go to YouTube, punch my name in, punch in the Hancock actions, Hancock trials, and you'll see and you'll hear the testimony that we've been giving to the local judge, because we've only had violation charges up until this time. Now we have—well, I shouldn't say that. There have been other people receiving misdemeanor charges—Mark Colville and many people. We've had—

**AMY GOODMAN:** But, Mary Anne, what you just—

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** —over 160 arrests at Hancock.

**AMY GOODMAN:** What you just said, that the protesters you were filming, they all were acquitted. And it was an amazing scene, by the way—

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** Yes.

**AMY GOODMAN:** —being in that courtroom. It was not exactly a courtroom. I mean, it's a place where, what? Traffic violators go, where you get your dog license? I mean, this is where people—

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** That's right. It's a town facility where they use one big room with chairs that come in, and, you know, they could set it up as a courtroom in the evening. And so, to go back to the laws, though, and what's happening is that we understand that civil resistance is something that we want every movement to look at, in that we are standing in law to protect life, and that's what we go to witness for. Whether it's to close Guantánamo, whether it's to protest on behalf of Black Lives Matter, civil resistance speaks about us having the right to stand under the law to do what we're doing.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Would you do anything differently?

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** No, I wouldn't, because we have to go there, we have to support those who go there, and we have to continue the witness there. Colonel Ann Wright wrote a statement, which I was so grateful for. She called me last night from Honolulu, and she'll be calling in during our press conference when I report to the jail. And she said, "With 29 years in the U.S. military, I find it quite embarrassing and ludicrous that a U.S. military commander decided that his personal security is so threatened by peaceful, nonviolent protesters of the drone policies of the U.S., that he applied for an order of protection from the

courts—and that the courts issued the order, without any evidence that any protester had ever seen the commander, much less constituted a threat to him." She said, "I would have expected a U.S. commander to have had the courage to meet with the group of concerned citizens rather than obtaining a cowardly order of protection." She said, "Had I been the commander, I certainly would have met with the citizens and would never have contemplated getting an order." So—

**AMY GOODMAN:** You're reading the words of Colonel Ann Wright.

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** —I thought that was quite amazing. So, yes, my family has been involved, but it's always done in the context of community—the Atlantic Life Community, the Pacific Life Community, the Catholic Worker Movement and many, many people, the upstate drone community—or resistance community, I should say. We've named ourselves Ground the Drones and End the Endless Wars, and we speak about that because the main policy of the United States, from Obama down, is to continue the profiteering, whether it is from building drones, which happens right up here in upstate New York, and we've got tons of grant money coming in to flood our communities with military contract jobs. And we need to switch this oppressive thing, which ends up hurting—and then, when you look at the young men that are drawn into the drone program to become pilots or operators, they walk out with a feeling of "I've got blood on my hands and on my soul." It's irreparable damage that our nation is experiencing. And this is something that we have to question and we have to say no to.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Mary Anne—

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** We have to say yes to life, yes to joy, yes to celebration and supporting one another, and end the killing, which is ending up—we are having the blowback with these situations like the attack in Paris and in other cities around the world and what happened at the World Trade Center. I would say we've got to stop. We need to pull back. No other country on the planet has over 700 military bases around the world.

**AMY GOODMAN:** I understand that your mom is very ill, and you're one of her caretakers.

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** Yes.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Does she understand what you have done? And what are your thoughts, the possibility that you might not see her again, being in jail for six months?

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** Well, I had a conversation with Mom, and she was amazing. I told her that if she had to leave, that she—I asked her, "Please come visit me," with her spirit, if I was in jail. And she said, "I will." And I said, "Mom, pray for me." And she said, "I will." And she said this with a whisper the other night. But then, yesterday, I went to the house, and she was sitting up eating whitefish with capers on it. So, I don't know what's happening with Mom. And I'm so grateful for her having taught us that this is the way that we have to live in these times. Hopefully, some day it won't be, for our children and grandchildren and for the sake of the drone victims, that they are not living under the fear of the blue skies, which allow the drones to fly and to see what's going on on the ground.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Finally—

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** I'm wearing a blue scarf today, and the kids from Afghanistan were the ones that sent this bolt of cloth, inviting us, that some day we could live with the vision of the future of blue skies, of peace, without—and, you know, nations, but not necessarily nations that are rigid, nations that are porous, nations that share love and resources with one another. And so, the kids at this moment in Afghanistan are afraid to live under blue skies. They'd rather see a grey sky, so that they can feel safe.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Because the drones are less likely to fly on a grey day.

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** So, I'm grateful for my mother for having given us this example, because she and my father and, you know, all the—as they say, the cloud of witnesses before us, you know, those that have gone before us, our elders, like Dorothy Day, like Phil Berrigan, Jerry Berrigan, who we remember as he passed just last year—many people have gone and been the witnesses before us to show us the way. So, I am—

**AMY GOODMAN:** Mary Anne, you are your father's daughter, John Peter Grady, who was a well-known antiwar activist. Share with us his history.

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** Well, Dad was one of the Camden 28. And they're—the action happened in Camden back in 1971, and the feds nabbed the group because there was an informant in the group. And they were slapped with seven felony counts. He was facing 47 years in prison. And they went to trial two years later, in 1973. And the group was called the Camden 28. And there is a book out by Ed McGowan called

*Peace Warriors*

, and it gives the history of the trial, which was historic. I happened to meet Supreme Court Justice William Brennan on the back porch of my cousin's house in Nantucket, and when my cousin's husband introduced me as the daughter of John Peter Grady of the Camden 28, Justice William Brennan said, "That was one of the greatest trials of the 20th century." And at the time, I was only 16, and I didn't fully comprehend what he was talking about.

But those defendants that went to trial shared incredible stories of the suffering of the Vietnamese people at the time. And by 1973, it was a time after the incredible movement of the veterans, from inside the military, from the students, from the clergy, across every sector of society within the United States, including the media coming out with the truth of what was going on in Vietnam. The jury was ready to hear the fact that what these people did, of going in and ripping up draft files, was the right thing to do, because it was upholding and—preventing death, upholding life, and so that the 28 were acquitted, which was a first of all the different draft board actions. And my father was able to come home free.

I'll never forget the time I was—well, I was 14 at the time when he was arrested. And to meet him behind the thick plated glass was really difficult. And it was a real learning point, that many poor people go through on a daily basis. African Americans are subjected to this all the time. We know of who the prisons are filled by, you know, in terms of the policing policies and the policies of the injustice system.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Mary Anne, I—

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** And so, I am grateful to have been given such extraordinary parents and—

**AMY GOODMAN:** I want to ask—



**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** —and the community, the rest of the community. So—

**AMY GOODMAN:** I want to ask Jonathan Wallace: Is there a chance that this sentence will be commuted?

**JONATHAN WALLACE:** Well, I think that the judge today does have the authority to make some changes to his own sentence, if he sees fit. And in any event, I do understand, from Mary Anne and her fine attorney, Lance Salisbury, that the appeals process will continue to New York's Court of Appeals. And I think the odds are very strong, on appeal, that the free speech elements of this will be recognized, and this conviction will be vacated.

**AMY GOODMAN:** But until then, you're turning yourself in in Syracuse. What jail will you serve in, Mary Anne Grady Flores?

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** I will be in the Jamesville Correctional Facility, and people can go to the website. Please don't come run up at the—without calling our visit coordinator, because we've got a lot of family that need priority. But we are so grateful for the outpouring of love across the country. There has been thousands and thousands of people responding to this. And so, we want people—we invite everybody across the country to say, "Stop the use of drones. Stop the assassination program. We don't want that in our own streets, so why would we allow that to happen elsewhere." You know—

**AMY GOODMAN:** And, Mary Anne, the figures—how many people have been arrested protesting at Hancock? How many people have been convicted? And how many people have gone to jail?

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** I don't remember. I'm sorry I didn't bone up on all those figures last night. But—

**AMY GOODMAN:** I think you were a little distracted, preparing for prison.

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** —there has been over 160. Is that correct, Jonathan?

**JONATHAN WALLACE:** Yes, that's the number that I've heard. But I think that if you do go in tonight, you'll be only the second person I'm aware of to serve any time as a result of a conviction. And—

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** Yeah, Jack Gilroy was the other heroic—

**JONATHAN WALLACE:** That's correct. And we've had many other people who were—

**MARY ANNE GRADY FLORES:** Well, he—none of us want to—I shouldn't use that term, because this is not about heroism at all. This is about just doing what we need to do. And we invite everybody else to do it with us, and you'll be amazed at the grace that comes when you take that stand.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Thank you for being with us, drone resister beginning a six-month jail sentence today. Jonathan Wallace, an attorney who has worked extensively with the drone resistance movement, thank you so much.

**JONATHAN WALLACE:** Thank you.