

By [Upstate Drone Action](#)

On Thursday morning, January 28, thirty life sized cutouts of Syracuse peacemaker Jerry Berrigan blockaded the main entrance of Hancock Air National Guard Base outside Syracuse, NY. The cutouts were accompanied by twelve nonviolent drone resisters, who were arrested after blockading for an hour and a half.

Jerry Berrigan, who died on July 26, 2015 at the age of 95, dedicated his entire life – like his brothers Dan and Phil – to Jesus' command to love one another, Jerry came to the base on a bi-weekly basis whenever he was able, in his words, "to remind the base commander of our government's pledge under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, a treaty to safeguard non-combatant's well-being in any warzone in which U.S. forces are engaged in combat." And further, "to register horror and indignation at reports of bombing missions by drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan which resulted in the deaths of many innocent civilians; men, women and children."

Former CIA analyst Ray McGovern was among those standing with the Memorial in the roadway. Others were Beth Adams, Bev Rice, Bill Ofenloch, Brian Hynes, Charley Bowman, Ed Kinane, James Ricks, Joan Pleune, Joan Wages, Pete Perry and Steve Baggary.

They were all charged with one misdemeanor and two violations, with the exception of Bev Rice and Joan Pleune, who were both charged with an additional misdemeanor (for allegedly violating an order of protection taken out by the base commander).

In 2008 Jerry was asked if there was anything he would change in his life. Jerry replied, "I would have resisted more often and been arrested more often." The activists brought Jerry's image to the gates to remember that this is where he would be, speaking out and putting his body on the line to say a clear "NO" to killing.

The group also remembered [Mary Anne Grady Flores](#), who is serving a six-month sentence for violating an order of protection, taken out by the colonel at Hancock Air Base. Clearly, courts in NYS believe that a colonel at this highly armed base needs protection from citizens

calling attention to the drone killings.

More and more evidence mounts regarding the illegality of U.S. drone policies, from the [“Drone Papers”](#) published by The Intercept, to the [four drone pilots](#) who have come forward to speak out about what this policy is doing. The activists tried to deliver a letter addressed to the Hancock military personnel stating that “Under the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice you must not be complicit in these crimes against peace, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In fact, you are required to disobey unlawful orders from a superior.”

Hancock Air Base deploys hunter/killer Reaper drones 24/7 over Afghanistan and probably elsewhere. These weaponized robotic drones are instruments of terror. They perpetrate extrajudicial killings, violate due process, violate national sovereignty, and kill non-combatants and civilians.

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### ***Statement from group***

We come to the gates of Hancock Drone Base today to install a memorial of Jerry Berrigan.

Jerry Berrigan, who died on July 26, 2015 at the age of 95, was a husband, a father, a brother, a teacher and someone who – like his brothers Dan and Phil – dedicated his entire life to Jesus’ command to love one another. Jerry came to the base on a bi-weekly basis whenever he was able, in Jerry’s words, “to remind the base commander of our government’s pledge under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, a treaty to safeguard non-combatant’s well-being in any warzone in which U.S. forces are engaged in combat.” And further, “to register horror and indignation at reports of bombing missions by drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan which resulted in the deaths of many innocent civilians; men, women and children.”

As more and more evidence mounts regarding the illegality of U.S. drone policies, from the “Drone Papers” published by The Intercept, to the four drone pilots who have come forward to

speaking out about what this policy is doing, we bring Jerry's image here to the gates to remember that this is where he would be, speaking out and putting his body on the line to say a clear "NO" to killing. Because Jerry Berrigan knew that it matters where we put our bodies.

In 2008 Jerry was asked by The Syracuse Post Standard if there was anything he would change in his life. Jerry replied, "I would have resisted more often and been arrested more often." In our memorial today we use an image of Jerry from The Syracuse Post Standard where he is being arrested for opposing the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

As we are installing this Jerry Berrigan Memorial Drone Blockade, we also remember Mary Anne Grady Flores who is serving a six month sentence here in the Onondaga County jail because the courts in this county believe that the colonel at this highly armed base needs protection from citizens calling attention to the drone killings. We challenge the courts to apply the law as it was meant to be applied; to protect victims not victimizers.

Syracuse has a great history of men named Jerry and resistance to injustice. We call to mind "The Jerry Rescue" memorial that stands across the street from The Federal Court house where Syracusans in 1851 literally got in the way of the illegal and immoral Fugitive Slave law and the officials who tried to take a man named Jerry back to enslavement in the South. They opened the prison gates for him to go to freedom. Our intent for this memorial today in honor of Jerry Berrigan, is to get in the way of the illegal and immoral use of killer drones. And to stand in solidarity with all those resisting other injustice – from Black Lives Matter to those putting their bodies to halt climate change.

Thank you Jerry Berrigan for your life and example. Your Spirit lives on!

In peace,

Beth Adams (Leverett, MA), Bev Rice (Manhattan), Bill Ofenloch (NYC), Brian Hynes (Bronx), Charley Bowman (Buffalo), Ed Kinane (Syracuse, NY), James Ricks (Ithaca), Joan Pleune (Brooklyn), Joan Wages (Roanoke, VA), Pete Perry (Syracuse, NY), Ray McGovern (Arlington, VA), Steve Baggaly (VA)

***Letter to Hancock Military Personnel***

HANCOCK REAPER DRONE WORKERS:  
HONOR YOUR OATH

To the men and women of the 174th Attack Wing of the NYS National Guard:

Each of you, when you joined the United States Armed Forces raised your right hand and solemnly swore to uphold the United States Constitution. Article VI of that Constitution states:

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

This clause is known as the Supremacy Clause. The Supremacy Clause declares that when the U.S. ratifies international treaties, those treaties become the “supreme law of the land.” This means they trump all local and federal law – including the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice.

One such treaty is the United Nations Charter. Signed by the U.S. president in 1945 and ratified by a Senate vote of 89 to two, that Charter remains in effect today.

The Charter’s Preamble states that its purpose is to “save future generations from the scourge of war.” It further states, “all nations shall refrain from the use of force against another nation.”

This U.N. Treaty applies to all levels – federal, state, and local – of the three branches of our government – Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The personnel of all these entities must act consistent with U.S. treaties and obey the U.S. Constitution, including Article VI.

Under the U.N. Charter and under long-established international law, anyone – civilian, military, government official or judge – who knowingly participates in or supports illegal threat or use of force against another nation or its people is committing a war crime.

Men and women on duty at Hancock AFB: Four of your colleagues, veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, formerly operating weaponized drones at other U.S. bases, have – courageously – gone public about drone war crimes they acknowledge committing.

The 174th Attack Wing of the NY Air National Guard deploys hunter/killer Reaper drones 24/7 over Afghanistan and probably elsewhere. These weaponized robotic drones are instruments of terror. They perpetrate extrajudicial killings, violate due process, violate national sovereignty, and kill non-combatants and civilians. They bring dishonor on the United States and upon its armed services.

Under the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice you must not be complicit in these crimes against peace, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In fact, you are required to disobey unlawful orders from a superior.

Those protesting here today are exercising our First Amendment right to petition our government for a redress of grievances (the vile use of our tax money). We urge you to do the honorable thing. We urge you to heed your conscience.

*From the Upstate Drone Action Coalition: Ground the Drones and End the Wars, 28 January 2016*