



Desert Voices

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Greetings from the New NDE Coordinator

by Jim Haber

The elections are over. Everyone was talking about change; now, let the real change begin. I was deeply moved by the global sigh of relief that followed our elections. No one knows how many compromises President-Elect Obama will make, and where he will take principled stands in line with his background as a community organizer. Campaign pledges aren't binding, and we can't count on the new president to reverse decades of U.S. nuclear hypocrisy. Hopefully, Barack Obama will become the first U.S. president since the nuclear bomb was invented not to threaten to use one on a non-nuclear armed country. Such threats violate the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and unless he hears widely from disarmament advocates, he may follow more offensive advice.

NDE is a shoestring operation with two part-time staff and a third one who is retired and supported by her religious community. **We can't do it alone, and we need your financial support as well as your participation in whatever way you are able.** NDE has raised its profile in the Las Vegas area with three of us here now. We are bringing necessary attention to the Reapers and Predators of nearby Creech AFB. (See adjacent article.) We continue, because of our persistent but open-hearted nonviolent resistance, to inspire "first-timers" as they begin to question the media, challenge the state, and even break the law as an act of civil disobedience.

Travel costs are higher than ever. We bring people to the desert, to see it is not a wasteland. We also travel to network with activists, whether it be for the Indigenous Environmental conference in Northern Nevada, to the Think Outside the Bomb conference in Boston or to demonstrate with compatriots outside Vandenberg Air Force Base. We remind people that war preparations continue at the NTS and that "stockpile stewardship," "full spectrum dominance" and "complex transformation" all fuel the nuclear arms race and turn every conflict zone into a potential nuclear nightmare. NDE's proximity to the Nevada Test Site, the most bombed place on Earth, and also to Nellis Air Force Base, the most heavily armed place on Earth (because of their nuclear stockpiles), makes our continuing work all the more essential.

Thank you for your generous support. NO NUKES!

Drone Warriors Another Threshold Crossed

by Louis Vitale, OFM

In a recent article in the Las Vegas Review Journal, military and environment writer Keith Rogers quotes Colonel Christopher Chambliss, commander of the U.S.'s 432nd Wing, in heralding the new MQ3 Reaper, big brother to the MQ1 Predator, the latest in the U.S. fleet of "Unmanned Airborne Vehicles." The colonel reflects on the time nine decades ago when military leaders were beginning to grasp the value of piloted aircraft that led the U.S. to domination of airspace and ultimately the intimidation of the world through the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan.

Jonathan Schell's latest book *The Seventh Decade* updates us on where we have come with the "atomic bomb" since that time. We have become the "Superpower" who holds the world in check through global domination with the fear of nuclear annihilation through our 12,000+ nuclear weapons available from air, land sites and sea. Noted psychiatrist and author Dr. Robert Jay Lifton has further illustrated the debilitation of the one dropping the bombs. He speaks to a severe "numbing" of the psyche that happens through the size of the weapons and the distance from the victims on the ground.

The new drones that are flown from Creech Air Force Base near Las Vegas (in the fashion of a video game) 7,000 miles from the target extend the numbing even further. Here young enlisted men in the Air Force sitting side by side with more experienced pilots guide missiles to their targets as in a video game. But these are real missiles and even 500 pound bombs on the Reaper. Our daily newspapers and TV broadcasts show us the impact on dwellings, schools, and hospitals. These bring the fleeting sense of dropping a bomb from 35,000 feet to an immediate sight of bodies in plain view. Commanders report the impact on some crews, especially the sensors who control the cameras and use laser beams to guide the missiles to their targets. Chambliss speaks of the difficulty some of the younger crew members have when they return home to their families after the bombing runs and that they need to hire more chaplains and psychologists for their aid.

Long time observers of the impact of the Afghanistan/Iraq war, such as humanitarian/activist Kathy Kelly, who

Continued on page 3 - Creech Drones

Why We Protest at Ft. Huachuca

A Statement of Southwest Witness Against Torture / October 2008

Gandhi teaches us that nonviolence needs to be practiced in places of institutionalized violence.

We practice nonviolence at Ft. Huachuca - headquarters of U.S. Army military intelligence training - to protest the policy of cruelty our country has carried out against captives in the so-called "War on Terror."

We practice nonviolence at Ft. Huachuca to open dialogue with soldiers and commanders about their rights and obligations to report cases of torture and cruel treatment. We call on enlisted personnel to speak publicly about their training and any abuses they have observed.

We practice nonviolence at Ft. Huachuca to protest our government's increasing use of private contractors - with little to no oversight or accountability - both as instructors and as part of interrogation teams in the field.

We practice nonviolence at Ft. Huachuca to call for civilian, human-rights centered oversight of all interrogation training and practice, which must include absolute prohibition of cruel treatment and command responsibility for any violation of this prohibition.

Our nonviolent presence joins growing, deepening movements throughout the world calling for an end to war and torture everywhere. We act in solidarity with the campaign to close the School of the Americas/Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation at Ft. Benning, Georgia, where the testimony of torture survivors has informed our outrage and moved us to action. We know that torture diminishes the humanity of both perpetrator and those who are tortured. It damages the very soul of our country.

We are told that basic training in military interrogation at Ft. Huachuca respects the Geneva Conventions and follows the U.S. Army Field Manual. Yet, despite the efforts of many honorable soldiers and commanders who respect human rights, this training has been inadequate to prevent abuses of prisoners in U.S. custody at Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib and other military prisons and secret detention centers around the world.

What is being taught in the field and in advanced courses about interrogation? What is happening in this dark space between training and the field? Has the policy of cruelty practiced by some U.S. military, CIA, FBI, and private agencies been integrated into military doctrine and advanced training? Does such activity take place at Ft. Huachuca?

We understand that secrecy and deception are part of the nature of military intelligence. We challenge this institutionalized silence, because torture and cruelty betray not only the Constitution of the United States, but who we are as a people. In a democratic society, such silence must not prevail.

To break this silence, interrogators and all other personnel (including private contractors) must be taught when and how to resist illegal orders that violate the laws of war, the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. They must be taught their obligation to speak out against such orders, and to report abuses to their superiors. And they must receive guarantees that speaking out will not lead to retaliation or punishment.

Ft. Huachuca's role in past military involvement in torture training must also be brought to light. Such involvement includes the creation of notorious manuals used at the School of the Americas to teach Latin American military personnel how to torture. Undoubtedly, records



NDE Council Member, Louis Vitale, OFM and staff members Megan Rice, SHCJ and Jim Haber make their views on torture known. Louis and Megan were two of the three people arrested, but not charged presently, for crossing the line at Ft. Huachuca.

about past and contemporary use of torture exist at Ft. Huachuca. We call for the release of all such information, both past and present.

It is time for a light to shine on the darkness that has been hidden behind the walls of Ft. Huachuca.

Monsignor Oscar Romero of El Salvador said, "Love begins where violence ends." To end the violence of torture and war we will stand at the gates of Ft. Huachuca. Together let's build a world without torture.



Cortez Hills Expansion Project

Help stop the proposed massive Barrick Gold Mine

From an Action Alert by Great Basin Mountain Watch & the Western Shoshone Defense Project

Mount Tenabo is an important area for Western Shoshone cultural and spiritual practice, and many Shoshone individuals and tribal governments oppose the mine. We strongly believe that these cultural and spiritual values, which have been important for centuries and which can remain so for many generations to come, are fundamentally more valuable than a mine which will last less than 15 years, but devastate the area forever.

The mine would effectively dewater Mount Tenabo, which would have devastating impacts on the regions wildlife, vegetation and general ecology, as well as the cultural and spiritual values for the Western Shoshone.

This is the first time Great Basin Resource Watch has outright opposed a mine. This mine is simply proposed for the wrong location, and must not be allowed to go forward! It is also legally required that the BLM deny this proposal, due to the irreparable harm it would cause to the clear and recognized cultural and spiritual values of the area. Unfortunately, we expect that BLM will not follow the law, and will permit the mine.

This mine would:

- Disturb 6,792 acres of land, including a heap leach and waste rock facilities.
- Blast the new Cortez Hills mine pit approximately 900 feet in length, 6,400 feet in width, and a maximum depth of 2,200 feet.
- Pump groundwater from around the pit with an average dewatering rate of approximately 1.8 billion gallons per year for ten years.
- Create a drop in the water table of 1,600 feet surrounding the pit, decreasing to 10 feet at a 3-4 mile radius of the pit.
- Potentially impact 50 springs and seeps in the area.

On November 16, three people were detained and released without charge at Ft. Huachuca. The weekend's events were particularly well organized including a teach in, a prayerful evening of poetry, theatre, music, candle light procession and vigil on Saturday. The rally, march and vigil on Sunday were very moving, and the counter-demonstrators couldn't break the 300 people's spirits or resolve.

- Of the 11 non-Cortex Gold Mine water rights impacted, only one is expected to recover fully within 100 years after dewatering ceases.

The permanent impact to the cultural and spiritual practices of the Western Shoshone is undeniable. Mt. Tenabo has been, and continues to be, used by Western Shoshone people as a central part of their religious practices and world view. Western Shoshone visit the mountain and the valley below (the location of the mine pit) for prayer ceremonies, gathering of sacred plants, fasting, and vision quests, among other uses. The Mountain also contains Western Shoshone gravesites. All of these values and uses will be destroyed by the project. In addition, the massive pumping of groundwater will likely dry up sacred springs and streams on and around Mt. Tenabo.

The BLM has never denied a big mining project in Nevada. This is one BLM must deny. It is not ok for the BLM to allow the destruction of a Western Shoshone church.

For More Information:

***Great Basin Resource Watch – www.gbrw.org
777.348.1986***

***Western Shoshone Defense Project – www.wsdp.org
775.468.0230 or 775.744.2565***

Continued from page 1 – Creech Drones

have experienced firsthand the enormous sufferings of the 2,000,000+ victims are eager to travel to Waziristan and other frontiers between Afghanistan and Pakistan to see up close what the Predator and Reaper crews see on their screens. BBC viewers worldwide were treated to this dramatization of a British Reaper crew, U.S. coalition partners, actively engaging in attacks.

Here in Nevada, with the Creech headquarters of the UAV 432nd Wing nearby, part of the same land space shared with the Nevada Test Site, the bombing range operated by Nellis Air Force Base, and other sites of new and lethal weapons, the scandal of Creech's remote and earth-shattering war, we cannot dare fail to address the damage and destruction both on the Middle East battlefield and on its own crews.

With other Nevada partners we have begun vigils at the gate to the Drone base. We have carried out signs of concern, taken a letter to the base commander Colonel Chambliss and heard their ownership of "causing groans" and making "kills." We pray and we weep. As with recent developments of torture, this is a frontier we did not want to pass. They intimidate the world and leave us all in fear and trembling. We are pledged to call attention to the truth of these atrocities and take active measures to put an end to their existence.

*Join us to transform fears into compassion
& apathy into action.*



*A Communal Pilgrimage to
America's Nuclear Sacrifice Zone*

2009 Annual Sacred Peace Walk
Las Vegas to the Nevada Test Site
April 6 - 13

We walk in the footsteps of a long legacy of peace walkers and spiritual leaders to draw attention to the nuclear dangers that continue to threaten our sacred planet and the community of life.

This walk includes a Passover Seder; a Lenten Desert Experience; and observances of Hindu, Buddhist and other holy days. Rituals and meditations are planned and conducted by the walkers. It concludes on Easter Sunday. Some people do only part of the walk. Some also choose to do an arrest action on Monday. Most nights are spent camping with help from a Las Vegas support team.

The 63 mile journey begins in Las Vegas to meet, get oriented, and solidify our intentions; a Good Friday action at Creech Air Force Base, a control-center for missile-laden Predator & Reaper pilotless drones; contemplative time at the Sekhmet Goddess Temple in Cactus Springs; and on to the Nevada Test Site, the most bombed place on Earth.

Suggested donation is \$150 (sliding scale)

Consider sponsoring a low-income walker

Deadline to apply is March 1

NevadaDesertExperience.org

702.646.4814

info@NevadaDesertExperience.org

A WARNING
PETER EDIGER

WE HAVE A NEW NEIGHBOR.
HE MOVED IN UNANNOUNCED.
HE IS ARMED AND DANGEROUS.

HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE KILLED MORE THAN ONCE.
HE STRIKES UNSUSPECTING VICTIMS WITHOUT
WARNING.

HE HAS NO CONSCIENCE.

HE IS PROGRAMMED TO KILL WITHOUT QUALMS.
HE HAS LOST ALL HIS HUMANITY.

HE HAS NO HEART.

HE LIVES AT THE CREECH AIR FORCE BASE,
INDIAN SPRINGS, NEVADA.

HIS ARMS REACH AROUND THE WORLD.
HIS NAME IS PREDATOR.



The Reaper MQ9, the younger, newer, more deadly sibling to the Predator, is also remote-controlled from Creech AFB about 35 miles north of Las Vegas.

The upcoming Sacred Peace Walk will include a "Lenten Desert Experience" harkening back to NDE's original gathering from which its name is derived. Holy Thursday will be celebrated at the community center in Indian Springs. Good Friday Stations of the Cross will be re-enacted at Creech Air Force Base.



Fr. Jerry Zawada, OFM (left) and other ADW 2008 participants, many new to activism, joined other demonstrators to relay a variety of concerns to then-Presidential nominee John McCain who was speaking to a veterans group on the Las Vegas Strip.

August Desert Witness 2008 by Chelsea Collonge

Graced with the presence of leaders in the United Methodist Church from Southern California, this year's August Desert Witness was a whirlwind of different actions for nuclear abolition.

The event began with a book-signing event with Ret. Col. Ann Wright, who talked about her new book, *Dissent*, which profiles the many government and military officials who resigned to protest the war in Iraq.

On Friday we began our successful *Earth, Air, Fire, and Water* teach-in with a talk from Gard Jameson, UNLV professor and chair of the Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada, about the Earth Charter Initiative and "our moment in history." On Saturday we continued the teach-in with presentations on Yucca Mountain from Steve Frishman, Technical Policy Coordinator for the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects, Judy Treichel, Executive Director, Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force, Inc. and John Hadder, Program Director of H-O-M-E: Healing Ourselves and Mother Earth. We also watched a gripping movie to mark the 63rd anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, called *Original Child Bomb*. It was evocative and artistic, full of both pain and beauty, but few words, letting the images and footage speak volumes.

On Saturday evening we drove out to the Goddess Temple in Cactus Springs for a beautiful sunset prayer service. Candace Ross, Priestess of the Sekhmet Temple welcomed us and explained the history of the land and of the site. It featured a Dance of Universal Peace led by Brian Kimmel, a local meditation teacher in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Fr. Louis Vitale and Fr. Jerry Zawada both also spoke about their faith-witness and work in service of the poor and against war and oppression. We



Presenters Takashi Tanemori, Retired Col. Ann Wright and Steve Frishman (counter-clockwise, the three people in the foreground) enjoy lunch with other ADW 2008 participants.

then drove to the Test Site to engage in nonviolent civil resistance at the line; 17 were detained, some for the first time ever or the first time in years.

On Sunday, a number of our group stayed a while longer in Las Vegas in order to voice our concerns on the strip where John McCain was appearing. With signs we sent a clear message: No to Yucca Mountain! No to new nuclear power plants! No to new nuclear bombs!

Throughout the weekend Takashi Tanemori, an artist and writer from Berkely, CA who survived the bombing of Hiroshima honored us with his beautiful presence. His stunning art exhibit, *Bridge to Forgiveness*, had just



Participants in the 2008 ADW ready themselves to cross the line at the Nevada Test Site. Several first time arrestees expressed feeling liberated by the experience of challenging the government's policy in this way, despite their fears.

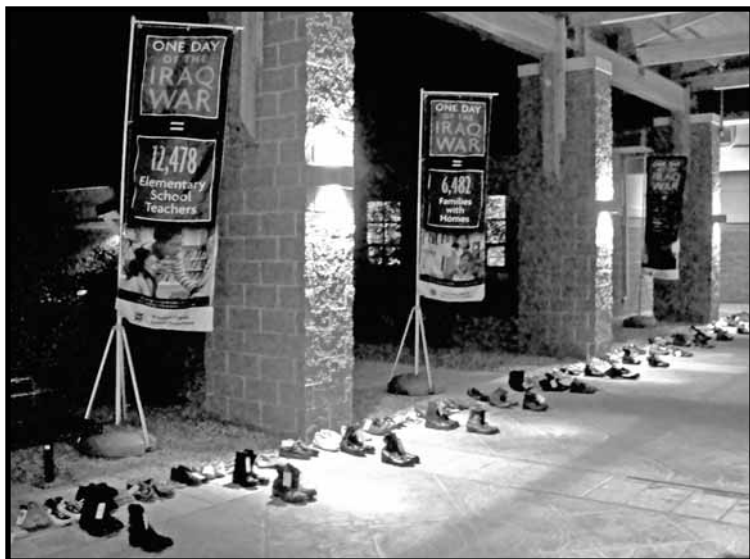
opened at the Atomic Testing Museum, where his art was displayed through September. We were blessed to hear Tanemori-san speak twice, first to our group and publicly at the museum. His rich artwork shows the context of World War II, depicting the history of Japan-United States relations over the last 150 years. His life is a beautiful testimony to all practitioners of nonviolence: that the creation of true peace between nations and peoples is possible through cultivating an overarching spirit of forgiveness, even in the face of horrible atrocities.

NDE's *Friends of the Desert* help sustain the important work we do throughout the year. A true blessing, *Friends of the Desert* contribute monthly or quarterly to ensure that the basic operating needs of NDE are met and free up staff resources for program work instead of fundraising.

Contact the office or click the Donate button on NevadaDesertExperience.org where you can use a credit card or checking account via PayPal.

Eyes Wide Open-Nevada

NDE is State Coordinator for Evocative Memorial about the "Cost of War"



The Pahrump Community Library and Patrons extended a very warm and grateful welcome to the exhibit.



College of Southern Nevada's Cheyenne campus is a stone's throw from Nellis Air Force Base. Despite this proximity to a popular military base, most passersby were grateful for this reverent but political questioning of the "Cost of War."



Gold Star grandmother Katie O'Brien of Pahrump holds the tag bearing the name of her grandson, the late Travis Virgadamo, U.S. Army Specialist, age 19.

After Memorial Day 2007, Eyes Wide Open was divided among states so it could more easily be viewed in smaller towns and venues.

Displaying it in Reno and Carson City (for Nevada Day), as well as Pahrump and the greater Las Vegas area provided an opportunity to hear people's feelings and concerns about Iraq, war in general, and also nuclear issues that are so central to NDE's calling.

To learn more about Eyes Wide Open visit these websites:
www.afsc.org/cost & www.afsc.org/eyes

Los Alamos National Lab Prayer-Action Update

Marcus Page

On April 14th, 2008 two members of Trinity Nuclear Abolitionists (TNA) were arrested for praying at Los Alamos National Laboratory in opposition to war taxes. The two men were part of a group of six who held vigil during daylight hours on April 14th & 15th. Charged with trespassing on Department of Energy (D.o.E.) land, both men say they were praying openly along the public road in county territory, and they believe the Laboratory has no rights to conduct nuclear weapons work anywhere. Several of the prayer-action participants have been involved with Nevada Desert Experience activities.

One defendant, Mike Butler, made a plea bargain in September and was on probation for only a month. The other defendant, Marcus Page, previously had a mistrial in August. Page was subsequently notified of a new arraignment for a slightly different version of the trespassing charge. Los Alamos Police are taking the D.o.E.'s side in the argument, believing that the public needs to see that "trespassing" on D.o.E. land carries consequences. Because the prior trial utilized a jury which failed to reach consensus on guilt or innocence, neither the D.o.E. nor the Los Alamos Police are satisfied with the public message from the jury that the issue of the legality of praying on National Laboratory land is debatable.

For more info see the Trinity Nuclear Abolitionist website: <http://tna.lovarchy.org>

NDE CALL TO ACTION

Join Nevada Desert Experience in one of our nonviolent direct actions or invite us to make a presentation or prayer-offering to your community or congregation. We are grateful for your prayers and financial contributions too!

Nevada Desert Experience

1420 W. Bartlett Ave.
Las Vegas NV 89106
702.646.4814

info@nevadadesertexperience.org

www.NevadaDesertExperience.org

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To save money and resources, please email me when the new *Desert Voices* newsletter is posted on-line instead of mailing it.

Enclosed is a check for:

\$500 \$125 \$65 \$35 \$25 other _____

I want to donate monthly or quarterly as a NDE "Friend of the Desert." Please contact me.

Contact us for more information about

Lenten Desert Experience Sacred Peace Walk
August Desert Witness Immersion Programs
Other Collaborative Ideas

NDE does not share our list; nor do we send lots of e-mail. E-mail is very helpful for our organizing.

February 27 - March 1, 2009

Third Annual Pacific Life Community
Faith & Resistance Retreat in
Olympia-Lacey, Washington and
Direct Action at Trident Submarine Base
Bangor, Washington

<http://pacificlifecommunity.wordpress.com>

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for peace this New Year's Eve.

<http://mauipeace.org>

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Please visit www.NevadaDesertExperience.org for the latest news about the Test Site and the nuclear abolition movement

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Desert Immersion Programs

NDE Immersion Programs provide college or high school groups, religious communities or other organizations an opportunity to learn about the relationships between nuclear weapons and indigenous sovereignty, environmental degradation, militarism and economic justice. Possible immersion activities include:

- visit to the Nevada Test Site, Creech Air Force Base and the surrounding desert
- discussions with members of the Western Shoshone Nation and other local Native American communities
- prayer or ritual at the Sekhmet Goddess Temple in Cactus Springs
- serve with the Catholic Workers on their morning soupline and participate in their weekly peace vigil
- picnic at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area
- tour of the Atomic Testing Museum
- vigil on or tour of the Las Vegas Strip

Immersion trips range from two to seven days and can be scheduled as alternative Winter or Spring breaks, during the Summer, or to coincide with religious holidays

Contact NDE, and let's tailor-make a meaningful, rewarding desert immersion experience for you and your group!



Peace and Joy to you and Yours this Holiday Season. Best wishes for a blessed 2009 from all of us at Nevada Desert Experience.

Nevada Desert Experience's Mission

To stop nuclear weapons testing through a campaign of prayer, education, dialogue, and nonviolent direct action.

To mobilize people of all faiths to work toward nuclear abolition and nonviolent social change.

To support personal renewal in the desert tradition, reconnecting with each other and the earth.

To end subcritical tests and other war-making preparations at the Nevada Test Site and preventing the return of full scale nuclear testing.