



Desert Voices

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Activists Protest at NTS, Creech

by Betsy Lamb

The September 25-27 celebration of the 20th anniversary of NDE's sister organization, Pace e Bene, overlapped with "Five Days of Action Against the Drones" at Creech Air Force Base in Indian Springs, NV. The Pace e Bene weekend of speakers, workshops and action was concluded with a day in the desert, including a vigil at Creech and an action at the Nevada Test Site in which 14 women and seven men were arrested and cited.

Activists from various groups including Nevada Desert Experience, Pace e Bene, CodePINK Women for Peace, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom and Progressive Democrats co-mingled from around the country at the Test Site and at Creech for the "Five Days" starting on Sunday, September 27.

Since 2006 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)—another term for the drones—have killed 20 militant leaders out of 750 to 1000 dead, including approximately 500 low-level "enemy combatants" some of whom were assuredly conscripts, most of whom have families that must be outraged.

Several activists felt so strongly about halting the military's use of drones that they were willing to risk arrest Monday afternoon as they attempted to meet with the base commander to dialogue about alternatives to the military's use of UAVs to hunt down, track, and kill human beings—the great majority of them civilians—7000 miles away in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Activists with NDE, Pace e Bene and CodePINK—including David and Jan Hartsough, Xan Joi, Betsy Lamb, Gene Stoltzfus, and Frs. Louie Vitale and Jerry Zawada—were taken to the Clark County Detention Center in Las Vegas, where they spent the night and were released at various times throughout the following day. They were charged with "assembly to disturb the peace" and being a "pedestrian in roadway." The morning of their release, Sr. Megan Rice of NDE was also arrested for a nonviolent action and charged with another traffic-related misdemeanor.

Street drama and banners accompanied the anti-drone vigils, at which law enforcement officers appeared excessively present. In what most consider acts of police harassment, five additional misdemeanor arrests were made (for minor traffic violations or obstructing the police), and three other traffic citations issued, between Monday and Wednesday. On the last day, four protesters were met by at least 20 police officers from three different agencies, as well as four officers mounted on horseback, and several military observers. One demonstrator was arrested for obstructing police as she attempted to video a police officer 50

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Environmental Impact & the Nuclear Weapons Complex

by Jim Haber

Both the Nevada Test Site and the Y-12 plant at Oak Ridge, Tennessee are undergoing updates of their respective Site Wide Environmental Impact Statements (SWEIS). A wide range of issues should be considered in preparing any SWEIS. For nuclear weapons facilities, the forest must not be lost for the trees; i.e. the environmental problems of the entire complex must not be far removed when looking at any one site. The public comment period for determining the scope of the NTS SWEIS closed in October, and NDE supporters submitted over 120 comments in just 3 days. Extensive comments were sent in by allies Tri-Valley CARES and Western States Legal Foundation. Thank you all.

Comments can still be submitted in response to the Draft SWEIS for Y-12. The current deadline is January 29. For detailed critiques of the Y-12 draft and suggested talking points, visit the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA) website www.stopthebombs.org. The following 11 points were NDE's specific comments submitted to the Nevada Site Office calling for a broad scope to the NTS SWEIS:

1. The scope of the SWEIS needs to include the consideration of closing the NTS in its entirety. Nothing

in the world can cause as much environmental devastation in as short a time, lasting for as long a time as nuclear weapons. Closing the Test Site would be a concrete, confidence-building sign to the world that the United States will not enlarge or reshape its nuclear stockpile and is sincere in working for nuclear disarmament.

2. The Western Shoshone National Council should have the final say regarding any of the work mentioned in this message or the SWEIS. The Nevada Test Site land rightfully belongs to the Western Shoshone Nation, and their wishes should be paramount. The Treaty of Ruby Valley (1863) grants their Nation the NTS land and more. Special use by the US military and for other specific uses that have not been negotiated with them are thus illegitimate. The Western Shoshone National Council doesn't support the continued contamination of their land nor its ongoing use for the preparation of nuclear war.

3. Specific proposals included in the SWEIS need to be analyzed for the impact they would have on the prospects for the US to move the world towards reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. The environmental cost of nuclear weapons is so large as to necessitate its consideration at every turn. Proposed NTS work needs to ensure that it doesn't hinder successful negotiations with other countries and groups to prevent the spread of

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"Ms. Panty Gone" (Mary Sprunger-Froese) rallies the troops in September as Alex Cherup isn't quite sure if she's for real.

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yards away citing another demonstrator for honking her horn in support of peace.

"I feel sorry for military personnel who risk life and limb in another country or sit here at Creech with their joysticks, killing innocent people and thinking they are protecting my right to protest, —and then have to watch me being arrested for attempting to exercise that very right," says Xan Joi, one of the arrestees from CodePINK.

Focusing on a possible court date for the majority of arrestees, an additional "Ten Days of Action" were held at Creech from November 22—December 2, with NDE collaborating with Code Pink on publicity, personnel and logistics. CodePinkers came in three waves to cover various parts of that period, led, respectively, by Toby Blome, Nancy Mancias and Xan Joi. About a dozen individuals—including Nancy and Frs. Louie Vitale, Jerry Zawada and Steve Kelly—joined at Creech in a nationwide four-day fast to protest UAVs over Thanksgiving. The 3rd group was comprised of 14 from California, including Cindy Sheehan, co-founder of Gold Star Families for Peace.

The court date for most of NDE's Creech resisters passed; with no charges filed by the District Attorney's office, no appearance was necessary. Sr. Megan's court date awaits her on December 22.

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nuclear weapons. NTS projects must lead the country forward in its obligation to eliminate nuclear weapons from the US arsenal. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) makes any testing of, or improvements to nuclear weapons a violation of international law and hence the laws of the United States. Maintaining our ability to develop new generations of nuclear weapons undermines our moral position as a nation in the face of any other country developing nuclear weapons capabilities. Article VI of the NPT clearly binds the United States (and other nuclear states) to be disarming, not merely promoting non-proliferation.

4. No quantity or quality of environmental education programs like "Operation Clean Desert" with its "Dr. Proton" and "Adam the Atom" justify keeping the NTS open. There is no single polluter that compares with the United States military. Nothing in the world can cause as much environmental devastation in as short a time, with such long term consequences as nuclear weapons. Any educational programs conducted by the NTS or its managers must first and foremost emphasize the toxic impacts of the nuclear complex on the land and lives of nearby people as a warning against further contamination and destruction.

5. If not closed in its entirety, the Nevada Test Site should be closed to all but environmental restoration and containment of material already there. No new hazards or toxins should be introduced to this environment. Specifically, no more low-level or mixed-level waste sites should be opened.

6. At least one of the test shot sites needs to be characterized fully to track off-site drift of contaminants. Over 1000 nuclear detonations have occurred at the NTS already. Monitoring wells upstream of contamination sites can establish a baseline but additional systems are needed around Pahute Mesa and beyond. Evidence of plutonium drifting much faster than expected needs further study. Cumulative exposure also effects other potential uses in and around the NTS.

7. While individual countries have an interest in being able

NDE will continue to support people from outside the area who want to call attention to the drones as their popularity with the military and their ability to perpetuate an antiseptically insidious form of warfare increase. NDE plans to assure that vigils at Creech continue at least on a monthly basis and also dreams of initiating a local debate on the subject of UAVs, between knowledgeable individuals, including local military experts.

Peace activist Betsy Lamb is a long-time friend of NDE's from Bend, OR



Jerry, Louis and Ralph standing with CodePINK women in November.

to verify treaty compliance, the United States needs to focus more on taking concrete steps towards disarming than worrying about other countries. Any project such as the Nonproliferation Test and Evaluation Complex (NPTEC) needs to be conducted in support of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) mandate to monitor NPT compliance. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Organization has the task of monitoring compliance with the CTBT, not the United States, which still hasn't actually ratified it in the Senate. Given the history of "downwinders" being harmed by fallout from the NTS, the actual safety provided by the NPTEC site's "large safety zone for public protection" needs to be real and substantial. As stated previously, the Western Shoshone Nation needs to approve of all uses of the NTS especially in cases involving introduction of new toxins into the environment.

8. The Tonopah Test Range (TTR) should cease all activities related to R&D and testing of nuclear weapons components and delivery systems as inconsistent with the mandate of disarmament. The same is true for the Joint Actinide Shock Physics Experimental Research (JASPER).

9. No new sub-critical tests should be carried out. Such tests, under the guise of Stockpile Stewardship, undermine US credibility vis a vis the elimination of its nuclear arsenal.

10. The Renewable Energy Option has potential for positive use, but the Western Shoshone should determine what happens at the NTS.

11. The lives of workers at the NTS are important, but developing or maintaining nuclear weapons shouldn't be viewed as a jobs program.

Jim Haber is coordinator of NDE.

On behalf of the National Council and staff of NDE, let me offer a prayer for a healthy, happy holiday season for our readers and friends. May the new year and decade see our work bear fruit. May the culture of peace of which we're a part, be a source of comfort and inspiration the world over. -Jim

Aviation Nation 2009

by Peter Ediger

Last night I was reading Vincent Harding's book *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*. This morning Jim Haber and I go to the Nellis Air Force Base Open House. I slip on the NDE T-shirt with the King quote:

"A nation that continues to spend more money on military might than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

That quote keeps haunting me as I join the celebrative crowd on this beautiful Fall morning. There is something awesome about those Thunderbirds racing across the sky. There is something awesome about what we humans can do.

What could happen, I wonder, if we would invest the amazing human and material resources which we build into our military into programs of social uplift instead?

A few people in the crowd comment positively on my T-shirt. But when I take a picture of Jim posing in front of the Predator drone, holding a sign saying "Drones kill people and peace," while I'm holding a sign saying "In God we trust?" with the God xed out and the predator inserted, several security guards take note. They escort us to an area where the Deputy Director for Security at Nellis, William Garrett, asks us about our purpose in being there. He asks us to not display the signs and for me to remove the T-shirt. We agree on the signs, but I indicate I'll keep the T-shirt on. Jim has a letter written to Col. Gertsen, Commander of Creech Air Force Base, expressing our concern about the drones. He asks Mr Garrett to deliver it to the General. He assures Jim he will do that.

We go back to the drones. I get into a vigorous discussion with a Christian who is convinced God wants to kill our enemies, and that it's rude for me to wear the King t-shirt at this occasion. I'm left with the question, how close to spiritual death are we?

Jim Haber adds: They had a video display of a plane on the ground at the air show. The image was taken by a Predator in the air 10 miles away and 20,000 feet above ground. No wonder people fear they're being watched all the time and live in mortal fear of the drones.

Late Breaking Good News!

Western Shoshone prevail at Ninth Circuit Court on Mt. Tenabo. The court issued a ruling enjoining the Barrick Gold Corp. to postpone its proposed Cortez Hills open pit mine. They agreed with Western Shoshone and allies that the Interior Department's applitely violated federal law.

For more information on the Cortez Hills Project, Mount Tenabo, and the legal challenge, go to www.gbrw.org (Great Basin Resource Watch) and www.wsdp.org (Western Shoshone Defense Project).

Desert Voices! is edited by Jim Haber. All photos by Jim Haber.
Paper is 30% post-consumer recycled.



Above: Sally, Peg and Ken at the NTS during the Pace e Bene 20th anniversary celebration.

Left: Peter, not looking as amused as the boy seeing how light the deadly Predator is at the Nellis Air Show.

Below: Codepinker and initiator of the Thanksgiving Action Fast, Nancy Mancias holding NDE's ubiquitous drone banner with Peter. Fr. Steve Kelly in town with Susan Crane after their Plowshares Action at the Trident Base in Bangor, WA is doing double duty in the foreground.



Thank You NDE!

As I recently discovered during my four day, Thanksgiving Fast at Creech, you give amazing support and were immensely helpful and welcoming. I know other out-of-state, grassroots organizers agree. This is such a vital and resourceful organization. Your work towards nuclear disarmament is more crucial now than ever before despite the rhetoric coming out of the White House. As the war in Afghanistan increases, NDE's place at the forefront in bringing public attention to the horrific Predator and Reaper drones looms ever more important. The NDE office is perfectly placed where there don't seem to be many peace activists. Good luck. We need you!

-Nancy Mancias, CodePink Women for Peace organizer

NDE: Help Wanted!

Room and a small stipend are available for an interested activist organizer. We have a lovely, if a little dilapidated, live work house with a wonderful courtyard in an enclave we share with Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service. Experience the desert life with us. It is powerful and sacred, as the Western Shoshone and others have known for millenia. Short or long term. Contact Jim for more details: jim@NevadaDesertExperience.org

Cameras: our small digital camera is on its last leg, and we also need a video camera (even a simple "Flip" one) for legal observation at actions and for sharing our work online.

Legal Observers: NDE, in conjunction with the ACLU of Nevada is planning a training in how to be a legal observer at demonstrations. Useful knowledge about your rights in police encounters will be provided too.



Few Words, Clear Message

Thanks to a couple of NDE supporters who visited over August 6 to 9, Nevada Desert Experience has a

commemorative brick outside the Atomic Testing Museum for visitors to ponder.

ICBM Test Launch Watch

A Vandenberg ICBM test was postponed on Nov. 18. The US continues to threaten N. Korea over their relatively impotent missile program even though the USAF tests 4 to 6 truly intercontinental missiles a year. Join the growing international movement against missile tests. Visit VandenbergWitness.org.

"The notices to the outer islands of the Marshalls warning of dangers in and around the impact area were broadcast, and I took special exception to the notion that the military can decide when and where our fishermen may fish, or what islands are accessible to local folks, even if outside the test area of Kwajalein." -Tony de Brum, Marshall Islands Parliamentarian representing Kwajalein Atoll

NPT Review Conference New York City, May 2010

The planned activities include: a massive global petition campaign, and international peace conference (April 30 and May 1), and an International Day of Action for a Nuclear Free World (May 2). The NPT Review itself is May 3 to May 28 at the UN.

During the first week signatures collected all over the world will be presented calling on the states parties to fulfill their disarmament obligations. Sign the US petition at UnitedforPeace.org.

Resistance for a Nuclear-Free Future Celebrating 30 Years of the Nuclear Resister & Nukewatch July 3, 4 & 5 2010

at the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex, Oak Ridge, Tennessee

A national gathering to advance the role of nonviolent direct action for nuclear disarmament and a nuclear-free energy future. Hosted by the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance.

Contacts: nukewatch1@lakeland.ws nukeresister@igc.org
Nukewatch.com NuclearResister.org StopTheBombs.org

Join us to transform fears into compassion & apathy into action



A Communal Pilgrimage to America's Nuclear Sacrifice Zone

**2010 Annual Sacred Peace Walk
Las Vegas to the Nevada Test Site
March 29th to April 5th, 60 miles**

*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.
We come to heal this, the most bombed place on Earth.*

Register today! Gathering sponsors for this walk is an "easy sell" and is a big help to NDE. It's a great way to educate your friends & family about all the issues that are touched on with this journey.

Contact the office for more details

Disarm Now Trident Plowshares

On Nov. 2, 2009, five people undertook to disarm the Trident II missiles at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, as an outcry against the illegality and immorality of such weapons. "We are responsible... for this threat of first-strike terrorism hanging over the community of nations, rich and poor... Such planning, preparation, and deployment is a blasphemy against the Creator of life, imaged in each human being."

<http://www.photo.jonahhouse.org/disarm-now-plowshares/>

*Announcing the Nevada Desert Experience
2010 August Desert Witness*

The Meaning of Guardianship

*A Retreat and Public Commemoration of the 65th Anniversary
of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombings*

August 5 to 9, 2010

Nevada Test Site, Creech AFB, and in Las Vegas

*Join Joanna Macy, Daniel Ellsberg, Deena Metzger,
Takashi Tanemori, Kathleen Sullivan, musicians Jennifer
Berezan and Joel Kroeker and others*

Journey into new understandings of what Guardianship may mean in our lives and our nation, and open to insights, powers and practices that can sustain us in solidarity with past and future generations.

Limited space for retreat; Interfaith commemoration events at Nevada Test Site and Creech AFB on August 6 and August 9 open to the public. Contact NDE for details.

info@NevadaDesertExperience.org (702)646-4814