

Resisting the Afghanistan - Pakistan War

By [Jeff Leys](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Fourteen peace and social justice activists were arrested on April 9 at Creech Air Force Base in Indian Springs, Nevada. The arrests occurred during a 10 day vigil at the gates to Creech—which is home to members of the Air Force who “pilot” the Predator and Reaper drones used in the Afghanistan – Pakistan war.

Participants in the Sacred Peace Walk (organized by Nevada Desert Experience) arrived at Creech in the late afternoon, after walking 14 miles that day en route to the Nevada Test Site. With the vigil’s numbers strengthened by the walkers, participants gathered together to reflect upon the lessons to be learned from the examples of the White Rose student movement in Nazi Germany and Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s work to oust Hitler from power through a coup attempt.

The White Rose distributed fliers calling upon the German people to actively resist their country’s continuation of the war and to work for the downfall of Hitler. For this act, many were executed. Bonhoeffer returned to Germany from the safety of the United States in order to participate in the work to overthrow Hitler. In explaining his decision to return to Germany, rather than riding out the war in the U.S., Bonhoeffer said that the choice before the German people was clear—to work for a German victory in the war and thereby destroy civilization or to work for Germany’s defeat such that civilization might survive. He wrote that he could not make this choice from the safety of the U.S. but, rather, must return to Germany to act upon his convictions despite the risks.

As the reflections upon the White Rose and Dietrich Bonhoeffer drew to a conclusion, the Ground the Drones campaign vigil began to move towards the main gate of Creech Air Force Base. Remarkably enough, the gates were left open and fourteen people entered the base.

Air Force security personnel immediately ordered the fourteen to stop and to leave the base. The fourteen sat down to defuse any tension in the air yet firmly informed the Air Force that they intended to remain. They were seeking an audience with the men and women who work and serve at Creech so that a conversation might take place regarding the on-going use of the Predator and Reaper drones in the Afghanistan – Pakistan war. Needless to say, their request for such a conversation did not carry the day.

The Nevada State Highway Patrol was called to the scene, as well as the Las Vegas Metro Police. The Creech 14 were offered a deal in which, if they agreed to walk off the base, they would be issued a citation and released on the spot. All fourteen declined to walk off the base. Subsequently, the state and local law enforcement agencies arrested the fourteen on the charge of trespass. The 14 were transported to the Clark County Detention Facility to be booked, processed and, hopefully, released on a personal recognizance bond with a date to

return for court proceedings. As of this writing though, it is not certain whether in fact all fourteen will be released on their own recognizance or whether, instead, they will be held on cash bail.

This act of nonviolent resistance points the way forward to build opposition to the expansion of the U.S. war in Central Asia. Earlier this week, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced that he will seek additional funding in the Department of Defense budget to build and sustain an additional 50 Predator and Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles. This will be a 62 percent increase in the military's capability to utilize drones in on-going warfare. Secretary Gates comments follow up on President Obama's earlier decisions: 1) to continue attacks along the Afghanistan - Pakistan border (including attacks into Pakistan itself); and 2) to increase troop levels first by 17,000 followed by another 4,000 troops. As well, President Obama is seeking over \$80 billion in additional supplemental funds for this fiscal year alone (which ends on September 30) to fight the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Those arrested at Creech Air Force Base came from all parts of the country, north to south, east to west, and included: John Dear, S.J. (New Mexico); Kathy Kelly (Chicago - Voices for Creative Nonviolence); Louie Vitale, O.F.M. (Oakland); Renee Espeland (Des Moines Catholic Worker); Steve Kelly, S.J. (California - Pacific Life Community); Judy Homanich (Binghamton, NY); Jerry Zawada, O.F.M. (Arizona); Mariah Klusmire (New Mexico); Dennis DuVall (Arizona); Elizabeth Pappalardo (Illinois); Brian Terrell (Strangers & Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Maloy, Iowa); Eve Tetaz (Washington, D.C.); Brad Lyttle (Illinois); and Sister Megan Rice, S.H.C.J. (Nevada Desert Experience).

To learn more about the Predator and Reaper, please visit the website of the Nevada Desert Experience (<http://www.nevadadesertexperience.org>) or email Voices for Creative Nonviolence at info@vcnv.org.

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