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September 2010

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

« Aug
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Vegas drone trial makes history

posted by **Jason Whited**
Tuesday, Sep. 14, 2010 at 10:24 PM

Drone

Fourteen anti-war activists may have made history today in a Las Vegas courtroom when they turned a misdemeanor trespassing trial into a possible referendum on America's newfound taste for remote-controlled warfare.

The so-called Creech 14, a group of peace activists from across the country, went on trial this morning for allegedly trespassing onto Creech Air Force Base in April 2009.

From the start of today's trial, prosecutors did their best to keep the focus on whether the activists were guilty of allegations they illegally entered the base and refused to leave as a way to protest the base's role as the little-known headquarters for U.S. military operations involving unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, over Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan.

But a funny thing happened on the way to prosecutors' hope for a quick decision.

Appearing as witnesses for the Creech 14 today were some of the biggest names in the modern anti-war movement: Ramsey Clark, former U.S. attorney general under President Lyndon Johnson; Ann Wright, a retired U.S. Army colonel and one of three former U.S. State Department officials who resigned on the eve of the 2003 invasion of Iraq; and Bill Quigley, legal director for the New York City-based Center for Constitutional Rights.

By the time those three witnesses finished their testimony as to why they believed the activists had protested at the base, they'd managed to convince Las Vegas Township Justice Court Judge William Jansen to delay his verdict for four months — and had managed clearly to frustrate prosecutors.

For the better part of the day, Clark, Wright and Quigley testified under direct questioning from witnesses and a surly cross-examination from the Clark County district attorney's office.

Each witness spoke eloquently, and at length, about the need for nonviolent civil disobedience in the face of criminal actions by the U.S.

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Vegas drone trial makes history
09/25/2010 01:54 pm
31 Comments
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8 Comments
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09/21/2010 03:06 pm
5 Comments
Neon Reverb, 09.18.10: Can't stop won't flop
09/20/2010 09:09 pm
2 Comments
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09/19/2010 11:12 am
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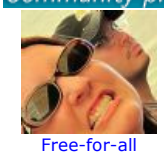
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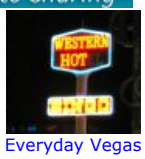

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government — which is how most in today's anti-war movement and many international observers have characterized America's drone war.

"[People] are allowed to trespass if it's for the greater good — and there are certainly exceptions [to the law] when there is an emerging, urgent need," said Quigley, while on the stand.

By all accounts, the Creech 14 trial is the first time in history an American judge has allowed a trial to touch on possible motivations of anti-drone protesters.

No one knows how Jansen will ultimately rule, but most took it as a good sign when, at the end of the day's proceedings, applause flooded the courtroom and Jansen sent the Creech 14 — all of them part of a robust Catholic anti-war movement — on their way by echoing the words of Jesus Christ with his call of "Go in peace!"

Look for the full story in the Sept. 23 edition of *Las Vegas CityLife*.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, September 14th, 2010 at 10:24 pm and is filed under CityBlog. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

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26 Responses to "Vegas drone trial makes history"

Really great comments they gave me hope that everyone in America isn't paranoid about terrorist attacks, some of which may be "home grown"?

It looks like a lot of the Americans commenting just want peace for their fellow man, good on you guys and girls.

Written by: Bob the Aussie on Saturday, Sep. 25, 2010 at 1:54 PM

Very interesting article. However, and as a side-note: you may want to host your blog somewhere else besides godaddy; your site's load time is rather slow. I'm assuming you host your site at godaddy because their sites are notorious for slow load time as a result of server overload.

Written by: Dave on Saturday, Sep. 25, 2010 at 10:59 AM

To all the prosecutors that support war and mis-understand the Rights given to free men by the Constitution – gotcha!

Further more, "Government Land" is the people's land not some obtuse group of overseers! We didn't vote for ANY of these so called, "Government Representative of the People"!

They DO represent the international bankers who OWN our Government Representatives! Murderous Traitors!

Our tax dollars are used to kill innocent people, which makes ALL of us accomplices-es to murder! We pay to murder people. WE PAY FOR OFFENSIVE WEAPONS THAT MURDER CHILDREN, MOTHERS, DAUGHTERS, SONS, AND FATHERS!
None of this murder protects MY freedom or ANY of our freedom. It makes us more at risk for retribution! So quit lying about our safety. The threat is from our own war-machines!
Think about this, why was there SO MUCH planning already in place and weapons ready to go, prior to 9/11? Think our Government Representatives aren't capable of killing our own citizens?
How many thousands of our soldiers have they sent and still sendings to Iraq and Afghanistan to die? Is knowing that 4,000,000 Iraqis and Afghans have been murdered make you a bit scared about OUR GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE? Four million dead at the hands of American invaders! Four million souls gone because of your financial support!
Look in the mirror everyday in the morning and you will see the face of a person that supports murder! Also, you will let it continue as long as you don't care…..freedom to ignore….
Written by: God Is Watching You on Saturday, Sep. 25, 2010 at 6:51 AM
Drones have proven to ineffective,especially in Pakistan where you hear everyday 20 or 30 people die for lord knows what.we seen it in Afghanistan and Iraq.all wars have one thing in common,they make the rich richer and the leaders more powerful and corrupt.stop the wars and bring all the troops home and investigate them all for war crimes,genocide,massacres and treason against America.
Written by: Ih8zionists on Saturday, Sep. 25, 2010 at 6:38 AM
In an open democracy it is the right of the people to protest and be heard. And what better forum then a public trial?
Or have we become that nation that we fought against in 1943?
Are we afraid to hear a dissenting opinion?
Perhaps we should all cheer when a drone missile kills everyone in a wedding party. Right On America? Does it make you proud? It happened.
Where was the outrage? Where was the protests?
Does it bother anyone that what you say here might land you on the no fly list?
After all Big Brother is watching and capturing all our emails, phone conversations, faxes, and online blogs.
Where are the protests?
It seems that Justice William Jansen has a lot on his plate and an opportunity to help America return to the land of the Free and rule of our Constitutional Law which has been shredded during the bush administration through the act, and aftermath, of 911.
What if we all joined the 14 in Vegas and protested these two illegal wars and the use of killer drones.
Will their names be added to the no fly list? Will

yours?
Written by: Rick on Saturday, Sep. 25, 2010 at 6:31 AM
Las Vegas Township Justice Court Judge William Jansen asked: "Aren't there better ways of making changethan breaking the law?"
The answer is Yes. Arun Gandi is on the right track when he writes: "You can quote me as saying Mahatma Gandhi would disagree with the Plowshares actions because they employ tactics of secrecy and destruction of property. I also think locking up the most courageous and devoted peace leaders for long prison terms is a way of weakening the peace movement. Those leaders could do much more for peace outside of jail than in it." (The Jesus Journal – Summer 1995 – No. 77 – page 44)
"Common people who are not directly involved in social debates and political conflicts have their lives to live, they become angry at those who are disturbing their lives or damaging property that has to be repaired using public funds. Thus the average person, whose support is often necessary for lasting success, is alienated. Rather than leading to a resolution, they escalate the conflict and create more deeply entrenched opponents." (Legacy of Love by Arun Gandhi – page 132)
Written by: William Horan on Friday, Sep. 24, 2010 at 1:36 PM
Well done….sane actions from a small group of steadfast decent people.
Next please!
Written by: Jim McCall on Thursday, Sep. 16, 2010 at 3:21 PM
Thank you John. A mirror can be a powerful tool.
Written by: Baruch on Thursday, Sep. 16, 2010 at 2:44 PM
Bauch not sure what you're saying now. I stand accused of giving my opinion? Of course it's my opinion. That's all anyone can give. You have given yours too! I will leave it to others to decide which one is based on the soundest judgement, evidence, logic and deduction. You just seem to spray the 'globalised' word around as if that means anything! If I said athletes are generally fit am I 'globalising'? Come on wise up here. Your soft logic betrays the paucity of your arguement. To paraphrase Kant "Some things I'm afraid are self evidently true". Irrespective of your semantic gymnastics. Semantic gymnastics – another thing peace campaigners/activists (in my opinion born of experience and ongoing observation) are good at. It's the real world they struggle with. Go on, read my detailed post again. This time with an open mind. You know your mind is like a parachute: It works best when it's open!
Written by: John on Thursday, Sep. 16, 2010 at 2:39 PM
John I understand that for you the defense of necessity is "subjective,self serving and disingenuous." That doesn't mean it is actually those things, just that you see it that way. Your globalizing of your POV is very evident in your posts.

Again, just because you know these folks and offer your opinion doesn't mean your opinion is right.
Your latest post contains more globalized stuff. We must agree to disagree because I think the stuff you are saying is trite and designed to make you feel comfortable with your conformity more than anything else.
Written by: Baruch on Thursday, Sep. 16, 2010 at 12:59 PM
Baruch read the whole post and you will see I have addressed and dismantled the 'defence of necessity' as purely subjective,self serving and disingenuous. Not just me though the vast majority of philosophers have done so before me and far better than I could. Am I OK with blood on my hands? How trite! Yes in as far as I would have been when we were fighting Hitler or the despots in Sierra Leone more recently. I have the courage to acknowledge this. You hide behind the whole vested interest argument as if the rest if us just can't see it (poor us!). If it were that important (blood on our hands!) then the referendum of the ballot box would have highlighted so in the past. As far as I know not a single peace party has ever won any kind of significant vote anywhere in the Western world! Wonder why? And why do the 'activist' not allow their views to be voted on by not putting up candidates anywhere?. Could it be that deep down they know what the result would be? Do they care – no- because in their minds they are right! This is what I mean by ego. With respect I was close to these guys and therefore quite qualified to offer an opinion on their motives. More so than you are to judge mine. The truth is painful. Doesn't stop it being the truth though!
Written by: John on Thursday, Sep. 16, 2010 at 10:45 AM
John, there has been no referendum on this policy. The laws are made by people with agendas that have to do with money and power over resources. Your rationale that "these misguided people" are breaking the law and that, essentially, there is no defense of necessity, absolves you of taking responsibility for your part in the murder of human beings by, in this case, US drone killer robots. If you are ok with having that blood on your hands, then so be it. Some people of conscience are not, and they speak out breaking the laws you tout which are made not from altruism but in the name of corporate power and greed.
You mentioned in an earlier post that your own activism at one time was ego driven. Everyone has an ego. That is not a dismissal of anyone's motives. The fact that you did not remain an activist confirms your own assessment that your ego was the primary driver of your activism. Just because that was/is true for you does not mean it is true for all activists. Many remain sincerely committed to political activism beyond their more egotistical youth.
Written by: Baruch on Thursday, Sep. 16, 2010 at 9:40 AM
Linda I know they can, will and should be prosecuted but I respectfully submit that you

miss the point. I am questioning their motivation and rationale. You know what: I feel passionately about this. However I will not break the Law to get you to see my point of view!
To take your point regarding 'not in my name' first. Well collective decision making is the cornerstone of democratic government. You may not like it but it is a tried and tested formula that works. Those who dismiss this rarely have an alternative. Don't you see if the roles were reversed and we pulled out of those areas (Pakistan, Afghanistan etc) and stopped using drones it is likely that many 'good' citizens would be engaging in actions because their government are standing by, failing in our duty to be 'good Samaritan's and allowing enslavement of Women and barbaric Sharia law etc. etc. etc. Not to mention providing safe havens for terrorists. You see I came to realise what most logical people accept: That there will always be differences of opinion but who 'wins' in any debate in large civilisations cannot (must not) for humanities sake be decided by who is prepared to make the greatest sacrifice for their cause/faith etc. It follows logically therefore that, there are things we should have the serenity and good grace, to accept at times however abhorrent if we want the benefits of a democracy! Demonstrate-yes, of course, but within the law. If others hear you but disagree – move on! Otherwise you allow your arrogance to supersede sense in order to serve you ego.
What I believe is just as important as that of any 'peace activist'. The silent majority should not be dismissed! Rather seen as the outraged majority should the desires of these misguided people be acceded to. If it were any other subject they would be dismissed. But 'in the name of peace' or 'not in my name' or 'swords into ploughshares' sounds so worthy, so capable of shaming those who 'disagree'. It is not until a logical examination of the issues is conducted that the falsehoods become evident.
One or two people on here have referred to the second world war. You know, they should note that the allies did kill defenceless civilians in the course of legitimate operations as well. For that reason should we have stopped fighting as many pacifists at the time would have wanted? Of course not. That would have allowed a greater evil to be done. We do not live in a perfect world. War can never be sanitised. Sometimes though (and the overwhelming majority of people accept this) it is necessary and people,even innocents sadly will die in the prosecution of an inevitable defence of freedom. It is truism that 'peace is not bestowed on us. Rather it is something we have to fight for; sometimes literally sadly; Many brave people have done so and died for this principle in the past. We owe them. These protesters are not fit to be named in the same breath.
In their community suffering for the cause (especially a prison sentences) is a badge of honor where you show your peers just how much you are prepared to do for the 'cause'. This affords status and kudos (who wouldn't

want some of that? -especially if you have low self esteem- in my experience most of them do!). They have a ready made community, people who 'care' like and for them. In some cases payment for book deals, giving talks etc. will follow giving more incentive to make your 'actions' more and more disruptive (knowing full well at all times that it will be a token gesture that in and of itself will not stop a war and in most cases not stop a single bullet being fired).
For all the reasons outlined the anti-war/peace activist movement is therefore a self perpetuating, self important and self congratulatory manifestation In so many ways, and I do not say so lightly, they are the cowards who will not fight for peace but who cover this up by perversely decrying those who do – in the name of peace! That is why we must not ignore them as a small, but well meaning sect. They threaten the fabric of our hard won freedoms. They wave their metaphorical ploughshares in the air and try to shame us into believing that we should just all be nice to each other,turn the other cheek etc. and all will be OK. If history has taught us anything it is that despots and tyrants don't run with the same logic. They do not prize democracy and they would have beheaded these 'protesters' in a heartbeat. This is where we would be now if we had listened to the appeasers (like Chamberlin in Britain before the war). Don't let yourselves be seduced. There is too much at stake!
Written by: John on Thursday, Sep. 16, 2010 at 9:30 AM
"By all accounts, the Creech 14 trial is the first time in history an American judge has allowed a trial to touch on possible motivations of anti-drone protesters."
Actually, a necessity defense trial just wrapped up in Tacoma, WA last month regarding a port militarization resistance action. Daniel Ellsberg was among a series of expert witnesses that testified. The defendant lost by jury decision but the case itself was significant and compelling to attend.
You can read about the story here:
http://www.olywip.org/site/page/article/2010/09/01.html
And you can read the defendant's perspective here:
http://www.olywip.org/site/page/article/2010/09/13.html
Written by: Sergei on Thursday, Sep. 16, 2010 at 12:02 AM
Johnz, I can make the character judgement because I too was a peace activist at one point! Until I realised it was mire about my ego than world peace. Not surprised you mention Ghandi et al: these guys really do think they are on a similar mission and it was the defence I always heard when challenged about Law breaking. I am sorry but there us no moral or logical equivalence here. The difference is that today's peace activists (they are really pacifists you know) are against war-full stop! The drone thing is a smoke screen. They are against killing. You see in simplistic terms that all sounds fine and dandy. What right minded person could

disagree? But of course when it comes to armed conflict the subtleties are far greater. Down the ages even churches agree with a 'just war'. The activists hate that society has listened to them (over and over again – they love the publicity they get from these stunts- it is their oxygen- the amount of self congratulation that will be going on now in their circles is nauseating) but the vast majority of us disagree. So they just dismiss us and refer to other anacronistic arguments about slavery etc. You see in their world because of their arrogance nothing we can say or do will change their minds because Gid is on their side (where have I heard that before) as for wanting to be judged by the Law – no. They want to use it for publicity. They think we will look at them and say "gosh if those good people are prepared to do that for what they believe maybe they have a point". A bit like the rationale a suicide bomber uses really.
Written by: John on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 11:31 PM
Correction: my comments were directed to JOHN.
Written by: Linda in Texas on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 7:51 PM
Jack: this is not carte blanche for activists to have open access to a base or building or site to do a protest with no consequences. Anyone who does a similar action can be arrested and charged with whatever the police choose to charge them with. They can go to trial and state their case. They can be found guilty or not guilty. If found not guilty, that does not mean that they can go back and do the same action and expect that security will open the door and let them in. It just means they could get arrested and charged and put on trial for the new action to be found guilty or not guilty. They are speaking out against immoral policies of our government that claims to act in our name. No, not in MY name. The use of these drones in a misguided policy that kills innocent people, it is KNOWN to kill innocents, and it is making the situation extremely dangerous for our soldiersand creating animosity towards our gov't. And our gov't refuses to stop doing this.
Written by: Linda in Texas on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 7:50 PM
It is odd how often folks attribute motivations to "activists" without ever entering into a dialogue with them. It is as if the arena for political discussion and action is ceded to people who run for political office or wish to run for political office, and the citizenry are just folks who complain about what they are doing and who may or increasingly may not show up at a voting booth. Congratulations to my fellow citizens who have the courage to risk censure by the State for standing up to it.
Written by: MaryAnne on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 7:00 PM
John, I don't know how you can know what these activists feel (that they 'love' theater or 'get a kick' out of feeling 'superior) but aside from your character judgments, people do break the law to serve a greater good. Witness Rosa

Parks, King and Gandhi. Like the Creech 14, they did not flee prosecution by the law, but rather chose it. And by it they too will be judged.
Written by: Johnz on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 2:15 PM
Like Rosa Parks, MLK, Ghandi and so many good people before them, the Creech 14 dare to stand up against the terror of US foreign policy, specifically the remote-controlled killing (mostly of innocents) by these awful drones. Like the people of London during the German V1 and V2 attacks, people in Pakistan and Afghanistan live in fear of our military's attacks. We should expect blowback in the form of reprisals for many years to come from surviving family members of the innocents killed, due to our barbaric arrogance. People like the Creech 14 are should be honored, and joined in this worthy protest.
Written by: john lee on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 1:52 PM
I applaud Judge Jansen's decision both to allow expert witnesses and to study the issue in this landmark case of citizen action. We all must wake up to the insidious weapons we're using on the innocent people of other lands.
Drones used to be the worst nightmare of science fiction–now they're a reality. OUR reality, and it's our responsibility to speak out against them and demand that they be removed from our arsenal.
Written by: Rosalie Riegle on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 10:17 AM
Good article, and good for these peace activists, and should the defense of necessity prevail, good for the world! When citizens stand up against illegal and immoral acts taken by their government, even though some may not understand, it is a profound service they are doing for the rest of us. I am grateful.
Written by: Baruch on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 8:03 AM
Jason, while most of the defendants are Catholic, not all are! You might poll them and correct the print version.
Written by: Jack on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 6:58 AM
These well meaning but delusional 'activists' may well be appeasing their own 'conscience' but the fact that they are misguided at best is no excuse for the complete waste if money involved processing them through the legal system. Let's get serious here; if we indulge them where do we stop. Any kind if 'peaceful' protest as long as it is in the name of 'God' must surely be allowed fir the sake of consistency and as long as they seem like the week meaning type capable of persuading other similarly deluded but powerful people to speak on their behalf with a great sense of 'theatre' (they love the theatre!) No of course not. That is why Law is rightly kept separate from religion.While on this Earth they should be judged by the Law. Not their God. You know if I broke into their homes and broke their legs to prevent their crimes (I happen to believe they would be guilty, by default, of

perpetratimg mass murder and enslavement of whole populations I'm Afghanistan and Pakistan) I would expect the full force of the Law. Irrespective of my claims to be acting to prevent 'worse' crimes or whoever spoke I'm my defence and regardless of how many passages from the good book that were uttered. You see despite their deliberate obfuscation these guys get a kick from feeling they are standing up for what is 'right' in the face of our mass apathy. They are 'superior'. We don't get it…..yea right!
Written by: John on Wednesday, Sep. 15, 2010 at 6:44 AM
Great article, dude!
I look forward to the City Life release of this story. I stopped by the courtroom during the trial. Everyone could tell that the defendants' witnesses were good people, wise and smart in their shared analysis of our culture and widespread need for social justice–if not revolution. I got the sense that the Judge and the prosecutors were learning from these witnesses, which was the best possible use of the legal system–the attempt to progress from law to justice.
Written by: Marcus Pegasus on Tuesday, Sep. 14, 2010 at 11:51 PM
good article
Written by: Mary Lou Anderson on Tuesday, Sep. 14, 2010 at 10:52 PM

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