

Col. Kevin W. Bradley, 174th Flight Wing Commander
New York Air National Guard Base
Hancock International Airport
Syracuse, New York

Re Reaper drones

Dear Col. Bradley:

As concerned New Yorkers we converge today at the entrance of the NY Air National Guard base on the outskirts of Syracuse. We are protesting the presence of unmanned Reaper drone aircraft here -- and in our midst.

As someone who no doubt has spent his career believing he is dutifully serving the security and best interests of the United States, you may not understand why we assemble at your doorstep. Let us explain.

Based on reports in the *Syracuse Post-Standard* over the past year, we understand that this Air National Guard base will be training Reaper “pilots.” We further understand that in time these pilots, sitting here before computer screens, will control Reaper drones in the skies over Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. From those skies the Reaper, using Hellfire missiles, will assassinate those whom informers claim are resisting the US invasion and occupation of the region.

For reasons of both security and morality, the Syracuse Peace Council opposes such invasion and occupation. We also oppose such rogue assassination – i.e. execution with no judicial due process. Further, we oppose the piloting of the Reaper from a base in our “backyard.” (See “Drones and Dishonor in Central New York,” Oct. ’09, *Peace Newsletter* [www.peacecouncil.net/pnl/09/788/788drones.htm])

The Reaper assassinations and bombings – with their high rate of civilian “collateral damage” – generate enormous resentment in the highly volatile Afghanistan/Pakistan region, a region hosting nuclear weapons facilities. We believe that that resentment – in both the short and long run -- will outweigh any tactical advantage derived from assassinating presumed Taliban or Al Qaeda militants. Indeed, it’s a resentment that spikes recruitment and may spawn decades of retaliation.

Like you, we do not wish US military pilots to face needless risk. But their protection lies not in using mindless, amoral new technologies to do their deadly work. Their safety lies in ending the US war on this region.

Neither do we want Central New York to face needless risk – the risk of retaliation. We do not want Central New York to become part of the global battlefield. We do not want

Central New York tainted with complicity in murder – indeed in some cases, mass murder.

Thanks to the Reaper assassination campaign hundreds of civilians have been killed. How is such killing to be distinguished from the terrorism the US claims to be fighting? After all, doesn't our own State Department define "terrorism" as the killing of civilians for political purposes?

We believe that problems between nations and other political entities must be solved peaceably. Respectfully enlisting the support of other powers interested in regional stability, our peace-seeking must be marked by due process, negotiation diplomacy and cooperation. Violence only spawns more violence.

Col. Bradley, we come to your doorstep to urge you to reflect on your own role – and that of those both above and below you in the chain of command -- in facilitating Reaper drone violence.

We ask that you examine your conscience. We ask that you not – drone-like -- obey orders regardless of the havoc they wreak. Further, we ask you not to play an avenging God with the innocent lives of others.

We ask that you do something remarkably courageous: that you do your utmost to influence your "superiors" to remove the Reaper from our midst, from the US arsenal entirely, and to stop using the Reaper to kill more of our fellow human beings.

Respectfully,

for the Syracuse Peace Council