Countdown to Zero is a new documentary that's generating a media hoopla since its principals include well-known government war-makers and “anti-nuclear nuclearists” Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn and George Schulz. (See the Feb.2009 DV more about “anti-nuclear nuclearism.”) The promise of the title is great, but it is misleading in the extreme. We at NDE remain open-hearted towards our opposition. When we cross the line, we get arrested. When war-makers cross the line, we welcome them. But if their motivation undermines the goal of nuclear disarmament, we must remain vigilant to the truth. United for Peace and Justice has created an excellent handout for viewers of this movie. [http://unitedforpeace.org/downloads/COUNTDOWN%20TO%20ZERO%20-%20UFPJ%20-%20final.pdf: Bring a few with you to action in Tennessee.

“Nowhere in the film are the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and U.S. obligations under the treaty mentioned...The film essentially carries the message of the U.S. national security establishment that the #1 national security priority must be preventing a nuclear attack on the U.S. by terrorist or rogue state forces...I would agree that an important national security priority is protecting the country against a terrorist nuclear attack, but I would also argue that the greatest danger of nuclear weapons comes from the continued U.S. and Russian adherence to its nuclear first strike policies and the related double standard/hypocrisy that actually encourages nuclear weapons proliferation, despite President Obama’s abolition rhetoric that is not supported by his actual policies.” [by Joseph Gerson, American Friends Service Committee; author of Empire and the Bomb <via e-mail>]

“The administration’s Nuclear Posture Review in no significant way changed the nuclear force structure or use doctrines. The NPR makes it abundantly clear that US national security is founded on the nuclear “deterrent,” and that no one in government will seek to reduce the role of nukes in the foreseeable future.”

“Countdown to Zero is one component of a larger and coherent campaign to stoke up public fears about nuclear weapons for the purpose of extending a near-monopoly on nuclear weapons, and legitimating a more aggressive foreign policy aimed at regime change in Iran and elsewhere. The consensus behind those who funded and produced the film has little to do with disarma- ment, and a lot to do with stabilizing the American empire.” [Darwin Bond-Graham, Los Alamos Study Group <http://darwinbondgraham.blogspot.com>]

Drones, Not Droning on Drones

The enormous growth in use of remotely piloted vehicles like the Predator and Reaper by different branches of the security complex creates confusion in how to address them as an activist. When we choose where to apply pressure, we need to articulate why it is a relevant target. Who controls what missions from where? Was a strike close air support for GIs on the ground or miles from any US or “friendly” troops? Whose fault are particular mistakes? What is public and what is secret information? What difference does it make if private contractors are pushing the buttons?

Jeremy Scahill of The Nation Institute and a reporter for Democracy Now! has delved into questions like these more than almost anyone. At the recent Netroots Nation conference in Las Vegas, Scahill made some enlightening points about drones and the privatizing of security and military work. For reference, see also his 23 Nov. 2009 and 4 Feb. 2010 articles in The Nation magazine.

Data is hard to come by because much of the “dark” or covert operations budget is scattered, buried and codenamed. Civilian overseers don’t get the full picture either. The CIA was thought to control missions in Pakistan (a country we’re not at war with, officially), but Special Mission Units and the Joint Special Operations Command blur the distinctions making accountability next to impossible, but also making all points of the spy network meaningful places for coordinated action.

Surveillance and private contractors are cross-over issues. Blackwater (or whatever it’s called now), like other private firms on contract to the US government often have more access to information than civilians in high government positions. Holding state secrets could be powerful leverage to keep from losing contracts, or winning new ones despite public outrage.

Rep. Jan Shakowsky (D-Ill.) was on the panel. She introduced continued on p.3 - Drones, Not Droning on Drones

“The legal transgressions of the United States with regard to its NPT obligations are legion. In fact, the US has nuclear deals with both India and Israel, despite the fact that neither country is a member to the NPT. These deals, as per the US’ non-proliferation requirements, are illegal. Ironically, the US opposes China’s recent nuclear deal with Pakistan citing, of all things, the terms of the NPT...Additionally, the Obama Administration’s new Nuclear Posture Review, which is praised by the film’s producer, actually leaves the door wide open for a first-strike nuclear attack on Iran, which it accuses of NPT violations on par with North Korea, thereby demonstrating a startling lack of truth in the Pentagon’s assessment of the Iranian program. The NPR doesn’t even mention India, Pakistan, or Israel at all...The film's trailer features scary music, lots of mushroom clouds, and menacing titles like “Rogue Nations” and “Terrorists” over montage clips of Kim Jong II, Osama bin Laden, flag-waving Iranian crowds and images of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in a lab coat. It’s clear what the agenda is here.” [Nima Shirazi, <http://www.wideasleepnamerica.com/2010/07/when-truth-is-inconvenient-preview-of.html>]

Here & There with NDE

The last issue of Desert Voices included adverts for several gatherings that NDE staff and friends were attending. They’ve all been exceptional opportunities for networking, and all deepened our understanding of the interconnected nature of numerous struggles and campaigns. We don’t have space to show all the beautiful images of people and all their creativity. The Gallery of Galleries on the NDE website is being expanded, so check it out.

Chronologically, the first big events were the international conference and demonstrations preceding the UN’s Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in New York in May. Highlights included close work with the War Resisters League on a panel about the problems of mining, testing, deployment and waste, especially how they affect native and local communities. A project that emerged from the session is to map affected sites and community responses so the extent of the problem is more apparent, and ways for people to address it too. And the march was a lot of fun!

1500 members of the Japan Council Against A & H Bombs (Gensuikyo) came with 17 million signatures on an “Appeal for a Nuclear Weapon-Free World.” 80 Gensuikyo members spent 2 days in Las Vegas, and NDE coordinated their events including an evening reception and joining the weekly LV Thursday peace vigil; NDE provided political, historical and environmental interpretation en route to the Nevada Test Site, the Temple to Goddess Spirituality, and a significant meetup with members of the Western Shoshone Walk/Run underway at the time. Special thanks to Dawn Barlow of the Atomic Testing Museum, Candace Ross of the Goddess Temple, Peter Ediger of Pace e Bene, Johnnie Bobb of Newe Sogobia, and Mark Kelso of the Catholic Worker.

In San Diego, General Atomics (GA) makes the Predator and Reaper drones that are controlled on their deadly missions from Creech AFB near Vegas. Codepink’s Nancy Mancias joined local organizers Carol Jahnkow of the San Diego Peace Resource Center and Gabriel Seth Conaway of Activist San Diego to create an event and action May 18 and 19. High-spirited and colorful best describe the blockade. Some confusion about the entrances to the GA site decreased the blockade’s effectiveness, but next time more than one gate at a time will be stopped! See also <http://www.womensaynotowar.org/article.php?id=5100>

June 5 was International Nuclear Abolition Day, to keep the issue in the mind’s eye following the NPT Review month of May. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) put out the call, and also produced a report about the NPT Review Conference documenting the growing support among governments for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The report is here: <http://www.icanw.org/files/RevCon2010.pdf>

Later in June was the US Social Forum in Detroit. 14,000 people enjoyed wonderful hospitality in that troubled, but overmaligned city. Unity and camaraderie were abundant. Participants were interested in issues outside of their own areas of immediate concern. See also <http://www.war-times.org/> and click on “Detroit: I Do Mind Empire (USSF Recap).”

Then came the July 4 weekend celebration and action at Oak Ridge Tennessee’s Y-12 plant. It’s Uranium Processing Facility is enlarging to quadruple the output of nuclear weapons components. Like the NPT conference, this gathering gave participants a sense of vitality in the anti-nuclear movement. It was also a 30 year anniversary celebration of Nukewatch and the Nuclear Resister. Elders in the house were minor, but youth were very present too. A commemorative slideshow traced the history of anti-nuke activism, including the Plowshares movement. The presentation was emotional for many attendees, being reminded of people like Corbin Harney and No Nukes Norb, eliciting sighs and cheers as old actions were brought to life. 37 people were arrested at the Monday action. A good report on the Y-12 action is at <http://wearewideawake.org> Click on the July 5 link. Other video clips and images are in the Gallery of Galleries on the NDE website too.

IS YOUR MAYOR ON BOARD?
Mayors for Peace www.mayorsforpeace.org
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! Most of our income is from individuals.

Nevada Desert Experience
1420 W. Bartlett Ave.
Las Vegas NV 89106
702.646.4814
info@NevadaDesertExperience.org
www.NevadaDesertExperience.org

NDE does not share our list; nor do we send lots of e-mail. E-mail is very helpful for our work though — saving money, resources, and speeding the distribution of time-sensitive news.

Nevada Desert Experience is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible. Ask us for a receipt if you need one.

continued from p.1 - Drones, Not Droning on Drones

a bill in Congress, HR 4650, the “Stop Outsourcing Security” or “SOS” Act. She hopes people will bring it to the attention of their representatives. She is looking for high level military personnel to work for its passage. Sadly, under President Obama, the problem is deepening with more contractors and more secrecy. We have to keep speaking out, standing up, and educating our friends and co-workers. NDE has new postcards available (see below). Get some, and send them in!

The text reads, “Dear President Obama, Stop killing the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan. In particular stop remote-controlled Predator and Reaper drone attacks. You may think the deaths of hundreds of civilians (and low-level conscripts) are excusable when trying to assassinate people with “Hellfire” missiles. Actually, the large number of casualties makes the ending of hostilities even harder to imagine. The Sept. 11 attack in 2001 doesn’t make these air-strikes right or wise! Drone attacks do not prevent or eliminate terrorism! They are terrorism! They unite people in outrage and incite more revenge, violence and retaliation. Of course, the problem isn’t one crew or one weapon system, but the wars and occupations as a whole.”

Vandenberg Witness

Vandenberg Air Force Base in Lompoc, CA continues to be vital for the demonstration of the functionality of US missile systems, the implementation of the robotics revolution, including control of Predator and Reaper drones on kill missions, and the development of anti-ballistic missile systems.

Control of demonstrators has been inconsistent. According to MacGregor Eddy’s blog, “Two trials were held in federal court [on July 15]... All resulted in convictions of trespass. The first trial was for co-defendants Dennis Apel and MacGregor Eddy. The magistrate rejected arguments that free speech is protected in the area selected and defined by Vandenberg...This is the first time an arrest for violating a ban and bar, without leaving the designated protest area, has been prosecuted.”

On Sept. 16, two days after their court date in Las Vegas as part of the Creech 14, Louis Vitale and Megan Rice have a Vandenberg trespassing trial from August, 2009.

To keep up to date on Vandenberg activities and protests, visit <http://vandenbergprotest-macgregor.blogspot.com>

Enclosed is my contribution of:

- $500
- $125
- $65
- $35
- $25
- other ______

Want us to contact you about something specific?

- Sacred Peace Walk
- August Desert Witness
- Nukes
- Immersion or Internship
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

Name _____________________________
Address ___________________________
City, State, Zip _____________________
Phone ____________________________
E-mail ____________________________

I’ll Be Back!
by Elisabeth Gustafson

I had the opportunity to stay at the NDE house as an intern for two weeks in July. From the first weekend I spent as an NDE intern at the conference in Oak Ridge, TN, I felt part of a network of incredible activists. It has been truly energizing to work with Jim, Megan and the LV Catholic Workers – people who dedicate endless amounts of time and effort to ending war and injustice. I have a restored hope in the possibilities for social change through collective action.

Since I have been in Las Vegas I have joined NDE in weekly anti-war vigils, at a meeting with one of Senator Reid’s aides, in passing out postcards about UAVs as people exited an Obama event at UNLV, at a vigil at Creech Air Force Base, and to the Sekhmet Goddess Temple.

On the morning of July 16th Sister Megan and I went to the Nevada Test Site to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the first nuclear bomb detonation, the “Trinity” test in New Mexico. We placed three signs leading up to the entrance of the site and defied the restrictions of a ban and bar, without leaving the Ihrem protest area, has been prosecuted.”
Sacred Peace Walk
Las Vegas to the Nevada Test Site
April 18 to 25, 2011

ARGVMENT: Las Vegas to the Nevada Test Site
April 18 to 25, 2011

4/18 Passover Seder; 4/21 Peace Ritual at the Goddess Temple; 4/22 Good Friday Stations of the Cross at Creech; 4/24 Western Shoshone Sunrise Ceremony and Easter Mass at the NTS; Devotional Chanting; other spiritual and political offerings to be scheduled.

65 mile walking meditation. Major walk days are Tues, Wed, Thurs, & Sat. Part-time “Pilgrims” welcome. This is a walking meditation, a desert healing, a political act of solidarity.

Regarding any of the upcoming actions, contact Jim or Megan: info@NevadaDesertExperience.org (702) 646-4814

The Nevada Desert Experience
1420 West Bartlett Avenue
Las Vegas NV 89106
USA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

At 65, Retire the Bomb

Because of organizing for the September trial and events surrounding the Creech 14, NDE is not hosting a gathering for Hiroshima/Nagasaki Days THIS YEAR at the Nevada Test Site.

For a local August 6 gathering, contact Candace Ross at the Temple for Goddess Spirituality; 702-569-0630. Fold paper cranes; discuss peace; watch a dvd; vigil at the NTS.

On August 7, the Atomic Testing Museum is organizing an Obon Ceremony (Japanese Lanterns) at Sunset Park in the evening in memory of all who have died and suffered as a result of war. For more details, contact Dawn Barlow at the ATM at 702-794-5147.

Our Grief is Still Not a Cry for War!
We mourn civilians and soldiers because all life is sacred!

Sept. 10 to 14
NDE Desert Witness
Las Vegas & Cactus Springs

• Vigils every morning
• Sept. 11 Day of Solidarity and Remembrance at the Goddess Temple in Cactus Springs (plus pot luck and evening ritual for peace and healing.
• Sept. 13 Evening with Kathy Kelly, Louis Vitale, Ramsey Clark and Bill Quigley
• Sept. 14 Trial Date of the Creech 14

(See Below & Contact us for more details)

NDE “September” Desert Witness

Friday, Sept. 10 through Monday, Sept. 13: Daily vigils at Creech AFB. Co-sponsored with Voices for Creative Nonviolence and the Creech 14 defendants. Some people will walk from the Goddess Temple in Cactus Springs. Others will drive out from Vegas to stand together. Rides will be arranged as needed.

Saturday, Sept. 11, In Memory of Civilians and Soldiers. A Day of Solidarity and Remembrance. Eyes Wide Open—Nevada memorial exhibit will be on display. The Temple to Goddess Spirituality, Pace Bene Nonviolence Service and the Nevada Desert Experience sponsors.

Sunday, Sept. 12, still in formation aside from the morning vigil at Creech. Creech 14 defendants may meet to plan for their trial. The NDE Council will be meeting during the day.

Monday, Sept. 13, Evening program in Las Vegas featuring Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Nonviolence and Fr. Louis Vitale, released July 23 after 6 months in prison for crossing the line at Ft. Benning’s School of Assassins (aka the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation). Plus special guests Bill Quigley of the Center for Constitutional Rights and Ramsey Clark, former US Attorney General!

Tuesday, Sept. 14, Trial of Creech 14 defendants, Regional Justice Center, 200 Lewis Ave., Las Vegas, 5th Floor (Regional Court, Department 5): 7:30 am rally at Lewis and 3rd St.; 8:30 am trial scheduled to begin.

Regarding any of the upcoming actions, contact Jim or Megan: info@NevadaDesertExperience.org (702) 646-4814

Desert Voices is edited by NDE Coordinator Jim Haber. Uncredited text and images are his responsibility.