

US Veterans Urge Drone Operators to Refuse Orders to Fly Surveillance and Attack Missions

Letter Reinforces Call Made in National TV Ad Campaign

By [David Swanson](#)

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An increasing number of United States military veterans are counseling United States military drone operators to refuse to fly drone surveillance/attack missions – the veterans are even helping sponsor prime time television commercials urging drone operators to “refuse to fly.”

In a letter released today by KnowDrones.com, 44 former members of the US Air Force, Army, Navy and Marines whose ranks range from private to colonel and whose military service spans 60 years, “urge United States drone pilots, sensor operators and support teams to refuse to play any role in drone surveillance/ assassination missions. These missions profoundly violate domestic and international laws intended to protect individuals’ rights to life, privacy and due process.”

Among those signing the letter are retired U.S. Army Colonel Ann Wright, who resigned from her State Department post in 2003 over the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and former Marine Captain Matthew Hoh, who, in spite of pleadings by Obama Administration officials, resigned his State Department post in Afghanistan in 2009 in protest over U.S. strategic goals and policy there. Also signing are former U.S. Army Captain and CIA official Ray McGovern; former U.S. Navy Lt. Barry Ladendorf, president of Veterans for Peace; and former U.S. Army Sgts. Aaron Hughes and Maggie Martin, co-directors of Iraq Veterans Against the War.



Speaking to the issue of disobeying military orders, the letter says: “Those involved in United States drone operations who refuse to participate in drone missions will be acting in accordance with Principle IV of the Principles of International Law Recognized in the Charter of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the Judgment of the Tribunal, The United Nations 1950,” that states:

“The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not

relieve him of responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible.”

“The people signing this letter know that they are asking drone operators to take a heavy step,” said Nick Mottern, coordinator of KnowDrones.com, “but we feel it is perfectly legitimate to advise military people to stop taking part in illegal activity that has killed thousands without due process, is terrorizing thousands more and is wracking their own ranks with moral injury and PTSD.”

To advance the “Refuse to Fly” initiative, KnowDrones.com has been airing 15-second television commercials on CNN, FoxNews, MNBC and other networks in areas near drone intelligence and control centers in the U.S. The paid spots, the cost of which has been partially covered by members of Veterans for Peace, show the human toll of drone attacks and urge drone operators to refuse to fly.

The ads have appeared in Las Vegas near Creech AFB and in northern California near Beale AFB. They are currently airing in upstate New York near Hancock Air National Guard base outside Syracuse and the Air Guard base near Niagara Falls; more showings will be scheduled soon elsewhere in the U.S.

Below is the letter:

RETIRED AND FORMER U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL URGE DRONE OPERATORS TO REFUSE TO FLY MISSIONS

As retired and former members of the United States military, we urge United States drone pilots, sensor operators and support teams to refuse to play any role in drone surveillance/ assassination missions. These missions profoundly violate domestic and international laws intended to protect individuals’ rights to life, privacy and due process.

At least 6,000 peoples’ lives have been unjustly taken by United States drone attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, the Philippines, Libya and Syria. These attacks are also undermining principles of international law and human rights, such as those enumerated in the United Nations International Declaration of Human Rights, written in 1948 under the guidance of Eleanor Roosevelt with the blood of the atrocities of World War II freshly in mind. The United States is a signatory to this declaration.

Those involved in United States drone operations who refuse to participate in drone missions will be acting in accordance within accordance of Principle IV of the Principles of International Law Recognized in the Charter of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the Judgment of the Tribunal, The United Nations 1950:

“The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him of responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible.”

So, yes, you do have a choice - and liability under the law. Choose the moral one. Choose the legal one.

Signed:

Kenneth Ashe E3 US Army Vietnam 1969 - 1971

Wendy Barranco SPC US Army 2003 - 2006

Barry Binks E5 US Army 1964-1967

Russell Brown CPL US Marine Corps 1966- 1968

Ben Chitty PO2 US Navy 1965 - 1969

Gerry Condon PVT US Army 1967 - 1969

Bill Distler E5 US Army 1966 - 1968

Arthur H. Dorland YN3 US Navy 1964 - 1967

Kelly Dougherty Sgt. - E-5 US Army National Guard 1996 - 2004

Jonathan Engle SFC (E-7) US Army 2004 - 2013

Mike Ferner HM3 US Navy 1969 - 1973

Bruce Gagnon SGT US Air Force 1971 - 1974

Bill J. Gilson AE2 US Navy 1954 - 1958

Mike Hastie E5 US Army 1969 - 1972

Michael Hearington E1 US Army 171st Infantry 1970 - 1971

Dud Hendrick CAPT US Air Force 1963 - 1967

Herbert J. Hoffman SPC3 US Army 1954 - 1956

Matthew Hoh CPT US Marine Corps 1998 - 2008

Matt Howard CPL US Marine Corps 2001 - 2006

Aaron Hughes SGT (E-5) Illinois National Guard 2000 - 2006

Tarak Kauff PVT US Army Airborne Infantry 1959 - 1962

Barry Ladendorf LT US Navy 1964 - 1969

Erik Lobo PO3 US Navy 1976 - 1982

Maggie Martin SGT E-5 US Army 2001 - 2006

Kenneth E. Mayers MAJ US Marine Corps Reserve 1958 - 1966 (active duty) 1967 - 1978 (Reserves)

Ray McGovern CPT US Army 1962 - 1964

Nick Mottern LTJG US Navy 1960 - 1963

Carroll Nast CAPT US Air Force 1969 - 1979

Tom Palumbo SGT US Army/US Army Reserve 1978 - 1992

Bill Perry US Army 101st Airborne/Tet Offensive 1966 - 1968

Kyle Petlock O-1 US Air Force 2000 - 2002

Charles R. Powell E4 US Air Force 1961 - 1965

Doug Rawlings SPC4 US Army Vietnam 1969 - 1970

John C. Reiger SPC5 US Army 1959 - 1962

Jovanni L. Reyes SSG US Army 1994 - 2005 Active Duty. 2005 - 2007 Reserves

Hannah Roberts LT (03) US Navy 2009 - 2014

Steven E. Saelzler E1 US Army Vietnam 1969 - 1970

Benjamin Schrader E-4 US Army 2001 - 2005

Chuck Searcy E5 US Army 1966 - 1969

Robert L. Stebbins 1stLT US Army 1956 - 1958

Will Thomas E3 US Navy 1961 - 1963

Cres Vellucci E-5 US Army Vietnam 1969 - 1971

Zachary Wigham SSgt. Massachusetts Air National Guard 2006 -2012

Ann Wright Colonel US Army (Retired)

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