

Edwina Vogan
Shut Down Drone Warfare
1549 E. Dover Circle
Mesa, AZ 85203

Date: April 19, 2023

Colonel Justin B. Spears
Commander, 49th Operations Group
Holloman Air Force Base
New Mexico 88330

To Colonel Spears:

We are writing to you as concerned American citizens who have traveled from the east and west coasts, and places in between. We are here to have a dialogue with the local community of Alamogordo and with the Air Force personnel who are serving with the U.S. drone program. We are committed to non-violence, and our views remain strongly against the drone program on Holloman Air Force Base and that's why we write to you as the commanding officer of the program.

It may not be possible to have a dialogue with any of the service personnel, so this letter will be our communication to you, other than our daily actions outside the base perimeter. As a squadron leader, you are responsible for implementation of the program and for the actions of the squadron. We hope this letter will be considered by you in reflection of your role.

We do not support any of the drone programs in the country. Some of us have been demonstrating and engaged in civil disobedience at Creech Air Force Base in Indian Springs, Nevada for years, hoping that we could have some impact on the mission and the service personnel in the drone program. We support Air Force personnel who have spoken out about their experience in the drone program. We hear their concerns and join them in opposing the U.S. drone program.

We are opposed to the U.S. drone program for the following reasons:

1. There has been a grossly high number of civilian fatalities and casualties from drone attacks, possibly 16,000 to date according to some reports. In truth, Americans do not know the total number of drone attacks made, and what they hear of is only the largest number of those killed in error, or of someone the U.S. government considers a terrorist. Even a military study reported in the *Arizona Republic* in May 2010 questioned the drone program - "inaccurate and unprofessional reporting about a mistaken airstrike that killed and injured dozens of Afghans in southern Afghanistan." These types of "mistakes" are not rare occurrences. If the U.S. drone program is ineffective according to the mission, why continue to operate in these countries when the end result is the killing of civilians? This is unacceptable.
2. We believe that the U.S. drone program potentially creates more enemies by a war of terror on the people in those countries where drone attacks are used to "kill terrorists." If your father, sister, baby were killed by a strike from a foreign nation, would you not be moved to strike back? People in the chosen target area are living in terror because they hear the sound of drones and know their life may be in danger. It seems we have accepted gross "collateral damage." No one is held accountable for the deaths of family members and the paltry compensation fees hardly seem ethically and morally responsible to say sorry for the death of a family member. Who's the terrorist here? Wouldn't it be better to utilize the United Nations to help resolve these issues of disagreement among nations without killer drones?
3. Moral injury is an important reason to oppose the U.S. drone program at Holloman. Unlike active combat troops, the drone personnel are watching a screen, tracking an individual or individuals, and are being fed intelligence gathered for a drone attack which is likely to be inaccurate. Drone personnel experience "moral Injury" (a term now used in clinical settings) similar to that of Post Traumatic Disorder (PTSD) experienced by combat troops in war. Drone personnel have and can experience feelings of regret, grief, and suicidal tendencies. This is not hard to understand from our perspective, especially after seeing people — innocent civilians, children — killed in the attacks. Daniel Hale is one such individual, among others who have spoken out in regret for their participation in the drone program. Isn't it — in fact, morally wrong — to put our service personnel under such stress and internal conflict when they signed up to be patriots for this country? Have they been misled?

4. Lastly, we have heard media reports from Ukraine about increasing use of drones and recently about the interest of North Korea to use underwater drones to carry nuclear warheads. We are in a dangerous time with escalating tensions between countries and the U.S. We know the end result of using nuclear weapons, and if drones become vehicles for nuclear weapons, it ups the odds of global nuclear war, not necessarily by intent, but by misunderstanding or mistake. Let's de-escalate — decrease the possibility of nuclear war by not arming drones. Let's end the U.S. drone program.

We hope you will understand why we chose Holloman Air Force Base to demonstrate our concern and to express our outrage as the weapons of war threaten the existence of people in many countries who are already struggling to survive, and the well-being of Americans. We can show U.S. exceptionalism by reducing the march towards global war, and specifically by ending the U.S. drone program. Active diplomacy should be the tool to dissolve the hatred and distrust toward the U.S. Let's become the example for peaceful resolutions among nations.

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Sincerely,
Denise Sellers
Shut Down Drone Warfare

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