Serving 45 months in prison, Daniel Hale on why he exposed drone program

By Daniel Hale  
Former Air Force Intelligence Analyst  
on violating the Espionage Act to try to stop the cycle of violence perpetuated by the US' extrajudicial killing programs:  
To say that the period of my life spent serving in the United States Air Force had an impression on me would be an understatement. It is more accurate to say that it irreversibly transformed my identity as an American. Having forever altered the thread of my life's story, woven into the fabric of our nation's history. To better appreciate the significance of how this came to pass, I would like to explain my experience deployed to Afghanistan as it was in 2012 and how it is I came to violate the Espionage Act, as a result.  
In my capacity as a signals intelligence analyst stationed at Bagram Airbase, I was made to track down the geographic location of handset cellphones believed to be in the possession of so-called enemy combatants. To accomplish this mission required access to a complex chain of globe-spanning satellites capable of
Continued inside (page 3)

“I joined the military to fight fascism” – Capt. Alan Kennedy

National Guard Officer Alan Kennedy is challenging the constitutionality of Department of Defense order 1325.06 on the grounds that it infringes on the soldier's right to free expression.  
Facing harassment, conflicting instructions, and contradictory reprimands, Captain Kennedy pushes on to protect service members' rights to protest and self expression. He recently shared:  
"It's personal. I care deeply about our humanitarian efforts in the world. And I think we learned from the Nazis and the Holocaust that we do have to defend civil rights, human rights, and constitutional rights. ... I became increasingly active with the Black Lives Matter movement. On May 30th, 2020, I walked from my home...and participated in a peaceful march against systemic racism and police brutality. Toward the end of that March, the police showed up in riot gear, and without warning or provocation and in violation of the Denver Police rules on use of force, fired clouds of tear gas indiscriminately at the thousands of marchers."  
He was reprimanded for his involvement in the protest and for an op-ed he wrote. A lawyer and a public policy advocate, Capt. Kennedy decided to appeal the decision, and eventually sue the National Guard for infringement of his constitutional rights.  
"In a surprise turn of events, we won an initial victory recently. In response to our lawsuit, the military said that Department of Defense instruction 1325.06 no longer applies to National Guard members who are not on Title 10 active duty orders, which would be most members of the National Guard," he explains. His journey continues. ☺
Jonathan Hutto: What we could do to harness our power
Jonathan W. Hutto, Sr. is an author, community organizer, and a co-founder of Appeal for Redress. Inspired by the Vietnam GI Resistance Movement, Jonathan started Appeal for Redress so that active duty US military personnel could speak out against the second conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their action came to the attention of several members of Congress, as well as laying the groundwork for future active duty military members to voice their concerns over American military operations worldwide.

“I found myself enlisting in the US Navy. ... Today, the slogan is ‘Black Lives Matter’. 20 years ago, the slogan being ‘Enough is Enough’. But within that milieu I was in and in contrast to the middle-class, upper strata, African-American students that I had gone to the university with, that wasn't my experience. ...That by the time I was 26 years old, I hit a wall, a serious wall. I couldn't maintain that lifestyle anymore being a single parent.”

Kevin Benderman: Why are we guarding an oil field?
Former Sgt Kevin Benderman shares his experiences in Iraq, the inconsistencies of the US mission in the Middle East, and his attempts to reconcile his military career with his clearly defined development as a conscientious objector. In his attempt to follow the letter of the law, Kevin served 15 months in prison for his actions, a punitive move by the Army to make an example of him to other soldiers.

"So you can imagine the disconnect that I had, with the image of what I thought I was, and what I was being told to do. It threw me for a complete loop. "They’re asking me to do things I’d never thought I’d be ordered to do as a soldier in the United States Army. And none of those chemical weapons or biological weapons…We never found any. "We were being … told to shoot children, all based on a bunch of lies. So there was no way in any kind of good conscience that I could go continue to take part in that.”

Ann Wright: The common thing is that no one wants war
Ann Wright is a former colonel and foreign service officer who resigned in protest of the Iraq War. After decades in international diplomacy, she raised her concerns about US foreign policy and met indifference. She now devotes those skills to grassroots advocacy.

“...I thought, well, I cannot be a part of what I know is going to be a horrific, horrific bloodbath in Iraq. And not that my resignation will make a bit of difference, but at least I won’t be a part of it. I won’t have that on my conscience. And so, I ended up resigning.

“It’s pretty well recognized around the world, except in the US, that the US is the primary instigator of most of the instability that we have in many countries around the world. And so, the common theme is, ‘Can you please try to control your own government, and how it works in the international arena, and trying to get them from stop thinking that killing other people in their own home countries is the way to go about resolving issues?”

Women and Draft Registration Update
Congress came very close to expanding the requirement to register with the Selective Service System for a possible military draft to include young women as well as young men. The expansion was part of the annual must-pass military budget, but removed only in the final House-Senate negotiations. Conservatives declared, “You can't have our daughters,” and we agreed. Why do we need to explain that they can’t take our sons either!!

Ed Asner (1929–2021): A life of persistence and perseverance for justice and peace
We wish to acknowledge the passing of Ed Asner, a friend and advocate. Beyond a gifted actor who created an identifiable, singularly American cultural character, Ed was also "one of us"—a veteran and a person of conscience. It's what he did with his power as a celebrity to stand up and respond when he saw the opportunity to do the right thing. As an artist, he took chances at the top of his career that had a significant impact. He performed inspiring, creative acts of resistance.
Bob Meola, Nonviolent Anarchist Revolutionary (1952–2021)

Obituary by Jeff Paterson
Courage to Resist is deeply saddened by the passing of our friend and comrade Robert “Bob” Meola. Bob was well known throughout the San Francisco Bay Area for his lifelong commitment to anti-militarist efforts.

Bob learned this past August that he had pancreatic cancer. He died Nov. 17th, 2021, with his wife Sue and daughter Sofia by his side, following complications from a surgery the day before.

Bob delighted in listening to—and resembling—Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead, attending Giants baseball games, enjoying quality red wine, pizza and cannabis, the SF Opera, and being a stay-at-home dad, home-schooling Sofia in her early years.

He joined Courage to Resist in 2008 and rarely missed a meeting or event. From 2010 to 2017, Bob served on the Steering Committee of the Chelsea Manning Support Network, which successfully won the release of the imprisoned WikiLeaks whistleblower by way of clemency by President Obama.

For years, Bob served as a War Resisters League National Committee Member, and was a founder of Southern California War Resisters’ League and SoCal War Tax Resistance.

He was well known locally for his 16 years on the City of Berkeley’s Peace and Justice Commission, serving as chairperson from 2008 to 2010. On the Commission, Bob championed many human rights issues, police accountability, support for whistleblowers, and the closure of Guantanamo prison.

Bob received a JD degree from the New College of Calif. School of Law, SF, in 1989. He graduated from James Madison College at Michigan State University with a degree in Justice, Morality and Constitutional Democracy in 1972.

At MSU, he was a member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and 30 years later, he was a central figure in the Movement for a Democratic Society (MDS).

Over the last ten years, Bob became a scholar of the Spanish Civil War and was a primary participant in the Movement for an Anarchist Society.

Bob identified as a “HinJew” based on his practice of both Hinduism and Judaism. He found strong connection with Indian spiritual leaders Shirdi Sai Baba and Ammachi, as well as with the Bay Area Jewish community. Bob was also a co-founding minister of the religious humanist Objector Church.

Since 2007, Bob organized the Annual Berkeley Conscientious Objectors’ and War Resisters’ Day. Sponsored by the City of Berkeley Peace and Justice Commission, the gatherings are held at the flagpoles in front of City Hall in honor of International Conscientious Objectors’ Day.

Bob Meola Memorial Peace Flag Raising; Monday, May 16, 2022: We will again gather to celebrate Conscientious Objectors’ Day and to remember Bob Meola at Berkeley City Hall (11:30 am).

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Daniel Hale, drone whistleblower cont.

maintaining an unbroken connection with remotely piloted aircraft, commonly referred to as drones. Once a steady connection is made and a targeted cell phone device is acquired, an imagery analyst in the U.S., in coordination with a drone pilot and camera operator, would take over using information I provided to surveil everything that occurred within the drone’s field of vision. This was done, most often, to document the day-to-day lives of suspected militants. Sometimes, under the right conditions, an attempt at capture would be made. Other times, a decision to strike and kill them where they stood would be weighed.

The first time that I witnessed a drone strike came within days of my arrival to Afghanistan. Early that morning, before dawn, a group of men had gathered together in the mountain ranges of Patika Province around a campfire carrying weapons and brewing tea. That they carried weapons with them would not have been considered out of the ordinary in the place I grew up, much less within the virtually lawless tribal territories outside the control of the Afghan authorities. Except that among them was a suspected member of the Taliban, given away by the targeted cell phone device in his pocket. As for the remaining individuals, to be armed, of military age, and sitting in the presence of an alleged enemy combatant was enough evidence to place them under suspicion as well. Despite having peacefully assembled, posing no threat, the fate of the now tea drinking men had all but been fulfilled. I could only look on as I sat by and watched through a computer monitor when a sudden, terrifying flurry of hellfire missiles came crashing down, splattering purple-colored crystal guts on the side of the morning mountain.

Please write to Daniel directly at the address below: Read the full letter given to trial judge Judge Liam O’Grady, and more info on how to support Daniel, at standwithdanielhale.org

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Legacy giving

As you are making out your will, please consider a bequest to “Courage to Resist / Veterans For Peace.” For more information about bequest language in your estate plans, please give us a call at 510-488-3559.
An Air Force veteran of the US Drone Wars, Reality Leigh Winner, was charged under the Espionage Act for leaking a report documenting cyber attacks upon US election infrastructure in June 2017, during the early days of the Trump Administration.

Upon Reality’s arrest, Courage to Resist took the initiative to form a collective response. Alongside Reality’s friends and family, we built the “Stand With Reality” campaign, created online resources, and hosted her defense fund. Later, that campaign was led by Reality’s mom Billie and her close friends.

We did not stop Trump from making an example out of her. However, this interview underscores why we tried.

Reality pled guilty and received a four year prison sentence vs. the ten years she faced otherwise. Excerpts from her 60 Minutes segment:

“...I just kept thinking, 'My God, somebody needs to step forward and put this right. Somebody.' ... I knew it was secret. But I also knew that I had pledged service to the American people. And at that point in time, it felt like they were being led astray. ... I thought this was the truth. But also, I did not betray our sources and methods. Did not cause damage. Did not put lives on the line. It only filled in a question mark that was tearing our country in half in May 2017. ... I've had four years of just trying to say I'm not a terrorist.”

Watch at couragetoresist.org