

'Ploughshares' to Support Pine Gap Defendants

by Ciaron via MIM - Pit Stop Ploughshares *Thursday, Sep 28 2006, 6:49am*

international / peace/war / other press

A couple of months ago our Pit Stop Ploughshares community was acquitted of \$US2.5million damage to a U.S. war plane at Shannon Airport, Ireland. I'm presently heading to Alice Springs to support the Pine Gap resisters.

In December '05, six anti-war activist friends made the 3,000 km long trek through the Australian Outback to the secret Pine Gap NSA Base near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. They transported themselves in a van converted to run on recycled fish and chip oil. They had written to a number outback fish and chip shops and asked them to save them their used oil, some did!



Alice Springs Court Protest

The six also wrote to the Australian Attorney General Phillip Ruddock and told him they were going to carry out a citizen's inspection of the joint facility hi tech base providing targetting information for U.S. bombing raids in Iraq. The Attorney General wrote back threatening seven years imprisonment if they carried out the inspection. They also wrote to the head of Alice Springs police and informed him they would inspect the base on December 9th. 2005. In response police, both Commonwealth and State, were mobilised from several states, to secure the base and stop the six accessing one of the most secure military sites in Australia.

On the evening of December 9th. 2005, four of the group called "Christians Against ALL Terrorism" - Jim Dowling, Adele Goldie, Bryan Law & Donna Mulhearn - made their way into the base undetected and began their inspection. More background information, and remarkable photographs, on their website

<http://www.pinegap6.org/>.

The four were finally discovered and arrested. The next morning my older brother, Sean O'Reilly was arrested and charged with "obstructing police" while conducting a solidarity vigil at the entrance to the Pine Gap base. In February '06 my brother defended himself in court and was found "not guilty" by an Alice Springs magistrate. The remaining member of the party, Jessica Morrison, was arrested later on December 10th. '05 charged and then released.

I have been asked by these friends facing trial in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia to

testify at their trial, originally set to commence on Tuesday October 3rd.

Following the action, there were immediate calls for solidarity and many people have responded with gifts of financial donations, music gigs, vigils, hospitality, literally the hundredfold. A gifted legal team has recently assembled and will move to have the draconian Defence Act charges (carrying a 7 year maximum penalty) dismissed on Oct 3rd. The government have assembled six of their own lawyers to counter the defence and any moves to reveal the full nature of the base in court.

The defendants are calling for people to come to Alice Springs to offer solidarity, reflect on Australian and Pine Gap's continued involvement in the U.S. wars on the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Following a committal hearing held in April '06, the remaining four have now been committed for trial by jury in the Northern Territory Supreme Court. The October 3rd. trial date was set at a July 5th pretrial hearing. However due to the recent initiative by the defence team, Oct. 3rd could now be a day of pre-trial argument.

Despite the earlier committal hearing being a legal procedure, the four used it as an opportunity to call witnesses and question them as a way of raising important issues in the courtroom and the media. A total of 15 witnesses were called, including the Australian chief of Pine Gap, Michael Burgess. He was quizzed about the activities of the Pine Gap base, what proportion of the activities are secret to the Australian public and parliament and of a recent visit to the base of US spy chief John Negroponte, a man with a long history of involvement in violence and terror.

Burgess stated that Pine Gap's role includes intelligence gathering and involvement in the missile early warning system. He was asked to confirm if the intelligence gathered at Pine Gap is used for targeting of missiles in Iraq, but his answer to that and many others was that this was 'classified information'.

The Pine Gap 4 are presently facing a maximum of seven years in prison thanks to Attorney General Phillip Ruddock consenting to charges under the Defence (Special Undertakings) Act of 1952 to be used for the first time.

A call for solidarity went out from the defendants and a specific request was made for me to return to Australia to testify and bring the experiences and spirit of the Pit Stop Ploughshares disarmament, trials and acquittal to outback Alice Springs. I have agreed to do so and am on my way this week. I hope to share experiences but also to gather any interest in our recent historic acquittal at Dublin's Four Courts <http://www.peaceontrial.com> and direct it to these defendants risking their liberty to stop these horrific wars on the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.

I have known two of the defendants for 28 years. Jim Dowling, Bryan Law and I met in custody in the Brisbane City watch house in March 1978. We had been arrested for nonviolent civil disobedience trying to halt the export of Australian uranium to the Shah's Iran among other places. It is ironic that the next war to be launched by the U.S. will be marketed as the need to stop Iran using its uranium. History has seen a lot of backflips and changes, Jim and Bryan have stood firm throughout those years in nonviolent defense of the poor and against plans to bomb them on whatever pretext. Jim now lives on a Catholic Worker farm with his wife and seven children. In the 1980's, Jim and I lived, worked, offered hospitality to the homeless and nonviolently resisted war preparations together at the Brisbane Catholic Worker in West End, Brisbane.

Bryan is also a husband and father and now lives 1200 miles north of Brisbane on the Queensland coast near Cairns. He has been faithful to the call of nonviolent resistance to war and preparations for conventional and nuclear war over these long bloody years.

The other defendants are new friends to me. Donna Mulhearn went to Iraq in 2003 as a human shield to nonviolently put her body between the U.S. war machine and the Iraqi people. She was later taken hostage in Fallujah and released. She has returned home to Australia to share the stories of suffering from Iraq and take this nonviolent resistance to this hi tech war base that targets the Iraqi people for the U.S. war machine.

Adele Goldie is a young artist and activist who has put herself on the line. In early 2005 she was arrested confronting the outback Australian Wakenhut-run gulags imprisoning refugees, many fleeing the wars we have created in Iraq and Afghanistan. In mid 2005, Adele was also arrested blockading U.S. and Australian troops arriving at "Operation Talisman Sabre Joint Exercises" on the central Queensland coast. 2005 was a big year for Adele

The vision of the defendants, and their support, is to transform Pine Gap from a place of death to a place of life! They have initiated this process with their December '05 action and will carry that spirit through their trial. The peace convergence of solidarity around their court appearances in Alice Springs will be opportunities for personal and social transformation.

The vision of the Australian government is to put these defendants in jail for a long time by a through a cynical use of the Defence Act and to continue to facilitate U.S. bombing in Iraq.

Ciaron O'Reilly
Pit Stop Ploughshares/Dublin Catholic Worker
At Large!,
Dublin, Ireland

2) SCHEDULE OF SPEAKING EVENTS, PARTY & VIGILLING IN BRISBANE BY CIARON O'REILLY

*THURSDAY SEPT 28TH
Detained by ASIO at Brisbane Airport

*FRIDAY SEPT 29TH. 11AM

-Ciaron O'Reilly Gives Press Conference
on his acquittal of \$U.S. 2 1/2 million criminal
damage of a U.S. war plane in Ireland
<http://www.peaceontrial.com>
Ahimsa House, 24 - 26 Horan St. West End
(close to the corner of Vulture Street)

*SUNDAY OCT 1ST.

-9 am Ciaron gives homily at mass, St. Mary's, Merivale St. South Brisbane
-5pm Ciaron O'Reilly gives homily at mass

*SUN OCT 1ST. AFTERNOON

-2pm onwards Party at "Casa Maggie"
-11 Egbert St. West End, Brisbane
(BYO Drink & some food to share)

There will be a bucket for folks to donate to getting Ciaron to Alice Springs to testify at Pine Gap Trial -3.30PM Party Pieces (bring a song, recitation). Party ends late!

*MONDAY OCT. 2nd
9pm Ciaron O'Reilly interviewed by Steve Austin ABC Radio Queensland.

TUESDAY MORNING/AFTERNOON OCT. 3RD.
(First Day of Pine Gap Trial)
<http://www.pinegap6.org>
8am-10 am & 4pm - 6 pm
Solidarity vigil at "Scales of Justice" statue.
Cnr. of George & Adelaide Streets, North Quay

*TUESDAY EVENING OCT 3RD. 7.30PM
"Nonviolent Resistance to a War that escalates and Expands"
Ciaron O'Reilly shares on the Pit Stop Ploughshares disarmament of a U.S. Navy War Plane at Shannon Airport, the historic acquittal at Dublin's Four Courts and continued resistance to the war.
Video footage by West End filmmaker Carolyn Davies who attended the third not thrid Ploughshares trial in Dublin.
<http://www.peaceontrial.com>

*WEDNESDAY OCT. 4TH.7.30 P.M.
"Faithbased Nonviolent Resistance in a Time of War Without End" Ciaron O'Reilly reflects on bringing the ploughshares prophecy to Shannon Airport in resistance to the deployment of U.S. troops to the invasion of Iraq, jail time and acquittal at Dublin trial <http://www.peaceontrial.com>
Updates on the Pine Gap trial and other nonviolent resistance to the war.

St. Mary's, Merivale St. South Brisbane
Free Entry

THURS OCT. 5TH.
Ciaron leave for Alice Springs to testify at Pine Gap Trial

THURS OCT 12TH
Ciaron returns to Brisbane from Alice Springs Pine Gap trial.

THURS OCT. 19TH
Ciaron departs for Ireland

SAT OCT 28TH.
Ciaron Joins U.S.Veterans of Iraq War at Shannon not Shannnon Airport to Remember the Dead on the Eve of "All Souls"

3) SCHEDULE ALICE SPRINGS PEACE CONVERGENCE TO TRANSFORM PINE GAP

All nonviolent activists and scholars are invited to participate in the Peace Convergence, and in the ongoing campaign to transform Pine Gap/End War in whatever way best suits your needs.

The Day of Transformation at Pine Gap on 7 October will be the key focal point.

The Citizens Inspection Team will be conducting exercises, with wonderful costumes and props. Self-directed contributions by small groups are welcomed and encouraged. You ought dream up a party piece.

Around the Day of Transformation we want to promote better public and activist understanding of

(i) Militarism and Pine Gap

(ii) Uranium and the Nuclear Fuel Cycle (connecting the dots from uranium to weapons)

(iii) Talisman Sabre 07 and Pre-emptive War
(07 Joint U.S. and Australian war games
scheduled for Shoalwater Bay in July 07)

(iv) De-Militarising Shannon Airport and
How to do It. (Pitstop Ploughshares
disarmament, moving forward)

(v) Errr, nonviolent resistance.

We are keen to promote the small affinity group model of interventionary nonviolent action. I'd like to encourage the preparation and formation of such groups for all the projects above and in particular for Talisman Sabre 2007.

We would like to analyse the activities around Talisman Sabre 05 (assess the condition and readiness of the Australian peace movement). Look into the present campaign at Shannon (what's been good, what needs improvement). Then look at what might be achievable in addressing Talisman Sabre 07.

Sunday 8 October

A day for work-shopping nonviolence strategy and techniques. Building a platform for future cooperation.

Friday 6 October - public panel forum.

Ciaran O'Reilly

Pitstop Ploughshares disarmament

Donna Mulhearn

CAAT member, former human shield

Mitch

Aboriginal activist authorised by TOs to discuss issues around the proposed nuclear waste dump.

The aim is to give as many people as possible a rewarding, positive and empowering experience of nonviolent power. (Plus transform Pine Gap).

<http://www.pinegap6.org.au>

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<http://melbourne.indymedia.org/news/2006/09/123524.php>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-316.html>