

Frank Pauc was arrested with others, including Contra Costa resident Michael Kerr, protesting U.S. drone assassination warfare programs which have killed thousands of innocent people. The protest took place at Creech Air Force Base, which is a drone operations center, in southern Nevada.

Frank wrote the following about his arrest and jail experience. It is a moving testimonial to those working to stop this practice, where [up to 90% of those killed are innocent](#), are persons not intended to be targeted, according to classified documents. Drone assassinations [create more "enemy combatants" than they eliminate](#) and are an effective recruiting tool for terrorists.

Hi,

The following essays are what I got out of the arrest experience. Use them as you see fit.

Frank Pauc

Be Careful. Watch that First Step!

He said, "Kid, we only got one question: have you ever been arrested?"

Arlo Guthrie, from Alice's Restaurant

We're sitting in a circle. The afternoon sun of Nevada is beating down on us, and a constant wind is blowing fine particles of tan dust across the plain. We are surrounded by sage brush and creosote bushes. We all left our cell phones far away, in fear that the intel guys across the road at Creech AFB might be monitoring our conversations. We are trying to decide on a course of action for the next morning's demonstration, which promises to include "direct action", which translates into English as somebody getting busted for doing stupid shit. The discussion is interesting and inconclusive. We are all independent thinkers and would be anarchists, so we have difficulty reaching any type of agreement.

Brian is desperately trying to get a plan set up for tomorrow morning. This is important because some people are willing to risk arrest, and some people really don't want to go to jail. There is a show of hands of those people who are willing to be arrested: Mike the guitarist, Mike who is the

guy with all the buttons on his hat, Sharon, Brian, Dennis, and Ray. I don't raise my hand. Somebody says that not many people are volunteering to do anything. That bothers me. I want to help, but I'm not interested in leaping into the unknown.

Nothing is really decided except that we will carry signs that look like tombstones to remember the kids killed by drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan and wherever. There is a kind of ritual that has been established between the cops and the protestors at Creech AFB: they know we will break the law, but they never know exactly where or when. The police allow us to block the entrance to the Air Force Base very briefly. They give us five minutes before they start arresting people. Everybody knows the rules of the game. Nobody likes surprises.

I told my family before I left for Creech that I had no intention of getting arrested. It didn't make sense. I was doing volunteer work in Milwaukee, and I couldn't do it if I was incarcerated. If I got busted at Creech for my opposition to war, it would not help the people who depend on me back home. I give rides to Syrian refugees so that they can get to their ESL classes. I teach a citizenship class. I visit the boys in the psych. ward at the local VA hospital. If I'm in the tank, I can't do those things.

Dawn breaks. Nevada has beautiful sunrises. I stumble out of my tent, shave in a haphazard way. I grab a sign. I wander over to the far side of the state highway. It's cold. I'm only wearing a t-shirt, but it says that we support our troops. I need that shirt. It reminds me of my son, Hans, and of his suffering from the war in Iraq. When I wear the shirt, I suffer with my son. I live with him.

We stood in the cold at the sidelines. Joseba talked with me as the sun rose and my spirits lifted. The wind blew as Joseba and I stood by the fence at the entrance to the air force base. Joseba talked to me about his life as a Basque. We talked about the anniversary of the bombing of Guernica (of Picasso fame). I told Joseba about how my wife's family fled before the Russian cannons in Silesia at the end of WWII. We talked about war. We talked about how it doesn't make any sense at all.

Show time! The sun is up. We have to decide if we want to block the road to the base, and for how long. At about 6:30 AM we go into the street. A car tries to push Dennis out of the way. A cop beats on the window of the car, and he makes it clear to the driver that shoving a protestor is not cool. We stand at the entrance to the base and hold our signs.

Power speaks. The boys in uniform explain to us clearly and patiently that we would be arrested. A sergeant from the police announces over the PA that we have five minutes to get our shit together. He uses other words, but the meaning is obvious.

Five minutes can be long time. Or maybe not. For me, the five minutes in the street was an eternity. Suddenly, it was time to live. The game was over. The police were going to do their job. The cops were working their way down the line, from left to right.

I had no intention of getting arrested. I thought it was stupid. Maybe it is. In the last five minutes I wrestled with this thing. I thought, " This is mindless. This will have no effect".

Ray stood next to me. He turned to me, grabbed my hand, and said, "Frank, I'm glad that you're here."

Time stopped. I said to myself, "Fuck this. I can't leave his guy. I will stay here."

The cops came. They took Dennis. They took Brian. They took Ray.

They took me.

"You are under arrest. Put your hands behind your back!"

I did.

Two cops escorted me from the street. They were professional and they were respectful.

I told them, "I know you are only doing your job."

One cop told me, " Hey, it's all about freedom of speech. You know what I'm saying?"

I told him, "Yeah, I guess I know now."

Disneyland

"As we contemplate the horror
Of the senseless things men do
In this search for rhyme or reason
One must finally come to view
This recurring nightmare madness
As merely Man's attempt
To prove that nothing's sacred
That no one is exempt
So, let the wayward children play

Let the wicked have their day
Let the chips fall where they may
We're all going to Disneyland"

Dis Land from Timbuk 3

Getting arrested is a lot like getting on to a rollercoaster. Once you are on, there are no more decisions to make, and you can't get off the ride until it comes to a complete stop. Our ride lasted over twelve hours.

The cops put us into the paddy wagon and took us for a short drive to a different part of the air base. Just as an aside, the police had two paddy wagons at the place of our arrest, along with thirteen squad cars. They were ready for anything. It reminded of the part in Alice's Restaurant when Arlo Guthrie gets busted for littering and says that "when we got to the scene of the crime, there was five police officers and three police cars, bein' the biggest crime of the last fifty years and everybody wanted to get in the newspaper story about it". That pretty much sums up the situation at Creech.

The police took us out of the vehicle and walked us over to an enclosed area that was set up for processing miscreants. Once again, a bit over-prepared. People in plain clothes were too. FBI. The cops took all of our possessions and put them into paper bags. We filled out paperwork. We traded the plastic restraints for handcuffs that were attached to a chain that went around the waist. Then it was back into the van. We were going to Disneyland. Two squad cars followed the van...just in case.

We arrived at the Clark County Detention Center in Las Vegas. That's where I did all my gambling. The first activity after leaving the paddy wagon was to remove our shoes and socks. With the shackles it was too much of a challenge for us to do that on our own. A police officer took mine off for me. I asked him if this was the best part of his shift. I don't remember his response.

From that place in the garage we went inside the CCDC to sit on a bench. We did a lot of bench-sitting during the next several hours. Every once in a while, somebody would yell at one of us to come and do something. It reminded me a great deal of my first day as a plebe at West Point. They patted us down again, they looked into our mouths. The a brief medical exam. While sitting there, we talked, and waited. There were no clocks in the room. Time there has no meaning. Mike of the many buttons said to me, "I guess we forgot to tell you about the boring part of being arrested!"

At one point they fed us, sort of. Each of us got a brown plastic tray with something resembling food on it. My tray had two slices of bread, a mixture of potatoes and ground beef, carrots, and a broken cookie. I got the opportunity to smell the food, but not to eat it. I couldn't get the plastic spoon to my mouth while wearing the handcuffs. The longer I looked at the meal the more certain I was that not being able to eat wasn't all that bad. The best part of the experience was the fact the tray had served as the cover for the tray of food beneath. That way the warm moisture from the tray below my tray was able to soak through my jeans as the tray rested on top of my lap.

We were fed again later in the day. That meal was just as good as the first go around. Mike the Guitarist and I determined that nobody could make food this bad by accident. Somebody had to try to cook something this nasty.

At one of the stops to fill out even more forms, a lady asked me if I was a vet. I told her "yes". She got out a big ink stamp and stamped "VETERAN" in bold letters in the middle of my charge sheet. I'm not sure why they care about that. Maybe they won't want to have a civil disobedient vet in the courtroom. I don't know.

A policewoman called for people one by one to check some paperwork. She called out, "Francis Paul". I got up off of the bench and went to her. I told her that "Paul" is not my last name.

She looked at me funny and said, "Then I got to find this 'Paul' guy..."

"No, no, no, no! That's my paperwork! It's just that my last name is misspelled! It should be 'P-A-U-C'."

She looked again at the form. "Okay, we'll fix it. Just respond to 'Paul' when somebody calls for you."

That's what I did for the rest of my time in jail. Not once did anybody use my real name. One guard told me that they had fixed it on the paperwork, just because they didn't want me to have an alias. I guess having an alias would be kind of cool. Oh well.

The last activity in that room was a kiosk where I signed a form which authorizes the police to release me on my own recognizance. Then the hand cuffs came off and I got to move to the next big room where they have "unicorns and rainbows" as one of the guards told us. Actually they have TV's that play "Family Guy" and "American Dad" over and over. They

also have more benches. They do the mug shots and fingerprinting there too.

A policewoman called me over to her desk to ask me more questions. She seemed kind of perky. She smiled and asked me, "So, how do you like our new jail?"

Really. What the hell kind of question is that?

The hall is next to the holding cells. Several times a guy from one of the cells screamed loud enough to be heard over the sound of the television. That was disconcerting.

Eventually, I heard a guard yell, "Paul!" I got up. He took me to a holding cell.

I got sit on another bench.

Pod 11

"There was all kinds of mean, nasty, ugly-lookin' people on the bench there

There was mother-rapers father-stabbers father-rapers!

Father-rapers sittin' right there on the bench next to me! And they was mean

And nasty and ugly and horrible and crime fightin' guys were sittin' there

On the bench, and the meanest, ugliest, nastiest one the meanest

Father-raper of them all was comin' over to me, and he was mean and

Ugly and nasty and horrible and all kinds of things, and he sat down next to

Me. He said, 'Kid, what'd you get?' "

Arlo Guthrie, from Alice's Restaurant

The guard stuck me into holding cell #11 with about fifteen other guys. The population was primarily black and Latino, with four whites in the mix. I was like a grain of salt in a pepper shaker. Almost everybody was either sitting on the benches or trying to sleep underneath the benches. There was a TV playing. I sat next to Mike the Guitarist. He seemed glad to see me. I didn't know any of the other people. We had plenty of time to get acquainted.

The room was narrow with wooden benches on either side wall. The concrete floor was painted a dark brown. The television was in the corner of the room furthest from the door. There were windows on either side of

the door, so that a person could look out at the hallway. There were phones built into the walls: three of them. The phones had no receiver. A person had to put his ear up against some holes in the wall to hear, and then talk into some other holes in the wall. The sweetest accessory in the room was the combination toilet/drinking fountain. How thirsty are you?

Sitting next to Mike on the bench was a big Latino guy. He had a long, black beard which he had braided. He was a little fluffy, but I think that there was plenty of muscle under the fat.

Across from Mike was an emaciated white guy in shorts. His face was covered with grey stubble and his eyes looked like two bleeding sores. He needed a good dermatologist. The man worked in a body shop, and he told us how he was being falsely accused of domestic violence.

Standing near us was a young black man. He had on a black t-shirt that said "Murder" on it.

Across the room was a middle-aged black man, well built with greying hair. He liked to converse. He would have been a great talk show host.

Big Latino asked the guard for a roll of toilet paper. The guard cracked the door open slightly, and tossed the roll into the cell. Nice.

Everybody in the cell seemed decent enough. Of course, we were all there because we had been accused of committing various crimes, but that's okay. If things got ugly, there was always the panic button next to the door. I had my doubts that a guard would get here soon enough to prevent somebody from being hurt, but that's all we had available.

Mike mentioned that two fighter jets had buzzed our campsite across the road from the air base. The talk show host wanted to know what kind of jets they were. We weren't sure, and then a conversation started about military aircraft. Talk Show was actually quite knowledgeable, and we discussed American, Russian, and Chinese planes for a while.

Later the conversation turned to sports. It started with basketball. That made sense since there was game on the TV.

Talk Show: "Kobe. I got no respect for that guy. Cry baby. Kobe is like this: 'Gimme the ball! Gimme the ball! Gimme the ball!'. The guy should have got a record for world's biggest ball hog!"

Body Shop Guy: "They need another guy like Larry Byrd! Somebody to run circles around you black guys!"

Talk Show: "Larry Byrd! That guy was the last of a breed. You ain't never gonna see nobody like Byrd again. He was the Last of the Mohicans!"

Body Shop Guy: "Well, there's good white guys in other sports."

Talk Show: "Like what?"

Body Shop Guy: "Boxing!"

Talk Show: "Boxing! Boxing? You serious? Who was the last white winner in boxing? Rocky Graziano? Shit. I mean you got guys like Klitschko, but they're all Ukrainian. They don't count. They are like black Russians. They're like us! The Russians been beating down on those fuckers for years!"

The conversations were kept going to pass the time, but it still dragged. Some of these guys, like Body Shop and the Big Latino, had been in there for almost forty-eight hours already. People looked rough. Nobody knew when they getting out of the cell. The guards came by every few minutes to shuffle through the mug shot cards in the slot, but nobody left the pod. Actually, more guys kept joining us. The flow was all wrong.

Eventually, the guards brought in two young black men. One of them went toward the far wall, near the television. The other guy stood next to the door. Talk Show tried to welcome them to our little group.

He smiled and said, "Hi, new guy!"

The man at the door was staring at the TV, and never even glanced at Talk Show. He said quietly, "I don't know who you are. I don't care what you think. I just want to watch the game without being distracted."

Oh boy.

The mood in the cell shifted ominously. It got worse when our new friend started talking with people that were invisible to me.

He kept looking toward the ceiling and saying things like, "So what do you want me to do? Why do you got to shove it up my ass all the time?"

I hope he wasn't praying.

The guard showed up. He started sorting through his playing cards, and picking a few out.

Big Latino looked at me and laughed, "He picked your card! I could tell from your beard in the picture!"

The guard opened the door and started calling out names.

"Talk Show!"

"Paul!" (Close enough. I would answer to any name that got me out of that room).

Mike and the Big Latino got called too. Body Shop wasn't so lucky.

We filed into the hallway and hooked up with some more inmates, including the other guys from Creech. We all walked down the hallway to a door. The guard unlocked it and we entered. The room had no windows.

The guard locked us in.

Welcome to the Blue Room

"No, this is not a good town for psychedelic drugs. Reality itself is too twisted."

Hunter S. Thompson, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

Excellent. Another locked room full of unknown quantities. There were four guys sitting on a bench. They had on the dark blue uniforms and bright orange socks of CCDC. A mysterious cupboard door opened into another room and a black woman started handing out bags of clothes to the guys in uniform. One white guy with red hair did not get his bag of clothes. I have no idea why not. Another guy who had tattoos literally everywhere got all of his clothes except for a shirt.

People changed into their civilian attire, and then conversations began. Talk Show was telling the group about an acquaintance of his who had been caught with half a pound of meth. Somebody asked how much a half pound of meth goes for on the local market.

"Wholesale or retail?", somebody asked.

The guy with the red hair said that half an ounce usually went for about two hundred bucks. A black guy sharing the bench with him said that it was more like \$250 per half ounce. After further discussion, it was decided that half a pound, sold in bulk, should sell for between \$2000 and \$2500.

In the meantime, a homeless man wearing a Masonic t-shirt was describing his arrest. Apparently, the police woke him up by kicking at his feet, and then dragged him out his sleeping bag to arrest him in his underwear. His charge was something like "improper use of a sidewalk". It actually said that on his charge sheet.

Brian and Mike of the many buttons were trying to explain killer drones to Talk Show. Talk Show said that we need to kill the bad guys. Brian patiently explained that the drone operators had a poor record for identifying bad guys.

At that point, a black guy on the bench with a black polo shirt said, "There ain't no problem telling who is a bad guy around here! Every time we go out on the street, we the bad guys!" He pointed at himself. That was probably the most profound statement on racism that I have ever heard.

The conversation switched back to drugs. One man, who seemed to be an expert on meth, expressed his views on the drug:

"Man, meth helped me when I got off of coke. It reduced the cravings, all that shit. Speed made me more capable when I stopped using. Fuck yeah."

Polo Shirt said, "I don't care what you smoking in that bulb. Crack, coke, meth: if it's burning in that bulb, you still a fucking crack head."

Several conversations were going on at once. Then the door was unlocked. The guard called out for the guy with the tattoos. Nobody heard him. The guard called again. The noise never died down.

The guard said, "We'll try this again in a few minutes." He shut and locked the door.

Lots of bad energy in the room. Cruel disappointment. Recriminations...

"Stupid mother fuckers! Why didn't you just shut the fuck up when the guard come to the fucking door?!"

A black guy wearing an orange t-shirt and bright red pants was standing around, singing a rap song.

A man sitting on the floor called to him, "Knock that shit off, Man!"

Orange Shirt looked at him and said, "Why? The song's only got sixteen bars." He started singing again.

The guard unlocked the door. Silence, well, almost silence.

The guard called out, "Tattoo!" The man with no shirt came forward.

"Paul!"

I walked up.

Several more of us were called out. We went into the hallway. The guard locked the door on the other guys in the blue room.

We had two more stations and about fifteen minutes to go. We signed more papers. We got our possessions.

Tattoo asked the guard, "Where's my shirt?"

Guard: "There wasn't any shirt in the bag."

Tattoo: "I had a shirt when I came in. It's gone now."

Guard: "We don't have your shirt."

Tattoo: " I need a shirt to go outside."

The guard spoke to the lady behind the counter. "Do we have any of those 'throw away' shirts?"

Lady: "Yeah, a couple of them."

Guard: "Give him one."

Lady to Tattoo: " Is this shirt okay?"

Tattoo: "Yeah. It's good. Whatever."

Guard: "That way to the release door. Good luck."

One Last Kiss

"We go to Lost Wages, Lost Wages. We go to Lost Wages..."

Background lyrics on Show Biz Kids from Steely Dan

At the very last station of the release process, they give a person his or her cash back. Sort of. When I got arrested I had nineteen dollars and change on me. The lady behind the counter gave me my change back in a tiny manila envelope. Then she handed me a grey debit card, along with a multi-page document explaining how to use it.

She said, " This is your money on this debit card. Your PIN is your birthday (day and month). Use the card when making a purchase, or at an ATM. It will expire in a few days, so use it soon."

I asked, "So, how long is a 'few' days?"

She replied, "48 hours."

When I was outside the jail with the rest of the Creech boys, we got a ride from Marcus. He wanted to know if we wanted to go straight back to camp. We opted instead to stop at a Salvadoran restaurant for real food and cold beer. At the end of meal, I tried to use my brand new debit card. It was rejected by the machine.

The next day I was riding with Ray. We stopped at a filling station and I attempted to use the ATM there. I put in the card. I put in my PIN. So far, so good. I asked for money.

"Declined. Insufficient funds."

Well, that made sense, seeing as I had less than twenty dollars on the card, and this machine refused to spit out a bill smaller than a twenty. Actually, it also demanded a \$2.50 service charge to use the card. So, in reality, I needed at least \$22.50 to use his card at an ATM. My money was gone, and the debit card was just one of my souvenirs from Vegas.

Total scam.

For me, losing nineteen dollars or so is not the end of the world. However, I bet it is for some people, like the homeless guy in the blue room. The police are skimming cash off people each and every day. It's all perfectly legal, and it's completely wrong.

"We go to Lost Wages, we go to Lost Wages...Oh Honey, can you hear me?" Steely Dan