

Media release: Waihopai Ploughshares
For immediate release

Waihopai Ploughshares trial helped uncover secrets

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Adrian Leason, Father Peter Murnane and Sam Land - the three men who were charged with intentional damage and unlawful entry at Waihopai spy base - have today expressed their thanks to the jury, the judge, and the prosecution and defence lawyers.

At the conclusion of the trial, Father Peter, Sam and Adrian said they feel privileged to have helped uncover the true nature of the spy base. "Our actions in disabling the spy base and stopping the flow of information helped save lives in Iraq", added Adrian.

"What has been humbling for us to realise is how our witness has impacted on so many people around the world and at home", said Sam.

"We did not try to avoid the consequences of our actions, because we respect the rule of law although we do believe we are ultimately accountable to a higher authority. We damaged property at the spy base in order to save victims of war and torture. It's all about Jesus' command for us to treat all people as our brothers and sisters", said Father Peter.

The jury heard that the Waihopai Echelon spy base is New Zealand's largest contribution to the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. The ongoing war has resulted in horrific war crimes, including more than one million dead Iraqi civilians, torture, and permanent poisoning of parts of Iraq by the use of depleted uranium munitions.

The jury also heard evidence from a former British Echelon intelligence analyst, Katherine Gunn. She blew the whistle on secret Echelon spying operations when she was instructed by the US National Security Agency to spy on United Nations Security Council members leading up to the US invasion in 2003.

"Evidence presented in the court confirmed that the ongoing war in Iraq is illegal, and causing massive human suffering", said Adrian. "As an outcome of this trial, we hope that New Zealanders will insist on an enquiry into the activities of the spy base and its links to US-led illegal wars".

Father Peter, Sam and Adrian expressed gratitude for all the support they have received from family, friends and the New Zealand public.

Commenting at the conclusion of the trial, Graham Bidois Cameron, Waihopai Ploughshares media spokesperson, said this Ploughshares action is part of an ongoing tradition: "The practice of non-violent resistance and direct action in the cause of peace has a long history in this country - the peaceful resistance to the invasion of Parihaka, and non-violent direct action against nuclear armed warships entering our harbours being just two examples", he said.

"The actions of Waihopai Ploughshares also need to be understood in relation to an international movement for disarmament and peace", said lawyer Moana Cole, herself a Ploughshares activist. "Adrian, Sam and Father Peter are part of rich history of activism in support of those without a voice and the movement is certainly growing".

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