

INFORMATION UPDATE
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MYTHS AND FACTS CONCERNING THE S. BRIAN WILLSON INCIDENT

NOTIFICATION TO CNWS

Myth: CNWS had no prior knowledge that protesters would be on the track when the train left the Naval Weapons Station for Fort Chicago.

Fact: The attached letter to Lonnie Cagle from Brian Willson was sent ten days prior to the action and was followed up by three phone calls. On the day of the action at 11:50 a.m. a copy of the letter, signed by all of the persons who were preparing to blockade the train, was delivered to the CNWS Security Office at the main gate. The Base Security Officer was notified orally, as was a person holding a walkie talkie who was in direct communication with the train engineer, that protesters would be on the tracks. Brian Willson was run over ten minutes later.

Myth: If Brian Willson had been killed, it would have been suicide.

Fact: This is not true. Brian sat down on the tracks with every expectation that either the train would stop or he would be arrested. The base had received notice that he would be on the tracks. Moreover, in the many incidents in recent years where protesters have attempted to block trains, not one protester has been run over. Brian, by placing himself on the tracks, was acting in accordance with Nuremberg Principles. He was performing his duty as a citizen to oppose what he perceived to be immoral and illegal actions by his government. He was also exercising his Constitutional right to dissent from a government policy he opposed. He was acting in the tradition of King, Thoreau and countless others. While he was prepared to take the consequences for his action, he had no reason to believe that an attempt would be made on his life.

Brian made the following statement on August 21 about his decision to sit on the tracks:

The authorities will be notified of the resistance action on the tracks so that they will have the choice of suspending movement of munitions, removing our bodies, or running over us. One truth seems clear: Once the train carrying the munitions moves past our human blockade, if it does, other human beings in other parts of the world will be killed and maimed. We are not worth more. They are not worth less.

This is the essence of nonviolent direct action: to be prepared to take violence on one's self, rather than inflict violence on one's adversary, and in doing so bear witness to the truth one holds. One also gives the adversary a choice of how to respond.

CNWS had a choice of either moving the train or not. The choice which the station made and its awful consequences do not translate into an attempt to commit suicide by Brian Willson.