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Kansas City Bishop questions local nuclear weapons plant

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NCR Today

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Calling the continued creation of nuclear weapons a "grave moral danger," the bishop of the local Catholic diocese released a statement this afternoon asking officials to reconsider the construction of a new major nuclear weapons production facility here.

The statement comes a week before local and state dignitaries are due to hold an official ground-breaking ceremony for the new facility Sept. 8 and two weeks after 14 activists -- many self-identified as Catholic -- were arrested at the construction site for a nonviolent peace action.

The new plant, which will make non-nuclear parts for nuclear weapons, is set to be the nation's first new major nuclear weapons production facility in 32 years.

In his statement Bishop Robert W. Finn of the Kansas City - Saint Joseph diocese calls for officials to "make a decision for all of humanity: that one day this facility may be transformed from a producer of weapons into a producer of goods that benefit all mankind."

Currently a part of the Bannister Federal Complex, located about 13 miles south of the city's downtown area, the Kansas City Plant is responsible for the production and assembly of approximately 85 percent of the non-nuclear components for the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The plant is due to be relocated beginning in 2012 to a new facility further south.

Finn's statement was released on the online blog of the local diocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Key*.

Related reporting from *NCR*:

- Catholic activists arrested at Kansas City nuclear weapons facility
- Hiroshima Day marked by Kansas City activist sentencing

The full text of the statement is below. It can also be found [here](#).

Various Missouri dignitaries will gather September 8 in south Kansas City to break ground on a new campus for the National Nuclear Security Administration. The facility will manufacture parts for nuclear weapons. Following is a statement by Kansas City ? St. Joseph Bishop Robert W. Finn on the project:

Statement on the Groundbreaking of the Nuclear Weapons Plant

By Most Rev. Robert W. Finn

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On September 8, 2010 ground will be broken to begin construction of a new facility for the production of non-nuclear parts for nuclear weapons in South Kansas City. In the Catholic Church September 8th is the feast of the Birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The confluence of the groundbreaking with the feast of Mary?s nativity provides the opportunity to pause at the irony of the situation: Mary, mother of the Prince of Peace, and the construction of a facility whose main purpose is the construction of weapons for warfare.

The Catholic tradition has always affirmed the right of a state to defend itself from unjust aggression. Implicit in that right is the need to equip a trained military force. We do not deny this obligation and necessity on the part of any state.

However, the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction ? which this nuclear plant proposes to construct ? constitutes a grave moral danger. Nuclear weapons are by their very nature weapons of mass destruction: their force and impact cannot be contained, and their use affects combatants and non-combatants alike. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, ?Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and humanity, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation. A danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons ? especially atomic, biological, or chemical weapons ? to use them? (CCC #2314; cf. also *Gaudium et Spes* #80). Since the use of such weapons is morally questionable, it follows that the production of such weapons is also morally questionable.

Others would argue that to possess such weapons would be a deterrent to other nations who also possess such weapons. The Church responds to such an objection: ?The accumulation of arms strikes many as a paradoxically suitable way of deterring potential adversaries from war. They see it as the most effective means of ensuring peace among nations. This method of deterrence gives rise to strong moral reservations. The arms race does not ensure peace. Far from eliminating the causes of war, it risks aggravating them. Spending enormous sums to produce ever new types of weapons impedes efforts to aid needy populations; it thwarts the development of peoples. Overarmament multiplies reasons for conflict and increases the danger of escalation? (CCC #2325; cf. also Pope Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* #53).

We will continue to stress the Church's constant call for disarmament: "The Church's social teaching proposes the goal of "general, balanced, and controlled disarmament." The enormous increase in arms represents a grave threat to stability and peace. The principle of sufficiency, by virtue of which each state may possess only the means necessary for its legitimate defense, must be applied both by States that buy arms and by those that produce and furnish them. Any excessive stockpiling or indiscriminate trading in arms cannot be morally justified. Such phenomena must also be evaluated in light of international norms regarding the non-proliferation, production, trade and use of different types of arms. Arms can never be treated like other goods exchanged on international or domestic markets" (CSD #508; cf. also John Paul II Message to the United Nations 1985, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace paper "The International Arms Trade" 1994, John Paul II Address to the World of Work 1988).

We have an obligation to think responsibly concerning this nuclear weapons plant; to think beyond the local and examine the global dimensions of this project. "Arms of mass destruction " whether biological, chemical, or nuclear " represent a particularly serious threat. Those who possess them have an enormous responsibility before God and all of humanity. The principle of non-proliferation of nuclear arms, together with measures of nuclear disarmament and the prohibition of nuclear tests, are intimately interconnected objectives that must be met as soon as possible by means of effective controls at the international levels" (CSD #509, cf. also Gaudium et Spes #80; CCC #2314, John Paul II World Day of Peace #2 1986). Let us make a decision for all of humanity: that one day this facility may be transformed from a producer of weapons into a producer of goods that benefit all mankind. We look forward to the day when Isaiah the prophet declared, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again." (Isaiah 2: 4)

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