

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

May 28, 2012 at 4:14pm

Memorial Day commemorated with long peace walk

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NCR Today



Several dozen peace activists commemorated Memorial

Day in Kansas City by walking nine miles, from the site of the city's current nuclear weapons parts plant to that of a new nuclear facility under construction.

"We commemorate the dead by trying to stop more from dying," one said, walking a route south of the city.

Under a hot sun and near cloudless sky, the activists took nearly four hours to complete their peace journey, carrying signs and waving at passing cars.

They ended up in front of the proposed new plant under the watchful eye of a sole plant guard who stood nearby as group members read poems and explained to each other why they stay committed to protesting the new facility, intended to replace an existing one here that makes approximately 85 percent of the non-



The new Kansas City plant, located some 14 miles south of the downtown area and still surrounded largely by farmland, is part of an investment of \$80 billion in the arsenal announced by President Obama last year. The estimated cost of building the new plant is between \$500 and \$675 million.

Meanwhile, recent press reports have indicated that President Obama may be considering a significantly small nuclear deterrent force of between 300 to 1,100 warheads.

While the current number of deployed warheads is confidential, according to treaty limits the U.S. can only deploy up to 1,550.

In a March 2 letter, the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops asked people to sign an online petition calling on Obama to take "dramatic steps" toward nuclear disarmament in his implementation study.

Referencing the president's promise to "move towards disarmament" in an April 2009 speech in Prague, Czech Republic, the petition calls on Obama to "make good on his commitment" by pursuing "dramatic steps that would make us all safer from the threat of nuclear weapons."



The Kansas City peace activists have for

the past several years tried to focus local and national attention on the issue of nuclear weapons by protesting the construction of the new plant facility.

They have pointed to a contradiction in national policy: earmarking billions more for new weapons while claiming to want to cut the nation's nuclear arsenal.

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Henry Stoeber, chair of the board of PeaceWorks, Kansas City, and a leader in the Memorial Day march, speaking in front of the new facility, sealed off from the public by a tall fence, told protesters not to get discouraged.

Twenty years ago, he said, local activists marched many miles to protest the nuclear launching sites embedded in Missouri farm fields. Those launching sites have now been shut down. He said he hopes for a similar fate for the nuclear weapons plants in Kansas City.

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