NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Activists, including 82-year-old sister, halt work at nuclear site

Joshua J. McElwee | Aug. 3, 2012 NCR Today

Work has halted at one of the key facilities in the country?s nuclear weapons complex following an act of civil disobedience July 28 by three Catholics, including an 82-year-old religious sister.

The Y-12 National Security Complex, the nation?s only facility for manufacturing, processing, and storing weapons-grade uranium, has temporarily stopped operations and has moved all its nuclear material into secure vaults following the action, which saw the three Catholics cut through a series of fences before making their way to the complex?s reportedly most secure facility.

The three, who call themselves the Transform Now Plowshares, said they wished with their action to "indict the U.S. government" for its nuclear weapons modernization program and for planning to build a new facility at the Y-12 site in Oak Ridge, Tenn., according to friends of the activists.

In the last several years, activists in the area have been protesting the planned new facility for the complex, called the Uranium Processing Facility, which the National Nuclear Security Administration says is needed to replace aging buildings and facilities, some of which date to 1945.

Federal estimates have placed the price tag of the new facility, one of three planned by the security administration, at about $6.5 billion.

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) released a statement Wednesday saying the temporary closure of the nuclear site was ?necessary to ensure continued confidence in safe and secure operations at Y-12.?

?During the stand down period, which is effective today and is expected to end by next week, all special nuclear materials will be moved to vault-type facilities on site, all nuclear operations will be halted, and contractor security personnel will undergo training and refresher instruction,? the statement continues.

According to reports in the *Knoxville News Sentinel* [1], which first covered the protest, the activists were found outside the facility July 28 after they had hung banners, splashed blood and painted messages on the wall of the storage site.

Before they were arrested, the activists offered to share bread with the guards at the site and sang, the *News Sentinel* reported.

The three activists -- Sr. Megan Rice, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus; Michael Walli, a member of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker community in Washington, D.C.; and Greg Boertje-Obed, a former U.S. Army officer from Duluth, Minn. -- had their second court appearance regarding their protest Thursday.

They are expected to appear again Friday afternoon for a detention hearing in the U.S. District Court of Eastern Tennessee in Knoxville. At that hearing Magistrate Judge C. Clifford Shirley is to determine whether they can continue to be held in prison pending trial or if they can be released on bail.

For more on the protest, see *NCR*?s earlier story, **Catholic activists breach Tennessee nuclear weapons plant in protest** **[2]**.

Friends of the activists are also maintaining a website to keep people informed of their condition: **Transform Now Plowshares** **[3]**.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/26/2015 - 02:04*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/activists-including-82-year-old-sister-halt-work-nuclear-site

Links:
[1] http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2012/jul/31/more-details-of-stunning-y-12-break-in-offered/
[2] http://ncronline.org/node/31550
[3] http://transformnowplowshares.wordpress.com/