

By Felice and Jack Cohen-Joppa

From [The Nuclear Resister](#) | Original Article

Transform Now Plowshares Sentenced for Y-12 Nuclear Disarmament Action



GREG BOERTJE-OBED
62 months

www.nukeresister.org



SR. MEGAN RICE, SHCJ
35 months

www.transformnowplowshares.wordpress.com



MICHAEL WALLI
62 months

Nine months after their conviction on charges of sabotage and criminal damage at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, three nuclear abolitionists were sentenced to lengthy prison terms today, February 18, in federal court in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Federal Court Judge Amul Thapar imposed prison terms less than what federal guidelines recommend and prosecutors asked for: 35 months for Sr. Megan Rice (84 years old), and 62 months for Michael Walli (64 years old) and Greg Boertje-Obed (59 years old), followed by 3 years of supervised release. Divided among them, the three Transform Now Plowshares activists must also pay restitution totaling \$52,953.

Thapar heard arguments from both sides about possible downward departure from the sentencing guidelines, and allocution from each defendant. He said that he wanted to hand down a severe enough sentence to deter them and others from engaging in similar disarmament actions in the future.

Defendants reserved the right to appeal.

Sentencing of the three began on January 28, but the hearing that day was continued until today when a worsening winter storm forced early closure of the courthouse. The proceedings on both days were broadcast by closed circuit television into a second courtroom to accommodate the crowd of supporters on hand.

Before adjourning in January, Judge Thapar heard testimony from friends of each of the defendants, about their good works in their communities: Rice's life-long family friend, Yale University scholar Mary Evelyn Tucker; Walli's fellow Washington, D.C. Catholic Worker community member Kathy Boylan; Boertje-Obed and Walli's friends from the midwest, 87-year-old veteran Andy Anderson and Nukewatch co-director John LaForge. Assistant U.S. attorney Jeff Theodore, the lead prosecutor, used the occasion to further ridicule and demean the defendants, saying they were "disingenuous" about their commitment to peace and justice, and challenging Boylan and LaForge about their own criminal convictions in peace actions.

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Early on the morning of July 28, 2012, the three veteran activists hiked over a ridge and cut through four fences to reach the United States' new storehouse for bomb-grade, highly enriched uranium at the Y-12 nuclear weapons complex.

At the base of the concrete fortress they strung crime scene tape between the pillars, poured blood on the walls, lit candles and hung two banners reading "Transform Now Plowshares" and "Swords into Plowshares, Spears into Pruning Hooks – Isaiah." With their hammers, they began chipping away at the building's foundation. When the first security officer arrived on the scene, the trio broke bread to share as a peace offering. They took action in the 33-year Plowshares tradition of more than 100 predominantly faith-based acts of direct disarmament around the world.

Their arrest led to a temporary shutdown of Y-12 operations, oversight hearings in Congress, and on-going security overhauls throughout the nuclear weapons enterprise.

For more information, visit the Transformation Now Plowshares blog [here](#).

Report from the courtroom

by Ralph Hutchison, coordinator, Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance

Judge Amul R. Thapar passed sentence on Greg Boertje-Obed, Megan Rice and Michael Walli on Tuesday, February 18, 2014 in federal court in Knoxville, Tennessee. The three were convicted in May 2013 for their nonviolent action called Transform Now Plowshares at the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, on charges of depredation of property and sabotage—the convictions carried possible maximum sentences of 30 years in prison. Sentencing guidelines, based on factors including history, recommended sentences ranging from 6-10 years.

Sentencing began at 1:30pm; the three were permitted to be in the courtroom together by Judge Thapar.

Michael Walli received a sentence of 62 months on each count, to be served concurrently, followed by 3 years of supervised release.

Greg Boertje-Obed received a sentence of 62 months on each count, to be served concurrently, followed by 3 years of supervised release.

Megan Rice received a sentence of 35 months on each count, to be served concurrently, followed by 3 years of supervised probation.

“Judge Thapar has tried to strike a compromise that reflects the nature of this nonviolent action but satisfies the government’s demand that Megan, Michael and Greg’s sentence send a

deterrent message to the wider community. For now, their bodies remain in prison. But their voices are free, reminding us that the central issue of this action and trial have not been resolved—as long as the government continues to produce thermonuclear weapons of mass destruction in Oak Ridge or anywhere, people are required to resist,” said Ralph Hutchison, coordinator of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance

At the hearing, each of the Plowshares resisters spoke, reminding the court of the central purpose of their action—to call the court’s attention to the ongoing violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty at the Y12 plant in Oak Ridge. In testimony at hearings leading up to the trial, former Attorney General of the United States Ramsey Clark called the production of nuclear weapons components at Y12 “unlawful,” and the work there “a criminal enterprise.”

Megan, Michael and Greg entered Y12 in the wee hours of the morning on July 28, 2012, cutting four fences and traversing a lethal-force-authorized zone, arriving at the Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility, the nation’s warehouse of weapons grade highly enriched uranium. They poured blood on the walls of the HEUMF and spray painted “Plowshares Please Isaiah,” and “The Fruit of Justice is Peace.” They also chipped a corner of the concrete wall with a small hammer, a symbolic act reflecting the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah who said, “They shall beat their swords into plowshares.”

The statement issued at the time declared the United States in violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and said Y12 was chosen for the action because of plans for a multi-billion dollar bomb plant to be built there—the Uranium Processing Facility. The sole purpose of the UPF (pricetag now \$19 billion) is to produce thermonuclear cores for warheads and bombs. Y12 is an active weapons production facility—workers today are performing Life Extension Upgrades on the W76 warhead at Y12.

Supporters outside the courtroom said, “The United States is breaking its own law when it builds bombs in Oak Ridge. Any government that would lock up Megan, Michael and Greg is desperate to hide the truth. By their actions, they have broken the silence; their sacrifice challenges each of us to speak up for a safer world. In prison or out, Michael, Greg and Megan will continue to pray and work to save the life of the planet.”