

GREENPEACE

Greenpeace and Nuclear Disarmament: 30 years working for a world free of nuclear weapons

From "No Nukes" to "Stop Star Wars"

In 1971 a group of twelve American and Canadian activists chartered a boat and sailed straight into the nuclear test site in Amchitka Alaska. That famous voyage, thirty years ago, sparked an international outcry against nuclear weapons and formed one of the most influential watchdog groups, Greenpeace.

From that first action thirty years ago to the present nuclear menace, "Star Wars", Greenpeace's disarmament campaign has challenged the testing and proliferation of nuclear weapons in every corner of the globe.

1971-1972

Within a year of the first Greenpeace voyage to the test site in Amchitka, Alaska, the United States announces that it is cancelling further tests at Amchitka.

April 1972 - 1974

Greenpeace undertakes a series of voyages to the French nuclear test sites at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls. French gendarmes stormed the Greenpeace ship the Vega and beat crew member David McTaggart. Outrage over this incident helps pressure the French government into announcing that all further nuclear tests will be conducted underground.

1982

The Greenpeace protest vessel Sirius is towed out of Leningrad after Greenpeace members release thousands of balloons and distribute leaflets in the Russian city calling for the Soviet Union to stop nuclear testing.

August 1983

Greenpeace's hot air balloon Trinity flies over the Berlin Wall into East Germany carrying pleas for nuclear disarmament.

May 1985

Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior relocates the entire population of the South Pacific island Rongelap. These people had been exposed to radioactive fallout from U.S. nuclear testing in the region during the 40s and 50s and were suffering high levels of cancer and birth defects.

July 10, 1985

French secret service agents bomb the Rainbow Warrior while in Auckland harbour, killing one crew member. The crew had been planning to return to Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls to resume their protest against French nuclear testing. 1986 Four teams of Greenpeace activists infiltrate the Nevada Test Site and succeed in delaying the "MIGHTY OAK" nuclear tests for two days.

1986-1993

Greenpeace activists participate in annual protests at the Nevada Test Site involving 3,000 to 9,000 people that maintain public awareness of nuclear testing and the continuing nuclear arms race. In 1988 alone, over 14,000 people attend two demonstrations at the test site with over 4,000 people arrested for non-violent civil disobedience. In 1987, the Greenpeace balloon Trinity sailed into the test site.

1991

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev initiates unilateral nuclear testing moratorium.

1992

The Rainbow Warrior II returns to Moruroa atoll and is seized by French forces. In April, Francois Mitterrand unexpectedly declares a temporary moratorium on French tests pending the actions of the other nuclear powers. Greenpeace activists stage non-violent direct action in front of the White House calling on then-President George Bush to initiate a U.S. moratorium. After a sustained national grassroots lobbying campaign led by Greenpeace and other disarmament groups, the United States Senate adopts the "Hatfield-Exxon-Mitchell" amendment that would effect a 9-month U.S. testing moratorium: place strict conditions on any further U.S. testing and require the president to complete CTBT negotiations by September 1996.

September 23, 1992

The United States conducts its 1,030th and last nuclear test.

July 9, 1995

Rainbow Warrior II sails toward Moruroa to protest French plans to resume testing. The boat is boarded by a team of French Navy commandos who lob tear gas, smash equipment and take the boat and crew into custody. The incident comes nearly ten years to the day French Secret Service agents blew up the original Rainbow Warrior in Auckland harbour, New Zealand and fuels international outrage against French testing.

September 6, 1995

France resumes nuclear tests in the South Pacific despite international opposition and efforts by Greenpeace vessels to reach the test zone. CTBT talks in Geneva end the year without producing an agreement. The U.S. Energy Department announces plan to begin a series of "subcritical" nuclear weapon tests at the Nevada Test Site in

1996, prompting an immediate reaction from Greenpeace and a grassroots campaign to cancel them.

January 27, 1996

France conducts its last nuclear test.

Summer 1996

The MV Greenpeace sails to Shanghai, China to urge the Chinese government to stop nuclear testing and support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. July 28, 1996
China conducts its 45th, and last, nuclear test.

September 24, 1996

After 51 years and 2,046 nuclear weapons test explosions at over 20 locations around the globe, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is opened for signature at the U.N. in New York.

July, 2000

By sea and on land, from California to the Marshall Islands, Greenpeace activists were on the "Star Wars" frontline, protesting the third in a series of Missile Defence tests by the United States. Find out more about this action.

2001

Greenpeace intensifies its Stop Star Wars campaign throughout the world, including sending the Rainbow Warrior back to the Marshall Islands in the North Pacific, a region at the heart of the missile defence program. Other actions include the blockading of NATO Headquarters in Brussels, extensive protests during George Bush's first trip to Europe, and a two day occupation of Menwith Hill in the U.K., a U.S. spy base earmarked for the Star Wars program. A second Greenpeace ship, the MV Arctic Sunrise, is due to sail on July 13th 2001 for Greenland to protest at another U.S. radar facility crucial to the Star Wars system.