

Commentary

800 flock to desert test site to rally against nuclear tests

Camp Desert Rock near Nevada test site for nuclear weapons — Twenty Eugeneans were among about 800 demonstrators gathered in the blistering heat near a three-story-high, black nylon mushroom cloud to protest nuclear testing. In the 1950s, soldiers were irradiated at this location, watching atomic bomb tests.

This was the largest group ever assembled here, 65 miles from Las Vegas and about 100 yards from a painted white line. Crossing that white line, many miles from the entrance to the test site, guarantees an arrest for trespassing.

so there are no surprises.

Vip Short, a Eugene chiropractor and one of the protesters, said what the protesters are doing in Nevada is one of the best examples of the volunteerism President Reagan has asked of Americans.

"The DOE is spending tens of thousands of dollars just to watch us do this on a shoestring," he said.

The demonstrators clustered in the shade of makeshift shelters, sometimes leaving them to stand in the relentlessly scorching sun closer to



Arrested protesters become willing criminals and are loaded aboard buses at a peaceful Nevada desert anti-nuclear confrontation.

On the other side of the line, about 20 uniformed officers armed with guns, riot sticks and walkie-talkies stood idly in groups, leaning against their white cars, talking, occasionally glancing at the crowd, waiting. The hum from the generators that air-condition their big RV-like support vehicles broke the usual silence of this vast emptiness hospitable only to sagebrush and an occasional cactus.

But the protesters would wait a few days before crossing the line. The American Peace Test (APT), the group organizing the event, always tells both the sheriff's department and the Department of Energy exactly what they have planned,

the parachute-covered truck bed that formed a stage for speakers addressing the crowd. Peacekeepers, designated by orange arm-bands and armed with water bottles, circulated through the crowd, cooling necks and faces with welcome spray.

Nationally renowned astrophysicist Carl Sagan, best known for publicizing the "nuclear winter" effects of multiple atomic blasts, headed the list of speakers.

The list also included Sissy Farenthold, a member of the U.S. delegation to the Geneva Peace Talks, Oregon Rep. Jim Weaver and Daniel

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