NUKEWATCH QUARTERLY

A publication of the Progressive Foundation — ISSN 1942-6305 — Spring/Summer 2026
News & Information on Nuclear Weapons, Reactors, Radioactive Waste & Nonviolent Resistance

European States, Vatican Reject U.S. War on Iran

Spain and Austria have refused to allow their airspace to be used by U.S. warplanes in the bombardment of Iran. Additionally, Italians so overwhelmingly oppose the U.S. and Israeli war, that even their right-wing Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has spoken out.

Meloni told Parliament March 14, "Threats are becoming more and more frightening. They're multiplying, and the unilateral interventions carried outside the perimeter of international law — which is where we must place the American and Israeli intervention against the Iranian regime — interventions in which I say immediately, at the expense of any mistake, Italy will not take part and does not intend to take part."

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was more emphatic, calling the war "absurd, cruel and illegal," and saying on March 25: "Of course we are going to put all the resources of the state at the service of the people, to protect them from a war, a war on Iran which is not endorsed by the government of Spain. And I say to the right, and the far-right, that they cannot be supporting those who set fire to the world and then complain about the smoke...."

Mark Botanga, a Belgian Member of European Parliament outraged by the killing of children, said in Parliament March 11: "Most of you don't condemn and even support Trump's & Netanyahu's war on Iran, yet claim to stand with the Iranian people. Now I dare you to say that to the eyes of that 7-year-old girl ... that was killed when a U.S. Tomahawk missile hit her elementary school. Dare to admit to the 167 other victims in that school that you are offering European bases to U.S. killing machines. Tell the families of Tehran, a city of 10 million people, that you support the chemical warfare of Israel as it poisons the air with toxic fires and black rain that will cause cancers for decades.... Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Iraq: your bombs never brought democracy and never will. They bring chaos, death, destruction, and the unbearable silence of children who will never come home."

And António Costa, President of the European Council, wrote on social media, "Any targeting of civilian infrastructure ... is illegal and unacceptable."

Pope Rebukes Hegseth's War Prayer

During a March 29 Palm Sunday mass in St. Peter's Square, Pope Leo denounced the U.S. and Israeli war on Iran as "atrocious" and indirectly rebuked U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth for a war prayer delivered in Washington, D.C.

See Europeans, Vatican Reject U.S. War, p.8

Proximity to Nuclear Reactors Associated with Increased Cancer Deaths

By Maya Brownstein

BOSTON, Mass. — U.S. counties located closer to operational nuclear power plants (NPPs) have higher rates of cancer mortality than those located farther away, according to a new study led by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

The study is the first of the 21st century to analyze proximity to NPPs and cancer mortality across all NPPs and every U.S. county. The researchers emphasized that the findings are not enough to establish causality but do highlight the need for further research into nuclear power's health impacts.

The study was published Feb. 23, 2026, in the journal *Nature Communications*.

Numerous studies on the potential link between NPPs and cancer have been conducted around the world, with conflicting results. In the U.S., these studies have been rare and limited in their scope, focused on a single NPP and its surrounding community.

To expand the evidence base, the researchers conducted a national assessment of NPPs and cancer mortality between 2000 and 2018 using "continuous proximity." They used advanced statistical modeling that captured the cumulative impact of all nearby NPPs, rather than just one. The locations and dates of operation of U.S. NPPs — as well as some nearby in Canada — were obtained from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, and county-level data on cancer mortality was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The researchers controlled for potential confounders [that might effect data] in each county, including educational attainment, median household income, racial composition, average temperature and relative humidity, smoking prevalence, BMI [body mass index], and proximity to the nearest hospital.

The study found that U.S. counties located closer to nuclear power plants experienced higher cancer mortality rates, even after accounting for socioeconomic, environmental, and health care factors. The researchers estimated that over the course of the study period, roughly 115,000 cancer deaths across the U.S. (or about 6,400 deaths per year) were attributable to proximity to NPPs. The association was strongest among older adults.

"Our study suggests that living near a NPP may carry a measurable cancer risk — one that lessens with distance," said senior author Petros Koutrakis, Professor of Environmental Health and Human Habitation. "We recommend that more studies be done that address the issue of NPPs and health impacts, particularly at a time when nuclear power is being promoted as a clean solution to climate change."

The researchers noted that the results are consistent with the results of a similar study they conducted in

See Reactors and Cancer Deaths, p.6

Monticello Reactor Leaks Oil to Mississippi while Shut Down for Repairs

The 55-year-old Monticello nuclear reactor owned by Xcel Energy was unexpectedly shut down February 20, 2026 to "perform maintenance" and to "determine appropriate repairs," according to *The Monticello Times.* The reactor was still shutdown March 31, or 43 days.

No Minneapolis, regional, or national news service made mention of the reactor outage in spite of the "over 1 million users" that rely on its electricity (according to Xcel's website). The reasons for the outage were not made public by the company, which did not name the equipment or sorts of systems that need repair.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission also made no announcement of the shutdown, and its regional Public Affairs Officer Victoria Mitlyng wrote in an email to Nukewatch February 26, "The shutdown at Monticello was a planned maintenance shutdwon (sic) and did not require formal notifications. It's a routine practice for nuclear plants." The lack of a public NRC notification may explain why news services made no mention of the shutdown.

According to Xcel spokesperson Theo Keith, who spoke to *The Monticello Times*, the shutdown "is not related to the tritium leak" from the reactor and made public in 2023. Tritium is the radioactive form of hydrogen, and Mr. Keith's reference is to the leak of 829,000 gallons of highly radioactive coolant that contaminated groundwater under the reactor site, some of which eventually reached the Mississippi

See Monticello Shut Down for Repairs, p.7

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
EAU CLAIRE, WI
PERMIT NO. 1557

NUKEWATCH
The Progressive Foundation
740A Round Lake Road
Luck, WI 54853

Address Service Requested