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1969: Millions march in US Vietnam Moratorium

Americans have taken part in peace initiatives across the United States to protest against the continuing war in Vietnam.

The Peace Moratorium is believed to have been the largest demonstration in US history with an estimated two million people involved.

In towns and cities throughout the US, students, working men and women, school children, the young and the old, took part in religious services, school seminars, street rallies and meetings.

Supporters of the Vietnam Moratorium wore black armbands to signify their dissent and paid tribute to American personnel killed in the war since 1961.

The focal point was the capital, Washington DC, where more than 40 different activities were planned and about 250,000 demonstrators gathered to make their voices heard.

Some peace demonstrators gathered on the Capitol steps last night singing songs and holding a candlelit vigil until rallies began in the morning.

Addressing a rally in Washington, Dr Benjamin Spock, the child care expert, said the war was a "total abomination" that was crippling America and must be stopped.

Outside the White House, there were scuffles and several arrests made when police clamped down on black activists.

In Portland, Oregon, 400 protesters clashed with police after an attempt to prevent conscripts entering an army induction centre.

Administration supporters have been critical of the moratorium. General Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff called protesters "interminably vocal youngsters, strangers alike to soap and reason".

In a letter to President Richard Nixon, 15 Republican Congressmen have called for an intensification of the campaign.

Supporters of the war made their views known, too.

In New York, where the mayor, John Lindsay, had ordered the US flag to be flown at half-mast for the day, police officers and fire fighters drove with their headlights on in protest at the moratorium day as did many ordinary American citizens.

Some officials wore badges that read: "USA - Unity and Service for America".

But Senator Edward Kennedy, a vocal anti-war campaigner, called for combat troops to be withdrawn from Vietnam by October next year and all forces by the end of 1972.

Speaking in Boston, Senator Kennedy was careful not to accuse the president of perpetuating the war.

"I do not believe that President Nixon is committed to continuing the war in Vietnam, but I do believe this nation is in danger of committing itself to goals and personalities that guarantee the war's continuance."

President Nixon continued to work from the White House without comment, as thousands marched around him.

Peace activists congregated outside US embassies across Europe. In London a crowd of some 300 people demonstrated opposite the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square.