

VFW sues Obama administration over disputed cross memorial

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WASHINGTON (RNS) The Veterans of Foreign Wars has sued the Obama administration, saying it is dragging its feet on transferring ownership of land under a controversial California war memorial.

The Supreme Court ruled last April that a congressionally approved land swap involving a five-foot memorial cross in the Mojave Desert Preserve was constitutional, but legal wrangling over it has continued.

"Despite the reversal by the Supreme Court, the government has refused to give effect to the land-transfer statute and transfer the land upon which the memorial stands to the VFW," reads the complaint filed Tuesday (Jan. 11) in a California district court.

Officials from the Justice Department could not be reached for comment.

Shortly after the high court ruling, the cross was stolen from the site and has not been replaced. The VFW has unsuccessfully sought to have the memorial rebuilt with a new cross.

"This is our land, our memorial and we want it back," said James Rowoldt, an official of the VFW Department of California, in a statement.

The latest action in the Mojave cross case follows a Jan. 4 ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that a veterans' memorial featuring a 43-foot cross on California's Mount Soledad is unconstitutional.