

# PATHFINDER

The Progressive Foundation, P.O. Box 649, Luck, WI 54853, (715) 472-4185, <nukewtch@win.bright.net>

## STOP PROJECT ELF

CLAM LAKE, WI—Eight more nuclear weapons opponents were cited for trespass October 10 during an action organized by the Loaves & Fishes Community in Duluth, MN. Following Saturday events in Duluth honoring the peacemaking of St. Francis of Assisi and Plowshares activist, Larry Cloud Morgan, about 60 activists traveled to the ELF site to speak, meditate and act. Of the eight resisters who entered the site, three used a ladder to scale the fence and present the authorities with an International Law Complaint against ELF's operation.

Three of those arrested—Molly Mechtenberg of Duluth, Fern Arpi of Virginia, MN and Reba Mathern of Fargo, ND—pleaded not guilty and have a hearing Dec. 8 in Ashland, WI when a trial date will be set. Molly Mechtenberg's citation was the 500th issued since 1991, when Nukewatch, Anathoth Community Farm, Loaves & Fishes, Northland College students and later Laurentian Shield Resources for Nonviolence, in coalition with 35 other groups, began the latest campaign to close Project ELF.

**ELF will again be the focus of protest during the National Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. The National Trident Resistance Network has called on activists around the country to honor Dr. King's memory by demonstrating locally against all aspects of the illegal Trident system.**

**ELF events are set for the weekend of January 22 and 23, 2000. The Northland College Peace Club in Ashland will again host and co-sponsor ELF events in honor of Dr. King. Workshops, strategy and action planning will take place at Northland College's Sigurd Olson Institute.**

### LICENSE SUSPENSIONS ENDED

The elimination of a state law has revived prospects for additional resistance to the Navy's Trident Trigger. The Transportation and Property Tax Relief section of the new Wisconsin budget has handed a gift to practitioners of civil protest and the indigent.



Photo by John LaForge

**Ashland County Deputy Sheriff, Ed Schlotke prepares the 500th trespass citation since 1991 at Project ELF. Molly Mechtenberg of the Loaves and Fishes Catholic Worker Community in Duluth stands ready to take the case to trial.**

For years, Wisconsin State courts have suspended the drivers' licenses of people that fail to pay fines, even those that are non-traffic-related. Hundreds of activists charged with trespassing at Project ELF have had their licenses suspended for up to five years for refusing to pay fines. (A federal law makes a suspension in one state apply to all 50 states, so renewal of out-of-state licenses was sometimes held up for ELF resisters.) The importance of a driver's license made direct civil resistance difficult for many.

Effective Jan. 3, 2000, the legislature has eliminated the courts' power to suspend drivers' licenses solely for the failure to pay forfeitures "imposed for violating a local ordinance that is unrelated to the violator's operation of a vehicle." In dozens of protest cases, Ashland County has prosecuted Project ELF resisters under an agreement made with the Department of Agriculture and its Forest Service. The USFS oversees the remote site for the Navy.

By rescinding the license suspension penalties, the state expects to save the Department of Transportation about \$1,158,600 state-wide next year alone.

Suspensions made sentencing cheap and easy for Ashland County. In 1995, the County spent more than \$19,000 to keep three ELF resisters in jail on mere trespass convictions for a total of 19 1/2 months. Soon the county will have to pay a steeper price for prosecuting conscientious activists.

# Tokaimura: Japan's Neutron "Bomb"

By John LaForge

In the middle of a crowded residential neighborhood in Tokaimura, Japan, manufacturers of nuclear reactor fuel caused a disaster September 30 that sent a billowing cloud of alpha, beta and gamma radiation into the atmosphere and spewed deadly neutrons\* several kilometers from the site. It was the world's 60th uranium fuel fire, or "criticality," and it burned through the factory roof, according to National Public Radio. The 20-hour-long fire raised radiation levels to 20,000 times normal near the factory and 15,000 times normal 1.2 miles away.

The disaster was marked by an amazing lack of emergency preparedness and confused government responses. The federal authorities in Tokyo and the municipal government in Tokaimura issued conflicting advice on when it was safe for locals to return home. Seven days after the disaster, the Japanese Agriculture Ministry dared to say that iodine-131 and iodine-133 found 160 yards from the facility—proof of radioactive fallout—posed no threat to people eating local produce. Iodine-131 is dangerous for 80 days and damages the thyroid. Local police and television had initially warned people not to harvest crops.

Neutron radiation is extremely hazardous. It can penetrate cars, buildings and the body, where it can damage DNA and cause cancer. Signs of neutron radiation from the fire were found inside a bank 350 yards away, where coins were irradiated. A gold bracelet found 800 yards away was likewise irradiated. Greenpeace said it found radioactive sodium-24 in salt collected from inside houses 175 yards away. The passing neutrons caused the ionization of table salt. (The neutron bomb is designed to produce a huge burst of this radiation, poisoning people while destroying less property than an ordinary H-bomb.)

Hitoaki Koide of Kyoto University told the *Los Angeles Times*, "Of course, the people who were within 500 yards of the plant were irradiated. The only question is the degree."

## Going Critical USA: A First-hand Account

Note: This is an account of the aftermath of a 1963 Livermore Labs criticality.

By Jack Truher

In 1963, I was a young experimental criticality physicist whose office was a few steps away from the radiation vault in which the accident occurred.

Initial cleanup involved removal of radioactive debris and components from the combustion of some 103 pounds of enriched uranium, plus burned beryllium and graphite components.

After bulk removal was complete, I worked for a few hours in the vault in full rubber radiation protection gear, breathing filtration, etc. Untrained for such cleanup, I was among a small contingent of young staff, mostly professional, who were handed buckets and brushes and ordered to scrub down radioactive residue from damaged or complex experimental apparatus. Each of us could only work in this environment for perhaps 45 minutes per day without exceeding radiation standards. Our efforts were almost completely futile. After a few days of such wasted effort, management became aware that they had no effective scrub down plan. Some staff (not me) began a pattern of not appearing...

My last appearance in the contaminated vault was interrupted when a 55-to-60-year-old radiation safety veteran appeared in the vault without any protective equipment. Without saying a word, he removed his trousers and shirt, throwing them over some bars in a distant corner of the radiation vault. Dressed only in his underwear, the silent veteran turned on the wall-mounted, emergency fire hose at high pressure, spraying a robust stream of water directly on the blackened apparatus, the surrounding walls, etc. He was immediately drenched in radioactive water and traces of black uranium oxide. The resulting runoff water drained to what appeared to be an industrial floor drain. I assumed then that this runoff drain led to the public sewer or municipal storm drainage system. I was not aware of any contained sumps for this building—although their existence was possible...

Confronted with what I viewed as reckless cleanup behavior, I removed myself from the radiation vault. I was never rescheduled to assist further with the cleanup. No further communications were made to me about any aspect of the cleanup.

End Note: An article in a 1964 *Health Physics* journal is the only unclassified account of the 1963 criticality accident at Lawrence Livermore known to exist. It was written by lab staffers who suggested the cleanup was remarkable, stating for example, on p. 191, "The off-site environment was in no way compromised by the excursion." Jack Truher believes this report may amount to a "cover up."

Truher's account is from the October *Citizen's Watch*, newsletter of the Tri-Valley Communities Against a Radioactive Environment in Livermore, California.

Three factory workers had been illegally hand-mixing a refined uranium solution when it spontaneously began fissioning. Hisashi Ouchi, 35, and Masato Shinohara, 39, are in critical condition having received what is normally considered a fatal radiation dose. Ouchi received what's thought to be 17,000 times the average annual radiation exposure.

The team had combined eight times the usual amount of enriched uranium used in the operation and caused the mixture to go critical.

The government board responsible for the nuclear industry, the Science and Technology Agency, hadn't inspected the site for ten years. The agency confirmed that the workers had been illegally short-cutting the process since 1993. The disaster occurred in the JCO Co.'s "conversion experiment building," which processes highly enriched uranium into powder for nuclear reactor fuel. The fuel was being made for Japan's fast-breeder reactor program that has a disaster record of its own. In December 1995, the Monju fast-breeder leaked eight tons of radioactive liquid sodium and has been closed ever since.

During the Tokaimura "criticality," factory operators floundered without plans, equipment or emergency response help for nearly five hours before ordering the evacuation of houses within 350 yards. Monitoring of deadly neutron radiation did not begin until 6½ hours later. It was 12 hours before hapless officials using municipal loudspeakers told people in a six-mile radius—310,000 residents—to stay indoors, turn off fans and air conditioners, and wipe off any rain that fell on them. It was 20 hours before the out-of-control nuclear chain reaction and spreading of contamination was declared officially over.

The government estimates that 69 people were seriously contaminated: 59 workers, three rescue personnel and seven nearby golf course workers. Greenpeace and other environmental groups charge that the number is actually in the hundreds, and that the government is worsening the disaster by not providing adequate health checks.

Greenpeace has demanded that blood tests be conducted on everyone within 3/5 mile of the factory and that a registry of radiation victims be set up. State Geiger counter tests only detect surface radiation and cannot identify neutron exposure.

Tokaimura, a city of 33,000 known as "nuclear alley," is home to 15 nuclear fuel, radioactive waste and reactor facilities. In 1997 it was the site of Japan's worst accident—a plutonium waste explosion that blew all the windows out of a four-story building and irradiated at least 37 workers.

The residents of Tokaimura have expressed shock at the haphazard response of the company and the government. The *Boston Globe* reports that many found it hard to believe radioactivity 20,000 times normal near the factory had suddenly evaporated a day later. Doctors in Japan told the Associated Press that no one can rule out long-term health consequences of exposure to even low levels of radiation.

\*The splitting or fissioning of uranium releases neutrons that act like microscopically small bullets. Neutrons can penetrate the human body, aluminum, lead and concrete, and are among the most biologically destructive fission products. (Rosalie Bertell, *No Immediate Danger*)

EDITORIAL

## Tokaimura Is Here

On September 30, a radiation fire burned uncontrolled for about 20 hours in the city of Tokaimura, Japan, spewing unknown amounts of radioactive gases and dust into the surrounding atmosphere. Officially, at least 69 people were seriously exposed, but Greenpeace put the number at several hundred. The U.S. government's response to Japan's latest nuclear disaster—dutifully regurgitated by the press—was to say "It can't happen here."

This official retort, intended of course to calm and soothe, implies that plumes of radiation recognize borders, that the winds and waters stop at state lines. Only the Flat Earth Society can find comfort wearing such blinders, because by happening in Japan it happened here. (Another radiation disaster hit South Korea a week later)

"It can't happen here" is not just a lie and a denial of U.S. history—33 such accidents happened in the United States—but it smacks of dehumanization toward the people of Japan.

This deadly and broad radiation spill has poisoned the land and water well beyond Japan's Tokaimura region with long-lived cancer-causing poisons that smash and disorder the cell structure of living beings. 310,000 nearby residents were told nothing of the disaster for more than six hours. Shouting "it can't happen here" only serves to numb us to the inevitable suffering of fellow human beings and to dampen justified outrage at an industrial state that dares to put the environment in such danger.

The Tokaimura radiation explosion and fire were the result of ordinary (if illegal) operations in an inherently unsafe industry that is everywhere allowed to deal with deadly carcinogens without adequate regulation or oversight.

If the world can muster enough indignation and cooperation, Tokaimura could be one of the last insults from the nuclear power and weapons establishment before it is shut down. —JML

### How It Happened

The Tokaimura factory completes one step in the process of making reactor fuel rods. The workers are supposed to remotely mix uranium oxide, enriched to 18.8 percent fissile U-235, with nitric acid. This high concentration of U-235 raises the risk of criticality, and the mixing team was doing it by hand using an illegal manual.

At 10:35 a.m. the men, using buckets, poured 35 pounds of the uranium—eight times the proscribed amount—in a tank where it formed a critical mass and started a chain reaction. Repeatedly for the next several hours, this mass fissioned and blew apart, producing neutrons and gamma radiation, then reformed in the tank to start another reaction.

The out-of-control reaction spewed radiation for hours, making the area too radioactive to allow monitors to approach the factory from which all staff had been evacuated.

Water in the mix and in a moderating jacket around the tank kept the reaction going by slowing neutrons and allowing them to split other atoms. The water jacket also worked to ricochet the neutrons back into the tank, splitting still more uranium atoms.

The daunting problem that went unsolved for 20 hours was how to drain away the water. *New Scientist* reports that it was 2:30 a.m. before JCO managers initiated a plan to remove the water. Then, after several failed attempts to remotely drain the tank, workers ultimately "rushed into the irradiated building for just minutes at a time" and deliberately broke apart the drainpipes.

This halted the chain reaction. The building itself remains so radioactive that it may never reopen.



## NATIONAL TRIDENT RESISTANCE

*If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight. —Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The Trident Resistance Network, headquartered in Poulsbo, WA (see Resources) is calling for joint actions on January 17, 2000, Martin Luther King Day, in protest of the proposed conversion of eight Trident submarines to carry D-5 ballistic missile or Tomahawk cruise missile batteries.

The effect of stopping these programs range from providing a more stable atmosphere in international relations and avoiding confusion in current arms reduction treaties to saving the taxpayers over \$15 billion, which could be spent on more socially useful projects.

Vigils, leaflets and other creative responses will mark the beginning of a campaign to halt these Navy plans, and to work toward the complete abolition of the Trident program. This call for a national day of action makes a clear commitment to King's choice of nonviolence rather than non-existence.

In its call to action for January, the network asked activists to remember Martin Luther King's charge that, "The greatest sin of our time is not the few who have destroyed, but the vast majority who've sat idly by."

# Still Nixing MOX

By Bonnie Urfer

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is operating under a veil of secrecy trying to disguise bad policy, dangerous maneuvers and the unnecessary spread of plutonium. The agency filed formal notice on Nov. 17 that it intends to ship "mixed oxide" fuel (MOX) containing 119 grams of weapons-grade plutonium from New Mexico to Chalk River, Ontario.

The mixed oxide fuel consists of surplus plutonium from nuclear weapons production mixed with a bit of fresh uranium oxide. The DOE finds itself faced with more than 50 tons of surplus plutonium. At Chalk River, MOX will be inserted as pellets into a reactor to see how it does as fuel. It's just one more big experiment in the long line of nuclear gambles.

MOX transport procedures lack full public disclosure, adequate study, safety guarantee, and public input and decision making. Opposition had to grow quickly. Demonstrations have occurred and numerous tribes and organizations have promised resistance to shipments.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne plans to prevent MOX from entering Canada from the U.S. and keep shipments from entering the country from Russia. The Council is "outraged that the Government of Canada would allow such a dangerous transport to proceed despite the outcry of organizations, citizens, government leaders and indigenous tribes in Quebec and Ontario," according to a press release. The DOE found it necessary to use undisclosed routes and increase security in the face of widespread plans to halt MOX on the highway.

Two options have been presented for dealing with the waste plutonium. One is to move it into reactor cores as MOX which is dangerous and where it will become even "hotter." The other option is to take the plutonium, encase it in glass "logs" inside steel cans and store it for 240,000 years. To date, the U.S. is

exploring both procedures while stockpiling enough plutonium pits to make as many nuclear weapons as they wish.

The U.S. is planning to build three new MOX processing facilities at Savannah River in Georgia. The DOE estimates it will cost about \$1.5 billion to design and build the three facilities and another \$1.5 billion to operate them. The long-term goal includes dismantling the MOX facilities in about 2020. The program would create up to 4,000 construction jobs and about 1,100 operational jobs at the Savannah River Site, which employs about 14,000 people now.

Cost estimates for the "Parallex" project, as the Canadian MOX experiment is called, range from \$4.3 million to \$5.8 million and long-term projections come in at a conservative \$2.56 billion. The DOE never includes the costs of cleanup, waste storage or environmental damages up front. If the plutonium were to be processed in-country for long-term storage in glass and steel, the short-term costs decrease by \$1.5 billion, and the process would begin earlier. The DOE also plans to help Russia with a few bucks so they can use MOX as fuel.

Russian, Canadian, French, Japanese, British and U.S. companies are already calculating their profits from sales of MOX fuel and future electricity production—before they even know if it will work. Canada is expected to make \$500 million in subsidies on one shipment from Russia. Most of the U.S. reactor operators interested in MOX fuel have licensing periods ending within 30 years, the same time frame for readying a reactor and MOX fuel for 100% containment and output.

Safety concerns abound with every aspect of MOX. The fuel is not tested, the test is taking place in Canada. Canadian citizens contend they may become a de-facto waste dump. Canada has no high-level radioactive waste storage facility. France has already had serious problems with MOX but is continuing to push for MOX "recycling." Japan's Green Action and Osaka Citizens have begun legal proceedings to prevent MOX burns at two of Kasai's reactors. British Nuclear Fuels is suspected of falsifying records and producing unacceptable and dangerous MOX fuel pellets for Japan.

A plan to ship plutonium through Michigan brought a standing-room-only crowd to a public hearing in Saginaw last month. Law enforcement officers, emergency management leaders and politicians didn't buy the government's safety assurances. Not a single person supported the shipments. If the U.S. government would bother to ask, citizens across the country would echo the same sentiment. No MOX fuel; no MOX shipments!

## U.S. Threatens ABM Treaty

WASHINGTON—The Clinton administration says it will go ahead with a national missile defense system, even if it means withdrawing from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty over Russian objections. "We will not permit any other country to have a veto on actions that may be needed for the defense of our nation," Walter Slocombe, Undersecretary of Defense for policy, said in a speech given at the Center for Strategic International Studies.

The first deployment—200 missile interceptors and a radar station in Alaska—would break the ABM treaty, which strictly limits the number, type and placement of defensive missiles in Russia and the U.S. That would require renegotiating the treaty, something Moscow has been resisting.

A UN and Russian-sponsored resolution opposing any new missile defense system that "attempts to undermine or circumvent the ABM Treaty," passed in a committee vote (54 to 7), with all of the members of the European Union either voting with Russia or abstaining.

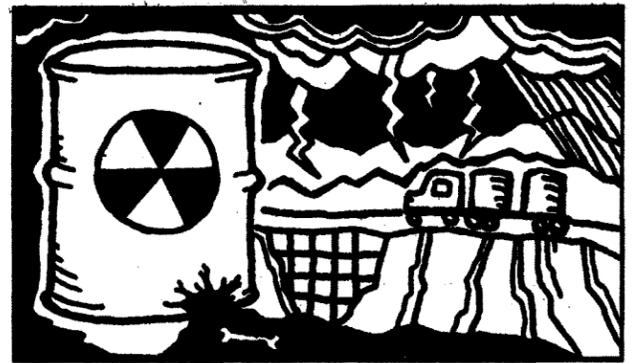
Claims of threats against the U.S. from so-called "rogue nations" have been hyped by the White House in order to justify a \$20 billion missile system. The revamped "Star Wars" network, which was designed to knock down incoming enemy missiles, is not large enough to be aimed at Russia or any other major nuclear power. Instead, it is said to protect all 50 states from small missile attacks.

Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott met with NATO members in Brussels and received "an earful" of complaints from the Europeans, but explained "It is necessary because of what we need to do and when we need to do it in order to respond to a looming threat."

Slocombe said that in the next 15 years, North Korea, Iran and possibly Iraq were "likely to be able to field intercontinental-range missiles that could deliver chemical, biological or nuclear weapons against the territory of the U.S."

The U.S. military already tested an element of the missile network and has sixteen more planned. Russia announced that it tested a short-range interceptor missile for their system.

An international effort is in the works promoting a series of actions in 2000. The Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space invites organizations and individuals to join in endorsing the actions. Activities scheduled to take place in Washington D.C. April 14 - 17 of 2000 are intended to escalate the level of opposition to this new arms race.



## Radioactive Recycling: Outcry Needed

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Department of Energy (DOE) and radioactive waste producers intend to profit from the sale and production of radioactive consumer products while ridding themselves of liability for millions of pounds of radioactive materials. Carbon steel, stainless steel, nickel, copper, aluminum and steel girders from buildings that housed radioactive substances are some of the metals contaminated from being in contact with radioactive isotopes. In addition to metals, concrete, plastic, soil, and other material from commercial nuclear power and weapons sites are bound for commercial processing.

DOE sites have already released 13,610 tons of radioactive metals to producers, and the U.S. still has over 1,577,000 metric tons of radioactive metal stockpiled. Subsequent consumer goods that may incorporate recycled radioactive metals include knives, forks, belt buckles, zippers, eyeglasses, dental fillings and intrauterine devices.

The NRC, DOE and metal industry representatives want to relax standards for recycling millions more pounds of radioactive material by raising the current acceptable levels of radiation exposure for individuals. This change would transfer liability from radioactive waste producers to the public and the recycling industry.

If radioactive standards were changed to 10 millirems per year, thousands of tons of additional radioactive material could be turned into consumer goods, and nearly 100,000 more cases of cancer could occur.

In order to make a new rule legalizing radioactive waste "recycling" or "clearance" into the marketplace, the NRC is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to consider all potential impacts and options. NRC Commissioners have clearly directed their staff to approve the measure that allows increased releases of radioactive materials.

Comments are due in to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) by Dec. 22, 1999. Citizens and action groups have filed for an 8-month extension on the "scoping" period.

The scoping deadline may be extended. You are encouraged to mail comments to NRC Chairman Richard Meserve, NRC, Washington, DC 20555, Attn: Rulemaking and Adjudications Staff. The nuclear industry must be held accountable for zero radioactive releases into our environment.

## "Bluddlefilth"

By Sam Day

A dozen activists gathered near the fence of an underground nuclear missile silo in October to mark the renewal of a campaign to alert fellow North Dakotans about the continuing presence of weapons of mass destruction in the Peace Garden State.

Climaxing the annual meeting of the North Dakota Peace Coalition, President Bryan Palecek led members on a pre-dawn trip across the Missouri River to Launch Site D4, near the town of Max in the Minot Air Force Base missile field. As a volunteer who helped map the silo field more than a decade ago, he had given the missile the ugly name of "Bluddlefilth."

Stern-faced U.S. Marshals and a sheriff's officer greeted the visitors at the approach to the fenced-in silo, saying they were there to maintain law and order. Air Force security personnel observed from a distance. The activists brushed past the officer, insisting on their right to gather 25 feet from the fence.

As dawn broke over the remote prairie site, the activists formed a circle and reflected on the nearby presence of a weapon a hundred times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

Bluddlefilth is one of 150 missiles in the Minot field and some 500 in the United States still capable, a decade after the end of the cold war, of wreaking world-wide nuclear destruction. Along with 500 missiles that have since been removed in Missouri, South Dakota, and the Grand Forks field in North Dakota, the launch sites and launch control centers all were mapped by peace activists in the 1980's in a program sponsored by Nukewatch.

Palecek said the North Dakota Peace Coalition hopes to continue vigiling at the active launch sites in the Minot field and at those that have been de-activated in the eastern part of the state.

Sam Day is a board member and former director of Nukewatch currently directing the U.S. Campaign to Free Mordechai Vanunu.

## Calendar

### December

#### 26 - 28—21<sup>st</sup> Annual Feast of the Holy Innocents

Retreat, Witness and Line Crossing : Stratcom Headquarters, Omaha, NE. Nonviolence training, community building, Bible study and prayer. Contact: Frank Cordaro, Des Moines Catholic Worker, phone: (515) 243-0765.

#### 31 - Jan. 2—Millennium 2000: Walking the Ways

of Peace. Prayer & reflection at Bishop Gorman High School in Las Vegas. Join a midnight candlelit procession onto the Test Site. Contact: Nevada Desert Experience, P.O. Box 46645, Las Vegas, NV 89114; phone: (702) 646-4814; email: nde@igc.apc.org

#### 31 - Jan. 2—New Year's Eve peace vigil and

gathering of peace activists at the Trident Nuclear Submarine Base Kings Bay in St. Marys, GA. A reunion, walk and peace vigil at the main gate at midnight. Several cabins have been reserved at nearby Crooked River State Park; some space may still be available. Camping may be arranged by calling the Park at 1-800-864-7275. Contact: John & Martina Linnehan of the Metanoia Community, 12230 Flynn Woods Road, Jacksonville, FL 32223; phone: (904) 262-5071; e-mail: metanoia@juno.com

### January

#### 17—National Day of Resistance to Trident, Martin

Luther King Day. Join the campaign at ♦Electric Boat in Groton, CT, (860) 724-7066, email: cdoucot@erols.com; ♦Lockheed-Martin in Valley Forge, PA ♦Brandywine Peace Community, (610) 544-1818 ♦Kings Bay in GA, (904) 262-5071, metanoia@juno.com ♦Bangor Trident Base in WA -for information packet - Ground Zero, 16159 Clear Creek Rd. NW, Poulsbo, WA; phone: (360) 377-2586; email: info@gzcenter.org. Contact: National Trident Resistance Network, phone: (203) 777-3849; email: skobasa@snet.net

#### 21-23—Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration

and National Trident Resistance Network Weekend to Stop Project ELF in Ashland, WI. Co-sponsored by Northland College Peace Club. Workshops, speakers, music, nonviolence training and action. Contact: Northland College Peace Club, phone: (715) 682-1251; or Nukewatch, phone: (715) 472-4185; email: nukewatch@win.bright.net

#### 31—Protest Vigil at the 17th annual Symposium on

Space Nuclear Power and Propulsion, Albuquerque, NM. Join us to protest a key meeting of those working on plutonium generators for NASA and star wars nuclear reactors. Contact: Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space; P.O. Box 90083, Gainesville, FL 32607; phone: (352) 337-9274; email: globalnet@mindspring.com, web: www.globenet.free-online.co.uk/

# NUCLEAR SHORTS

## Paul Nitze Succumbs to "Nuclear Retirement Syndrome"

NEW YORK, NY—Former National Security Advisor Paul Nitze has joined the long list of militarists who have publicly renounced 50 years of support for the nuclear weapons system. In what Robert Lifton calls the "Nuclear Retirement Syndrome," Nitze has now called for unilateral U.S. nuclear disarmament.

Nitze, who founded the weapons-friendly Committee on the Present Danger, was a life-long opponent of arms control. In 1979, he campaigned to defeat the Second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) saying, "To have the advantage at the utmost level of violence helps at every lesser level. ... the U.S. had the strategic edge because of our superiority at the strategic nuclear level. That edge has slipped away."

Although nothing about nuclear weapons themselves has changed since then, Nitze now writes, "There is no purpose to be gained through the use of our nuclear arsenal." Nitze, who promoted the building of thousands of new nuclear warheads during the 1980s, now declares: "I can think of no circumstances under which it would be wise for the United States to use nuclear weapons, even in retaliation for their prior use against us." In his astounding turn-around he concludes, "I see no compelling reason why we should not unilaterally get rid of our nuclear weapons."

—*New York Times*, op-ed, Oct. 28, 1999; Jerry Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, South End Press, 1983, p.10.

## Hanford Plutonium Waste Growing Like "The Blob"

RICHLAND, WA—A giant underground tank of liquid radioactive waste is threatening to overflow or even explode, because of the uncontrolled growth of a mysterious "crust" that has scientists baffled. The State nuclear waste program manager Mike Wilson said lightheartedly to the *New York Times*, "It was 'The Blob' kind of thing." The crust is growing both upward and downward inside the five-story tall tank, and hydrogen gas created inside could eventually reach a concentration that is flammable and explosive. The production of unwanted hydrogen is the result of a failed attempt to reduce the volume of waste by adding organic chemicals.

"I'm not convinced anyone understands the chemistry and physics involved in this crust," said Don Oakley a retired Los Alamos engineer. Engineers intend to pump the waste into another tank in a dangerous operation that critics say will only cause more problems.

The 20-year-old tank, which holds more than 1.2 million gallons of waste, is one of 177 buried, single-walled bins used to store high-level radioactive liquids from 40 years of plutonium production. At least 67 of the tanks are leaking their carcinogenic contents into Hanford's groundwater, on the banks of the Columbia River. —*New York Times*, Sept. 27, 1999, p.A10.

## Demand a Nuclear Stand-Down Before Y2K

A recent U.S. State Department study of 161 countries found 80 to be at medium-to-high risk of Y2K-related disruptions in their inter-dependent telecommunications, energy and transportation sectors. It concludes, "It would be prudent to recognize that Y2K-related failures are inevitable, both here and abroad." There are approximately 5000 Russian and U.S. nuclear weapons on hair trigger alert and vulnerable to Y2K bugs. The status of the nuclear weapons in Britain, France, China, Israel, Pakistan and India is unclear.

On Nov. 18, the European Parliament passed a resolution asking that all nuclear weapons be taken off alert and all nuclear reactors be taken off line during the Y2K rollover.

There are 433 nuclear reactors worldwide, all but eight in the Northern Hemisphere. Seabrook in New Hampshire alone contains 1,304 date-sensitive chips. Reactors depend on power from the grid, even when shut down. Fifty-three percent of U.S. reactor back-up systems had problems this year. Irradiated fuel storage pools have no emergency back up systems.

Call, write or fax officials and representatives to de-alert nuclear weapons and take the reactors off-line now. President Clinton, Pennsylvania Ave NW, Wash., DC 20500; Phone: (202) 456-1111; Fax: (202) 456-2461. Secretary W. Cohen, 1000 Defense, The Pentagon, Wash., D.C. 20301; Phone: (703) 695-6352. Secretary B. Richardson, DOE, 1000 Independence Ave SW, Wash., D.C. 20585; Phone: (202) 585-6210; Fax: (202) 586-4403. Greta J. Dicus, U.S. NRC, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852; Phone: (301) 415-1672; Fax: (301) 415-1672. Sandy Berger, National Security Advisor, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Wash., D.C. 20504; Phone: (202) 456-9481; Fax: (202) 456-2883. John Koskinen, President's Mouthpiece on Y2K, 216 Old Executive Office Building, Wash., D.C. 20502; Phone: (202) 456-7171; Fax: (202) 456-7172.

—Y2K World Atomic Safety Holiday, WASH, Oct. 16, 1999.

## Groups Fight Radioactive Waste Incinerator

POCATELLO, ID—A plan to incinerate radioactive and hazardous waste at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) received approval from the DOE earlier this year. The project will cost at least \$1 billion.

The waste treatment machine would be operated by the U.S. subsidiary of British Nuclear Fuels, Ltd. The factory is set to handle about 2.3 million cubic feet of radioactive waste stored at INEEL. The plutonium ash at INEEL is destined for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico.

Incineration is inherently unsafe and poses serious short- and long-term environmental and public health risks. While incineration burns up some hazardous organic substances, it releases and disperses heavy metals and radionuclides. Michael Bonkowski, DOE's project manager, acknowledged that trace quantities of plutonium will escape into the atmosphere, but "below national emission limits because of adequate filtration."

Those who work at the site or live downwind will be hardest hit. Crops and livestock can accumulate toxins and heavy metals. Environmentalists and anti-nuclear activists from surrounding towns, cities and states are organizing to stop the plan. Yellowstone, Sawtooth Wilderness Area, Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, numerous Indian reservations, Grand Teton National Park and Craters of the Moon National Monument are among the many parks and reserves located within 100 miles of INEEL.

Downwinders have raised over \$500,000 and have filed a lawsuit to stop this nuclear waste incinerator —*The Times-News Online*, Magic Valley, ID, Dec. 4, 1997; Tim Jackson in the *Idaho State Journal*, Pocatello.

## Drilling for Oil—and Radioactive Waste

From 1993 to 1996, 5.5 million pounds of radioactive scrap steel was shipped to China and Taiwan from Louisiana and Texas. The metals are contaminated in the process of drilling for oil. The drilling carries radioactive radium to the surface where it becomes encrusted on drilling equipment. Oil companies sell the contaminated equipment to other countries without regulations.

Some of the radioactive metal shipped to China and used in housing construction was emitting radiation at 2,000 micro-rems per hour—about 400 times the normal background. As of January 1998, at least 178 buildings containing 1,573 apartments are contaminated with excessive levels of radiation.

The information about the contamination was withheld from the tenants by the government for over a decade. Much of the radioactive metal came from the U.S., but there is also heavy traffic in radioactive metal from former Soviet bloc countries as well. Many of the people who live in those apartments in Taiwan are suffering from various cancers, birth defects, and unusual chromosome damage.

—Jackie Alan Giuliano, Ph.D., "The Radioactive Dinner Table," *Lycos Environment News Service*, Aug. 16, 1999.

## Ward Valley Update

NEEDLES, CA—It may be that a 1,000-acre patch of the Mojave Desert in Ward Valley, CA is safe from the ravages of radioactive waste. For 16 years it's been the subject of heated protests and warnings, and recently a long and peaceful encampment. Putting a low-level nuclear waste dump in Ward Valley could harm wildlife and contaminate the Colorado River, water source for over 20 million people.

California had to purchase the land from the Bureau of Land Management before construction could begin, but the federal government denied the sale of the land.

Governor Gray Davis appointed a panel to seek an alternative site, but nuclear waste generators on the board outnumber representatives of environmental and tribal groups by three to one. The Ward Valley Coalition and Colorado River Indian Tribes were out in force Wed. Nov. 17 at UCLA at the first meeting of Gov. Davis' advisory committee on radioactive waste options. Opponents relentlessly attacked the chair of the committee, University of California Pres. Richard Atkinson for his conflict of interest in having received nearly half a million dollars for sitting on the board, until 1998, of San Diego Gas and Electric, one of two owners of San Onofre nuclear power plant.

California formed a compact with Arizona and North and South Dakota, and is now legally bound to take the group's first batch of "low-level" waste.

Once a dump opponent, Davis has refused to take a stand on the issue since being elected. —Save Ward Valley, Oct. 28, 1999.

## A Radioactive Road in Africa

NAIROBI, Kenya—The Ministry of Health ordered medical examinations for some 25,000 people feared to have been exposed to radiation from a contaminated road. The chief radiation protection officer in this east African state said that exposure to radioactivity in the road will result in health problems in later years. A compound of radioactive thorium was used in constructing the Mwangwei-Jengo road. It was obtained from an undisclosed source.

Officials also dispatched radiation experts to Mrima Hill to test for elevated levels of radioactivity in that area. Thorium-230 has a radioactive half-life of 75,400 years; thorium-232, 14 billion years. —*The Nation*, Nairobi, Kenya, Oct. 31, 1999.

## Public Confidence Before Public Health

JEROME, ID—A leak of unspecified radioactive material from a semi-truck highlights the dangers of radioactive waste transportation. With an admission that raises more questions than it answers, the head of the state's Idaho National Engineering Laboratory Oversight Program, Kathleen Trever, said that the leak was discovered *after* the truck finished its trip from Tennessee to Washington State. The truck was hauling seven containers, and an undisclosed amount of radioactive "residue" leaked from one, Trever said. Government scientists swarmed over a parking lot here, testing for radiation where the driver stopped for dinner. Trever said none was found and claimed that similar searches along the 2,000-mile route also revealed nothing. Trever then claimed that the leak caused no health risk and said "We do these kinds of things [radiation tests] to maintain the public's confidence."

—Twin Falls, Idaho *Times-News*, Oct. 23, 1999.

## Chernobyl Not on the Chopping Block

KIEV, Ukraine—The Group of Seven thought they had a deal with Ukrainian officials to permanently shut down reactor No. 3 at Chernobyl. When No. 4 went critical 13 years ago, 8,000 people died from cancers and radiation related illness, including fire fighters, workers, area residents and others.

Instead of a complete shut down, reactor No. 3 went through five months of repair in 1999 and started up on November 26 amidst opposition and concern about Y2K readiness. Ukraine argues it needs the electricity, especially through the winter months. The Group of Seven claims the reactor has been used as leverage to get money from the West. Ukraine has been hoping to construct two new nuclear reactors funded by outside sources. —*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Nov. 26 1999

## Resistance Grows Against Australian Waste Dump

CANBERRA—The nuclear industry's plans for dumping used reactor fuel rods in Australia are being attacked by environmentalists and governments across the country. A group of giant European companies under the pseudonym "Pangea" has targeted the Outback for a deep underground site where it intends to bury waste fuel rods shipped from any nuclear reactor in the world. (See Spring '99 *Pathfinder*) A recent Pangea report claims, "China, North Korea and Russia would probably be persuaded" to dump in Australia. But public opinion and a string of legislative actions that would halt the project have attacked Pangea's plans. The West Australia (WA) Parliament's Lower House resolved against the dump, and the Upper House will soon likewise. Green politicians in WA are fighting to toughen the bill since it now leaves open the chance that waste could be sent across WA en route to a South Australia dumpsite. A recent poll found 85% of Australians favor a nationwide legislative ban, because current customs regulations are too weak to permanently prevent importation of the deadly wastes. —Bob Burton, *Environment News Service*, Oct. 28, 1999.

## RESOURCES

**Arms Trade Resource Center**, 65 Fifth Avenue, Suite 413, New York, 10003; phone: (212) 229-5808, ext. 112; email: berrigaf@newschool.edu.

**Citizen's Watch, Tri-Valley CAREs**, 2582 Old 1st St., Livermore, CA 94550, (925) 443-7148, email: marylia@earthlink.net

**Critical Mass Energy Project**, Public Citizen, 215 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20003; phone: (202) 546-4996.

**Environment News Service**, web:

<http://ens.lycos.com/ens/aug99/1999L-08-16g.html>

**Nuclear Awareness Project**, P.O. Box 104, Uxbridge, Ontario, Canada, L9P 1M6

**Nuclear Information & Resource Service**, 1424 16th St. NW, #404, Washington, DC 20036; phone: (202) 328-0002; email: nirsnet@nirs.org

**Physicians for Social Responsibility (De-Alerting Coalition)**, 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005; phone: (202) 898-0150; web: [www.psr.org](http://www.psr.org)

**Save Ward Valley**, 107 F Street, Needles, CA 92363; phone: (760) 326-6267; fax: (760)326-6268

**Trident Ploughshares 2000**, 42-46 Bethel Street, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 1NR, UK; phone: (01603) 611953; email: [tp2000@gn.apc.org](mailto:tp2000@gn.apc.org); web: <http://www.gn.apc.org/tp2000>

**Trident Resistance Network**, Ground Zero Center, 16159 Clear Creek Road NW, Poulsbo, WA; phone: (360) 377-2586; email: [info@gzcenter.org](mailto:info@gzcenter.org); or Stephen Kobasa, phone: (203) 777-3849; email: [kobasa@snet.net](mailto:kobasa@snet.net).

**World Atomic Safety Holiday Campaign**, Harmonics Life Center, 1047 Naka, Kamogawa, Chiba, Japan 296-0111; email: [yumik@awa.or.jp](mailto:yumik@awa.or.jp); P.O. Box 1047, Bolinas, CA 94924; phone: (415) 868-1900; email: [y2kwash@yahoo.com](mailto:y2kwash@yahoo.com); web: [www.y2kwash.org](http://www.y2kwash.org)

**World Policy Institute**, [www.worldpolicy.org/journal/](http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/)

**Noteworthy:** The British magazine *The Ecologist* has issued a special edition focused entirely on nuclear power and radioactive waste, "The Madness of Nuclear Energy." Some articles can be found at [www.gn.apc.org/ecologist/new](http://www.gn.apc.org/ecologist/new) or you can send for a copy from The Ecologist, 1920 MLK Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704.

# Trident Acquittal Sinks In

COULPORT, Scotland—The acquittal of Ulla Roder, Ellen Moxley and Angie Zelter on Oct. 21 at Greenock Sheriff Court has been recognized worldwide as a landmark for the peace movement.

The women were charged with malicious damage and theft from the barge *Maytime*, a floating laboratory at the Faslane Naval Base in Scotland which provides operational support for Trident submarines. The women used life rafts to reach the laboratory and threw equipment and papers overboard into Loch Goil before they were arrested.

Defense attorney John Mayer argued that Trident was illegal under international law, and that the women were acting simply to prevent a crime. Mayer said a ruling by the International Court of Justice in 1996 made Trident and all nuclear weapons illegal.

There were cheers and applause as the women walked free from the court after the trial that lasted 4 1/2 weeks. They had been in prison since their arrest at the Clydeside base on June 8.

During the trial before a jury and Sheriff (Judge) Margaret Gimblett, the defense called expert witnesses who gave evidence on the applicability of international law to the case, the nature of Britain's Trident nuclear weapon system and the country's defense policy. The government offered no substantial rebuttal of this testimony.

The Sheriff concluded that the women had acted without malice or criminal intent. In her view, the illegality of the Trident system under international law justified their action. She directed the jury to acquit on all charges.

## Observations on the Greenock Decision

CHAMPAIGN, IL—Right now the entire British nuclear "deterrent" consists of the Trident II nuclear submarines, missiles and warheads located in Scotland right down the road from Greenock. In October, after an extensive trial, a Scottish Judge ruled that the Trident IIs were illegal under international law, UK law and Scottish law. This is what we hockey parents call a "hat trick"—three goals in one game. In other words, the entire British nuclear weapons establishment now stands condemned as *illegal* under international law, UK law and Scottish law.

Britain is one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Britain is also one of the five nuclear weapons states party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This gross illegality of the entire British nuclear weapons establishment under international law, UK law and Scottish law shall stand unless and until the Greenock decision is overturned on appeal.

This gives us a remarkable window of opportunity to use the Greenock decision in order to go after the nuclear weapons establishments in *all* the other nuclear weapons states. Since the entire British nuclear weapons establishment stands condemned as illegal, the nuclear weapons establishments in all the other nuclear weapons states are also illegal under international law, their respective constitutions and domestic law for similar reasons. In particular and most specifically, we should be able to use the Greenock decision to go directly after the Trident IIs deployed by the United States, as well as the nuclear weapons submarines deployed by the other nuclear-armed permanent members of the Security Council. We should also be able to use the Greenock decision to head off the threatened nuclear arming of Japan and any other state giving serious consideration to developing nuclear weapons. We should also be able to use the Greenock decision to stop the further development of the nuclear weapons establishment in Israel, India and Pakistan. We should be able to use the Greenock decision to set free Mordechai Vanunu.

We should be able to use the Greenock decision to kill any proposed new nuclear weapons systems of whatever type; for example, the so-called Stockpile Stewardship Program in the U.S. and its equivalent elsewhere. We should also be able to use the Greenock decision to shore up the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty after the blow the U.S. government inflicted upon it.

Obviously, there is no way I can spell out all the implications of the Greenock decision in this message. But I think you get my point. I leave it to your creativity to figure out how to use the Greenock decision in order to rid the entire world of nuclear weapons.

—Professor Francis A. Boyle, Univ. of Illinois, College of Law.

## Trident Plowshares 2000 Continues

COULPORT, Scotland—In the wake of the acquittal of the "Trident Three" at Greenock Sheriff court, Trident Plowshares activists gathered for a weekend of disarmament actions at Couplort. The mid-November gathering aimed to disrupt the work of the nuclear weapons bases and to encourage military and civilian personnel involved in Trident to consider their position under international law.

On Nov. 15, Plowshares activists in Scotland blocked the gates for over an hour at the Royal Naval Armaments Depot in Couplort where Britain's Trident nuclear warheads are stored.

On Nov. 21, a convoy delivering Trident nuclear warheads to bases on the Clyde was halted by protesters at Balloch, near Loch Lomond. Some activists climbed on top of the truck and others locked themselves to the underside.

On Nov. 23, two Trident Plowshares activists were arrested inside the VSEL dock at Barrow-in-Furness and appeared in Barrow Magistrates Court on a charge of conspiring to commit criminal damage.

The "Trident Three" acquittal by Sheriff Margaret Gimblett in Greenock is helping people realize that Trident is deployed and actively threatening genocide. Citizens have a legal right to take peaceful and accountable direct action against it. Activists in Scotland are looking forward to Feb. 14, when they expect to have hundreds of people ready to act to uphold the law.

*The Pathfinder* is the quarterly newsletter of Nukewatch, a project of The Progressive Foundation, founded in 1979.

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**Nukewatch educates and organizes to nonviolently create  
an environment free of the nuclear industry  
and free of weapons of mass destruction.**

*The Pathfinder* submission deadlines:

Nov. 15, Feb. 15, May 15, Aug. 15.

**The Progressive Foundation**

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