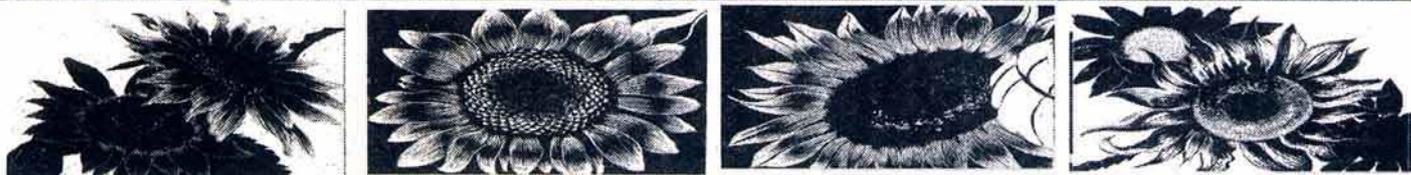


NUKEWATCH

QUARTERLY



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News & Information on Nuclear Weapons, Power, Waste & Nonviolent Resistance

Strontium-90 in Breast Milk Near New York Reactors

From Mothers' Milk Project, and the Radiation and Public Health Project

Recent analysis of breast milk from 30 mothers living within five miles of Indian Point in New York state, has found elevated levels of both strontium-90 and strontium-89. The isotopes are nuclear fission products known to cause bone cancer, leukemia and diseases of the immune system. They are beta particles that in the body act like calcium, getting into bones, breast milk and baby teeth.

On June 5, 2008, independent researchers with the Mother's Milk Project began collecting and sampling breast milk from mothers living within a 50 mile radius of the Indian Point 2 and 3 reactors in Buchanan, New York. The project's study found increased levels of the radioactive strontium isotopes in the milk of mothers living closest to the reactors. In addition, the Mother's Milk Project tested goat milk over a multi-month sampling period, and these tests also confirmed consistently elevated levels of strontium-90.

According to the project, and a report by the *Fairfield County Weekly* in New Haven, Connecticut, the New York state Department of Health stopped the testing of milk from dairy farms near Indian Point in 1991, and never tested human breast milk. About 20 million people live within a 50-mile radius of Indian point, which includes parts of Manhattan.

In a related study, the New York-based Radiation and Public Health Project released a report in May 2008, which found that levels of strontium-90 in Fairfield County baby teeth — which, like breast milk, absorb the isotope easily — are the highest in New York City's metro area and in counties closest to Indian Point.

Thyroid cancer rates in the four counties closest to Indian Point are nearly double the U.S. average, and childhood cancer incidence in these counties is also above the national rate. Above-average infant mortality and underweight births in Fairfield County point to additional threats connected with nuclear power.

Of all 62 New York State counties, Rockland, Orange and Putnam Counties — three of the four counties flanking Indian Point — had the first, second and third highest thyroid cancer rates in the period from 2001 to 2004. The other county, Westchester, had the eighth highest rate. A total of 992 persons in the four counties were diagnosed with thyroid cancer in this period.

Results collected by the Mother's Milk Project and the Radiation and Public Health Project were delivered to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) during a reactor relicensing hearing Feb. 12, in Cortlandt Manor, New York. The NRC deemed the data to be "out of the scope" of the relicensing process. NRC officials

were unconcerned by strontium found in shellfish in the Hudson River, by the lack of an emergency evacuation plan or by aging problems at the two IP reactors according to the environmental group Hudson River Sloop Clearwater (HRSC).

Manna Jo Greene, HRSC's Environmental Director, said at the February relicensing hearing, "While the regulatory standards the NRC staff used to evaluate the radioactive isotopes leaking from the plant into the Hudson may allow them to label the potential impacts 'small' and 'of no significant impact to [reactor] workers, the public and the environment,' we are not convinced. This

additional burden of radioactivity to people who may be catching and eating fish — [and] sharing their catch with friends and families without even realizing that the plant is leaking radioactivity — is an example of environmental injustice."

In the course of normal operations all reactors release "allowable amounts" of fission products including strontium-90 to the air and water. Strontium has a radioactive half-life of 30 years, making it dangerously persistent for 300 years. More than 100 different isotopes are routinely released by nuclear reactors. If ingested or inhaled, the pollutants are especially harmful to children and developing babies.

The NRC claims that all environmental strontium is the result of above-ground nuclear bomb testing, not from the operation of power reactors. Entergy Nuclear intends to get a 20-year license extension to continue operating the Indian Point reactors.



Mary Cassatt, 1844 - 1926

Radiation Exposure Standard "Scientifically Inappropriate"

By John LaForge

People exposed to radioactive materials in the workplace have an interest in radiation protection. Workers in the nuclear power and weapons industry, people living near reactors, practitioners of nuclear medicine and dentistry, the nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed Navy and Air Force, the irradiation industry (that zaps food and merchandise and sterilizes medical instruments), construction firms that use X-ray machines to check welds, smoke detector manufacturers that place americium inside each unit, and nuclear waste brokers, haulers and dumpers are all dosed with "allowable" amounts of radiation.

Yet the standard still used to set radiation exposure levels is a curiously chauvinistic and alarmingly dangerous method of

Continued on page 6
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Germany Stockpiled, Controlled 750 U.S. H-bombs

Demands for Withdrawal Increase

Germany stockpiled hundreds of U.S. nuclear weapons — 700 nuclear bombs and 50 nuclear-armed land mines — at the height of the cold war.

Germany is home to the largest U.S. military bases outside the U.S. and is still home to roughly 20 “B-61” H-bombs at Büchel Air Base. A total of between 350 and 480 U.S. nuclear warheads are still deployed at air bases in England, The Netherlands, Belgium, Turkey and at two bases in Italy.

The tightly held secret of this massive deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons was divulged by German military historian Detlef Bald and reported in the weekly magazine *Focus*. Mr. Bald is a Fellow at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg.

Bald found documents indicating that German officers could have launched the weapons independently of U.S. command authority, a revelation that contradicts official U.S. assurances that the White House always retains exclusive control over all U.S. nuclear weapons.

“The atomic bombs were supposed to be [detonated] in case of a military attack on Germany. They were planned for a nuclear first-strike,” Mr. Bald told *Focus*. This assertion squares with the long-standing U.S. and NATO refusal to rule-out the first use of nuclear weapons in war, and it squares with Cold War era statements by U.S. presidents that nuclear weapons could be detonated on European soil as a means of defending Europe.

According to Mr. Bald’s research, the massive deployment was ended between 1969 and 1972 by former German defense minister (and later Chancellor) Helmut Schmidt who called it, using diplomatic understatement, “deadly nonsense.”

An Open Secret No More: Outing Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal

By J. R. L. and John LaForge

Editor’s note: In his first Presidential press conference Feb. 9, Barack Obama was asked by Helen Thomas if he knew which Middle East states possess nuclear weapons. Mr. Obama refused to answer, even though it is a well established fact that Israel alone among Mideast states has a major nuclear arsenal.

On October 5, 1986, the *London Sunday Times* printed a remarkable story about Israel’s nuclear weapons program. Appearing on the first five full pages, the article included detailed drawings of Israel’s secret underground chemical separation center along with photographs of nuclear warheads at Dimona in southern Israel.

The story was the result of revelations by Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli who worked at Dimona for 10 years. Prominent British nuclear scientist, Dr. Frank Barnaby interviewed Vanunu for the *Sunday Times*. On the basis of that interview, Barnaby determined that Israel then possessed 100 to 200 nuclear warheads and could produce additional warheads at the rate of 10 per year. The nuclear reactor and the chemical separation center at Dimona — built by French experts — had then been operational for about 20 years.

The same estimate — with a qualification — was used by Jimmy Carter 19 years later during a May 25, 2008 appearance in Wales, the BBC reported. Carter said then, “The U.S. has more than 12,000 nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union [*sic*] has about the same. Great Britain and France have several hundred, and Israel has 150 or more.” (Emphasis added.)

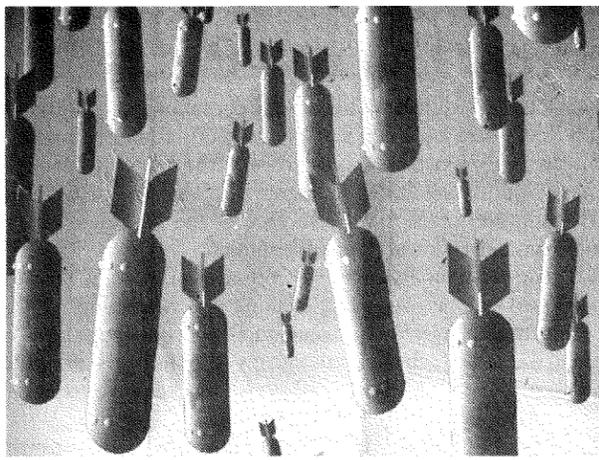
Vanunu was subsequently kidnapped by Israeli agents, tried in secret, convicted of espionage — even though he sold no secrets — and imprisoned for over 18 years.

Nevertheless, the Israeli government has for decades refused to confirm or deny its possession of the Bomb. And — unlike Iran — has never joined the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

John F. Kennedy, a proponent of nuclear nonproliferation, was the last U.S. president to seriously question Israeli officials about whether the Dimona facility had a chemical separation plant that could isolate plutonium. Kennedy thought that the possession of nuclear weapons by any single nation in the Middle East could spark escalation and eventual warfare in the region. Israel has taken provocative military action against nearby states including the bombing of an unfinished Iraqi reactor at Osiraq on June 7, 1981, and its Sept. 6, 2007 bombing of a suspected Syrian reactor building site. *The New York Times* reported Jan. 11, 2009, that the Bush administration last year denied requests by Israeli officials for both “specialized bunker busting bombs” and for permission to fly over Iraq to reach Iran’s nuclear complex at Natanz.

Kennedy insisted on inspections at Dimona. Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion eventually allowed access to U.S. inspectors for brief tours, but an entire underground plutonium separation facility was hidden beforehand. For a thorough discussion, see chapter eight of Seymour Hersh’s 1991 book *The Sampson Option*.

Except for Jimmy Carter, U.S. presidents since JFK have kept mum about the embarrassing fact that Israel — the



The *Focus* magazine report noted that Chancellor Schmidt had confirmed Bald’s revelations about the secret storage of U.S. nukes on German soil.

.....

Mr. Bald’s revelations added to the indignation of a group of German politicians that last June renewed its longstanding demands for complete removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from German territory.

“Atomic weapons in Germany are a holdover from the Cold War. They must go,” said Guido Westerwelle, head of the Democrat Free Party, the newspaper *Berliner Zeitung* reported.

Pushed by grassroots disarmament actions across the country, German opposition parties have for years demanded the weapons’ withdrawal. They cite a recent U.S. Air Force report that found “most sites” in Europe with U.S. warheads failed to meet Pentagon security requirements. Westerwelle said the report is “one more reason to remove all” the U.S. warheads.

Chancellor Angela Merkel’s ruling party disagreed. Ignoring the safety failures documented in the Air Force report, Eckart von Klæden, a foreign affairs spokesman for Merkel’s party, told the *Berliner Zeitung*, “They [nuclear weapons] protect us, too.”

Unites States’ closest Middle East ally and the recipient of the largest dollar amount of U.S. foreign and military aid — is stockpiling and deploying nuclear weapons.

Author Seymour Hersh wrote in *The Sampson Option* that Israel had “hundreds” of nuclear weapons, including more than 100 nuclear artillery shells and “hundreds of low-yield neutron warheads capable of destroying large numbers of enemy troops.”

In Israel, the first public and televised discussion of the country’s nuclear weapons program took place in 2000. During the debate in the Knesset (parliament), Arab Israeli Member of Parliament Issam Mahoul openly acknowledged the country’s arsenal.

“Mahoul stated that according to experts’ estimates, Israel has stockpiled huge numbers of nuclear warheads. This had increased to what he described as the ‘insane amount of 200-300,’” according to professor Jean Shaoul, writing on the World Socialist web site, Feb. 12, 2000.

“He [Mahoul] further alleged,” Shaoul reported, “that three new German-built submarines just purchased by Israel were to be fitted with nuclear weapons. Their stated purpose was ‘to cruise deep in the sea and constitute a second strike force in the event that Israel is attacked with nuclear weapons.’”

An indirect but official admission of Israel’s arsenal came three years ago from Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. While speaking Dec. 10, 2006 on TV news in Germany, Olmert was asked about Iran’s nuclear program, and replied, “Are they [Iranians] aspiring to have nuclear weapons, as America, France, Israel, Russia?”

Even U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has publicly confirmed that Israel has the Bomb. During his Senate confirmation hearing, Dec. 5, 2006, Gates said in response to a question about Iran, “They [Iranians] are surrounded by powers with nuclear weapons: Pakistan to their east, the Russians to the north, the Israelis to the west and us in the Persian Gulf.”

In her Nov. 21, 2006 interview with Hersh, Democracy Now! news anchor Amy Goodman asked how many warheads Israel possessed. Hersh replied, “I wrote a book about Israel’s bomb, what, 15 years ago, and at that time it was 300-400. So we’re talking about a country that could have 600.”

If Israel does currently possess 600-plus bombs, it is the world’s third largest nuclear power, behind the U.S. and Russia and ahead of France, China, Britain, Pakistan and India.

— *J.R.L., a human rights activist in Minneapolis, requested anonymity in order to facilitate travel to and from Israel and the occupied territories.*

Resources:

* Avner Cohen and William Burr, “Israel crosses the threshold,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, May 2006, p. 29; and *Israel and the Bomb*, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1998

* Prof. I. Shahak, *Open Secrets: Israeli Foreign and Nuclear Policies*, Pluto Press, London, 1997

* Seymour Hersh, *The Sampson Option: Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*, Random House, New York, 1991

After Crash, U.S. Lost Megaton H-bomb

By Bonnie Urfer

The *BBC News* has confirmed that the U.S. Air Force, following the crash of an Air Force B-52 bomber, abandoned its search for a lost and damaged 1.1 megaton H-bomb. The Nov. 11, 2008 BBC broadcast ended a 41-year long cover-up by the Pentagon.

The giant gravity bomb, with the explosive power of 1 million tons of TNT, was one of four carried by the giant B-52 that crashed and burned in Greenland on Jan. 21, 1968. The crash site at North Star Bay, about seven miles west of the Thule U.S. Air Force base was scoured by military and civilian crews who never found the fourth bomb.

Using the Freedom of Information Act and the American National Archives, the BBC obtained documentary evidence about the unexploded and abandoned bomb. According to the BBC, “documents make clear that within weeks of the incident, investigators piecing together the fragments realized that only three of the weapons could be accounted for.”

This information was kept secret by the United States — even from the Danish government — although the Pentagon claimed that all four weapons had been destroyed in the crash.

The November BBC report notes that, “the high explosives surrounding the four nuclear weapons had detonated but without setting off the actual nuclear devices, which had not been armed by the crew.”

A massive clean-up operation involved 700 U.S. troops and Danish civilians and cost \$9.5 million. The workers collected 10,500 tons, or about 500 million gallons of snow, ice and debris — some of it contaminated with plutonium and highly enriched uranium from the shattered warheads — which was put in barrels and shipped all the way to Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Savannah River, South Carolina for dumping.

According to the BBC, “by the end of January [1968], one document talks of a blackened section of ice which had re-frozen with shroud lines from a weapon’s parachute.”

The Air Force report “Speculate[s] something melted through ice such as burning primary or secondary,” the primary or secondary referring to parts of the weapon.

Leaving a damaged nuclear warhead at the bottom of the sea meant abandoning uranium, plutonium and highly classified weapons’ parts. The classified design, shape and materials’ amounts in the lost weapon were of such concern to the Pentagon, that it secretly sent a submarine to search for the bomb. “The real purpose of this search was deliberately hidden from Danish officials,” the BBC said, quoting a July 1968 report that said, “Fact that this operation includes search for ... missing weapon part is to be treated as confidential NOFORN,” that is not to be disclosed to any foreign country.

Documentation of the lost H-bomb was first obtained by a Thule workers’ association in its campaign to win medical compensation for up to 500 clean-up workers suffering from radiation related diseases and cancers. The U.S. did not issue radiological protection gear to the clean-up crews. Geiger counters located radioactive debris which was then collected by hand. Plutonium contamination as high as 380 grams-per-square-meter were found in a 10-square kilometer area. In December 1986, the Danish Institute of Cancer Epidemiology found cancer incidence among those employed in the clean-up was 50 percent higher than that of the general population, but concluded that radiation poisoning was not the cause.

Seeking Global Zero

By Paul Vos Benkowski

A group of 100 world leaders, calling itself Global Zero, has proposed practical steps toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. The names of so many well-known, if retired political, military and diplomatic figures adds some clout to the new plea and increases the chances that current world leaders will hear the call for complete nuclear disarmament.

Among Global Zero’s instigators are former President Jimmy Carter and former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev along with dozens of retired foreign and defense ministers from around the world. The effort has global support. According to a poll of 21 countries, an average of 76 percent favor an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons. The Dec. 9, 2008 notice accompanying GZ’s launch noted that, “In the five nations with large nuclear arsenals and advanced delivery systems, large majorities favor the plan — Russia (69%), the United States (77%), China (83%), France (86%), and Great Britain (81%).” It seems world leaders are catching up with popular opinion.

The GZ initiative is opposed as usual by U.S. weapons enthusiasts. Strategic Command chief Gen. Kevin Chilton supports a continued “modernizing” of U.S. warheads, and uses the twisted logic that engendered the nuclear arms race. Chilton has said, “A reliable nuclear inventory supports nonproliferation goals.” The General perhaps referred to campaign promises made by Barack Obama, when he worried, “The path of inaction is a path leading toward nuclear disarmament ... The time to act is now.” The president said last July, “We will make the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons a central element in our nuclear policy.”

In November 2008, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also urged the world’s nuclear armed states to start negotiating the elimination of nuclear weapons while assuring other nations they will not be attacked.



"Yeah, the job's got great benefits, but mainly I like the safe work environment."

Sweden Says No to Nuclear Negativity

By April Streeter

Just a year before it reached the original deadline to phase out its nuclear power (in 2010), Sweden instead reversed its decades-old dismantling policy and instead will now keep the 10 nuclear reactors it currently has, and lift bans on both new nuclear technology research and new plants.

Perhaps to silence its critics, Sweden simultaneously promised it would raise carbon taxes, and reduce carbon emissions 40 percent (from 1990 levels) by 2020, also in industries not covered by the EU's emissions trading scheme — continuing toward the supposed goal of "oil independence" and zero emissions by 2050. In a kind of humorous side note, the country will also up its share of energy from renewables, from the EU mandated 49 percent to a nice round 50 percent, also by 2020.

Politically expedient, but also popular

In a 1980 referendum, the majority of Swedes called for phasing-out nuclear, but ever since, successive administrations have hemmed and hawed without actually closing many reactors (of 12 total reactors, 2 have been closed). Now the tides of public opinion have turned, and a majority favors keeping nuclear, which is considered to be a cleaner and less carbon intensive energy source than coal or gas. Swedes also believe that their reactors are safe, and their waste management superior. Some scary near accidents at Swedish reactors within the last two years didn't even raise many eyebrows.

There are some political reasons why now is the time the Swedish government has made a stand. Sweden will

Killing the Messenger: UK Nuclear Advisory Group Scrapped After Warning of Safety Risks, Insiders Claim

Reprinted from *The Guardian* [London], Feb. 16, 2009

An expert advisory committee has been quietly scrapped after it warned the future safety of Britain's aging nuclear reactors was being put at risk by poor performance, delays and budget cuts.

The Nuclear Safety Advisory Committee (NSAC), which has been offering critical advice to Britain's health and safety watchdog for nearly 50 years, was disbanded without any public announcement.

Former members of NSAC are now worried about the lack of independent safety advice at a time when the government is embarking on a major expansion and clean-up of nuclear power.

Some former members privately suspect that NSAC was shut down in October because it could have hampered government plans for a new program of nuclear reactors. "This was just the time to get rid of a potential pest and spanner in the works of the brave new world of nuclear regulation and build," said one.

Some of NSAC's recent criticisms — particularly on potential shortfalls in the future funding of nuclear decommissioning and radioactive waste management — were forthright. "Maybe that was enough to rock the boat," added the former NSAC member.

Some committee members are also angry at suddenly being told in September that their next meeting was cancelled. "The way we were treated was shabby, to be honest," said another former NSAC member.

NSAC consisted of 19 safety experts, including scientists, academics, trade unionists and business executives, none of whom were paid. It reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and was chaired for the past four years by Dr. Stephen Vranich, a chemical engineer from Jacobs Engineering.

"We are anxious to ensure that a successor body to NSAC is set up as soon as possible," he said. "It is essential that nuclear safety regulators continue to receive good, independent advice, particularly at a time of great change in the nuclear industry."

NSAC had been "passionate" about safety and spoke with "tremendous authority," Vranich argued. "I believe we did good work and raised important concerns on the future funding of nuclear decommissioning and waste management, on skills shortages, on the siting of new nuclear power stations and on other issues."

Xcel Energy Puts Contamination on the Road

On October 29, 2008, radioactively contaminated equipment left Xcel Energy, Inc.'s reactor site at Prairie Island, Minnesota on an open flatbed transport. By the time it reached Westinghouse's Waltz Mill, Pennsylvania facility on October 31, radiation levels on the surface of the "package" were eight times the allowable exposure limit.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) blamed untrained workers and poor labeling and packaging for the radioactive cobalt-60 contamination. People traveling close-by along the same highways, emergency response personnel and workers at Waltz Mill were all at risk of excessive radiation exposure.

The NRC said in a Feb. 10 report that human contamination was "unlikely" or would have been minimal because of the location of the "particle" inside the container. The NRC's preliminary report labeled the accident, "Yellow, a finding with substantial safety significance..."

assume the EU presidency this fall and needed to have a coherent energy policy among the four-party center-right Alliance currently in power. That's the first step to getting a national energy policy together (due to the EU in 2010) describing how Sweden will meet the 49 percent renewables goals by 2020 mandated by the EU Renewable Directive.

And strangely enough, some within the wind and alternative energy camps say Sweden had to get to the point to decide to keep nuclear so that it could get past the question mentally and go on to other things — like how to develop 20 TWh [trillion watts-per-hour or terawatts/h] of wind onshore and as much as 10 TWh offshore. Others are worried that if Swedish industry decamps to the nuclear bandwagon, wind won't have a chance. But Fredrik Dahlström of the Swedish Energy Agency put it like this:

"The nuclear question effects all our energy decisions. In Sweden it's always wind against nuclear. Wind can't replace nuclear — it's 65 TWh that we can't just do without. However, if we want to build CO2-free going forward we also need wind. Taking the middle road ... that would be such a relief."

There also, thankfully, is one small kicker: Sweden says it won't pay for new nuclear development. Could the government possibly be looking at Finland's ill-fated Okiluoto nuclear project — years behind schedule and 60 percent over budget?

— *Freelance journalist April Streeter has written for the magazines MacWeek in San Francisco, Sustainable Industries in Portland, Oregon and Tomorrow in Stockholm.*

Xcel Energy, which ships an average of one radioactive load every month, temporarily suspended shipments of all contaminated materials to prevent a recurrence of the incident. Limited shipments resumed on Feb. 6, after the company said it had initiated better oversight.

The equipment involved in the October accident had been used to test the integrity of fuel rod "cladding" in the used fuel cooling pool. Cladding is the metal that surrounds the uranium inside reactor fuel rods. After the underwater tests, the 13-foot long piece of testing equipment was "decontaminated" (washed), demobilized (partly disassembled), wrapped in plastic and packed in a shipping container. The NRC's report says jostling during transport caused one overlooked "particle" of radioactive cobalt-60 to dislodge from a cable and fall to the bottom of the shipping container.

Radiation emanating from the shipping package measured 1,630 millirems-per-hour (mR/h), roughly eight times greater than the allowable limit of 200 mR/h. A chest X-ray averages 10 mR/h.

Detailed surveys of the contaminated equipment later found more particles with significantly increased gamma dose rates of up to 11 rem-per-hour. These surveys indicate a shockingly poor job of decontaminating the equipment by Xcel reactor staff.

Worker exposure evaluations involving "extremity and whole body dose assessments" were conducted by Xcel. In addition, a radiological survey of the work area beside the cooling pool holding waste fuel at Prairie Island showed further contamination.

Both Westinghouse and Xcel, Inc. workers attended to the fuel rod inspection equipment. The NRC report noted that none of Xcel's staff involved in loading, preparation or packaging the device were trained in the procedures and only some of Westinghouse's staff had function-specific education on the process. Nine of 13 people did not know what they were doing, and two of the four workers familiar with the process were delinquent in recurrent training. Testing the integrity of used fuel rods in the cooling pool occurs once every four or five years. — NRC Region III Inspection Report, EA-08-349, Feb. 10; *St. Paul Pioneer Press & Red Wing Republican Eagle*, Feb. 16, and AP, Feb. 17, 2009

Conventional Weapons Treaty Ratified by U.S.

The State Department announced Jan. 23 that the U.S. ratified the Convention or Treaty on Conventional Weapons (CCW), formally known as the "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions of the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects."

The CCW prohibits the use of five categories of particularly indiscriminate weapons, including incendiary weapons designed to set fire to or burn their targets. As such, the ban seems to bear directly on "depleted" uranium weapons which are spectacularly incendiary. The treaty bans the use of all incendiaries against civilians or "military targets located among concentrations of civilians," except when there is clear separation between targets and civilians.

The U.S. Senate attached a condition to this protocol stating that the U.S. reserves the right to use incendiaries against "military objectives located in concentrations of civilians where it is judged that such use would cause fewer casualties and/or less collateral damage than alternative weapons."

Reactor Pork Cut from Stimulus Package

After a groundswell of public pressure, \$50 billion in loan guarantees for new nuclear reactor construction was cut from the \$789 billion stimulus package signed by President Obama Feb. 17, 2009. On short notice, more than 10,500 letters were sent to Senators and Representatives, and over 1,100 letters were received by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid in just one day. Thousands of emails, phone calls and letters to newspapers expressed opposition to the industry bailout. With help from Beyond Nuclear and the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, Nukewatch mobilized its own campaign in Wisconsin's 7th District, helping flood Rep. Dave Obey's office with emails and phone calls imploring him to vote against the \$50 billion taxpayer handout. As Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Mr. Obey held a lot of sway over the agreement finally reached by the House/Senate Conference Committee.

On Feb. 11, 2009, word came from the Congressional Budget Office that the \$50 billion, as well as support for "clean coal," would be axed from the package. The Budget Office believed the nuclear industry would likely default on the loans afforded in the plan and leave taxpayers and ratepayers to pick up the bill. New reactor construction costs are now upwards of \$15 billion, and a Department of Energy study places the average cost overrun for reactor building at 207 percent.

The removal of this nuclear handout is a victory for grassroots citizens' action. The pressure applied by concerned constituents should alert lawmakers to the fact that nuclear power is not worth the risk or the money.

NUCLEAR SHORTS



Carpet Bombing

AFGHANISTAN — War in Afghanistan has been raging for 30 years and has become part of the art culture. Weavings done by Afghan women document the on-going conflict and create a pictorial history of the region. War rugs as they are called started to appear in Afghanistan in 1979, with the Soviet occupation, and are being made again in the wake of the October 2001 U.S. invasion. In intricate detail, anonymous weavers depict battlegrounds and weapons of war including tanks, grenades, machine guns, helicopters, pistols, trucks and even maps of wartime events. Some of the rugs have been woven in refugee camps and most offer a glimpse into where the weaver or carpets originated. The weavings are a part of the rich tradition of war art and they can be found on the market with prices ranging from \$60 to \$25,000.

The exhibit "Battleground: War Rugs From Afghanistan," featured for eight months at the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto, ended Jan. 27.

— Textile Museum of Canada: www.textilemuseum.ca/apps/index.cfm?page=exhibition.detail&exhId=271; *Smithsonian*, Feb. 4, Reuters, April 4, 2008

Vermont Yankee Cooling Water Leak

BRATTLEBORO — Radioactive water leaked at a rate of 2-1/2 gallons per minute for over two weeks (over 50,400 gallons in all), following the leak's discovery Jan. 7, 2009 at Vermont Yankee, 80 miles north of Hartford, Connecticut. Reactor operator Entergy Nuclear said it wasn't forced to shut down or reduce power during the leak's repair. According to Entergy spokesperson Lawrence Smith, the liquid leak sprang from the reactor's water "cleanout system," and was collected in a sump drain, cleaned, filtered and returned to the reactor water system. The fix is just temporary as the permanent repair will not be done until the unit undergoes its next refueling outage in the spring of 2010. The Vermont Yankee reactor is 37-years-old and has had a string of problems in recent years. NRC spokesperson Neil Sheehan said the reactor could operate only a short time without a functioning cleanout line. — *Rutland Herald*, Oct. 30, 2008 & Jan. 8, 2009; Reuters, Jan. 7, 2009

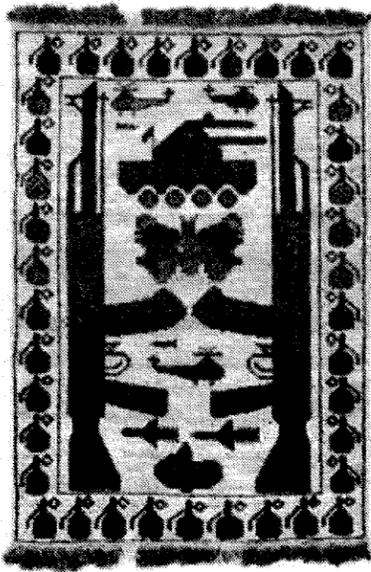
Reactor Workers Fear Retaliation for Voicing Concerns

ALLENTOWN, Pennsylvania — Two Susquehanna nuclear reactors operate 125 miles upwind from New York City. According to the NRC, workers at the Pennsylvania site are chronically afraid to raise safety concerns. NRC regulators have formally warned the owners, Pennsylvania Power and Light (PPL), about their workers' fears of retaliation and have ordered the company to remedy the "chilled" relationship between the workforce and management. The reactor led the nation last year in the number of anonymous allegations (33) sent to the NRC regarding employee health and safety. In 2008, PPL hired an outside firm to survey workers' attitudes. The company was forced to acknowledge that "the work environment at Susquehanna had declined." The site's two reactors employ 1,000 people and produce 25 percent of PPL's annual electric output. PPL has asked regulators for a license to build a new reactor on the site.

— Associated Press, Jan. 28, & WILK-FM, Jan. 29, 2009

Radioactive Cell Phone Straps Recalled

HIROSHIMA, Japan — Two people were arrested here — the site of a U.S. atomic bomb attack — last Summer for selling cell phone straps filled with tritium, a radioactive form of hydrogen used to boost the explosive power of nuclear weapons. Ads for the novelties urged readers to "Buy cell phone straps that can glow longer than 10 years!" They each contained 26 times the legal limit of tritium, in violation of the 1957 Radiation Sickness Prevention Law. The tritium was somehow purchased in England, and the couple processed the tritium themselves into small glass cell phone "charms." Although the government declared a recall of the straps, major newspapers had the nerve to report that "no harm can be expected even if the substance flows out, police said," and "tritium in the product is harmless to humans even if the glass container is broken." On the contrary, internal tritium exposure increases the risk to



pregnant women and the embryo/fetus of early miscarriages, malformations and genetic defects. Risks can also be multi-generational. — AFP, July 16, *Daily Yomiuri*, July 17, & *Japan Times*, July 18, 2008, *Science for Democratic Action*, Feb. 2007.

Reactor's Emergency Back-up Power Battery Out of Service for Four Years

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif. — Inspectors at Southern California Edison's (SCE) San Onofre reactors near Oceanside discovered an incorrectly installed battery required for emergency power. The backup power system was found to be inoperable for four years — since the previous inspection. The NRC ordered additional inspections, and it criticized SCE for its failure to adequately evaluate safety. Other batteries were available to supply power to reactor safety systems but the loss of one battery reduced safety margins.

— NRC News, AP & *North County Times*, Dec. 22; *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 23, 2008

Problems at Palisades

COVERT, Michigan — Fifteen months ago, a leaking pipe at the Palisades reactor caused elevated levels of tritium in 14 on-site monitoring wells. Since the pipe was repaired, tritium levels have been dropping — except at one well. Critics suspect another leak from an as yet unidentified source. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Entergy, the reactor operator, are not concerned since no drinking water comes from the wells. Entergy intends to install nine more monitoring wells and continue looking for the problem.

Palisades made headlines in Aug. 2008, when five workers were trapped in a containment area for 90 minutes, well beyond the 1/2 hour limit. The five were unable to exit through an emergency hatch, and a faulty phone system kept them from calling for help. They were freed accidentally when another worker walked in. Since the mishap didn't affect the reactor, the NRC deemed it "of very low safety significance." Regulators also reported that the entrapment "did not result in radiation overexposure...." Entergy has since installed a radio in the containment area, programmed a way to account for workers going in and out, and produced training videos with instructions for operating doors.

— AP, Aug. 9, and the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, Aug. 18, Nov. 19 & Dec. 10, 2008

Davis-Besse Joins List of Tritium Leakers

OAK HARBOR, Ohio — The accident-prone Davis-Besse reactor developed a radioactive tritium leak last October that allowed contaminated liquid to exit a drainage pipe for an undetermined amount of time. FirstEnergy, Inc. assured area residents that contamination did not move off-site and that drinking water supplies were safe, although no testing had been done. News reports said the leak was traced to a drainage pipe that ran eight feet underground to the site's settling basin. Radioactive tritium is routinely diluted on-site and then dumped into Lake Erie. Workers stumbled across the tritium leak while inspecting fire-protection equipment. At least eight reactors have leaked tritium in recent years.

— *Toledo Blade*, Oct. 25, Nov. 3, 2008, & Feb 7, 2009; Associated Press, Dec. 31, 2008

Greenpeace Still on the Line for Safe Energy

MADRID, Spain — Greenpeace ceaselessly works to expose, resist and get rid of nuclear power and weapons. Last November, in an action that lasted 10 hours and resulted in 15 arrests, 60 Greenpeace activists blockaded and "locked down" the entrance to Garona, Spain's oldest reactor, 220 miles north of Madrid. The reactor is set to be closed next year, but Greenpeace wants it shutdown now.

Nuclear power's unpopularity has intensified in Spain after a leak at the Asco I reactor last April and both an October fire and a bizarre November power surge that led to overheating at the Vandellos II reactor. Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero has vowed to gradually phase-out Spain's nuclear power system, replacing it with renewable energy sources. Greenpeace says that the 500 megawatts of power produced at Garona could easily be replaced by Spain's growing and profitable renewable industry.

Last September Greenpeace and Global Action Group declared nuclear power "dead" with a mock die-in in Ankara, Turkey. Thirty-seven people were briefly detained after blockading the Turkish Ministry of Energy.

— *Agence France Presse*, Nov. 20; Reuters, Nov. 8 & 20, 2008

Contaminated Train Turned Away from Border

DIMITROVGRAD, Bulgaria — A train car loaded with radioactive scrap metal bound for a dump in Macedonia was turned back at the Serbian border because of radioactive emissions 3,000 times higher than allowed. The radioactivity was discovered by a Serbian environmental safety inspector. The train car was carrying more than 54 tons of radioactive

material from the Bulgarian company Rovotel Steel to Skopje, Macedonia. It was the second such incident of radioactive waste being turned away at the border between Serbia and Bulgaria.

— Bulgaria Network News, March 2; Macedonian Information Agency, Feb. 3, 2009; *BlicPress (Belgrade Daily)*, Nov. 1, 2008.

No Exit?

WASHINGTON, DC — Wal-mart has misplaced 15,800 exit signs containing tritium gas and phosphor. The NRC is contacting organizations, schools, churches, museums and businesses that are in possession of 500 or more signs for an accounting of the radioactive devices. The exit signs continue to provide a green glow to assist in escape if grid power is lost. The NRC claims that the signs are safe and the tritium harmful only if breathed or swallowed. An exit sign owner becomes a "general licensee" of the NRC and must follow strict rules for disposal of radioactive materials. That however is not happening. According to environmental officials in Pennsylvania, roughly 2 to 3 million tritium exit signs have been tossed into landfills as evidenced by rising tritium levels in groundwater at half of the state's dumps. The EPA has determined that 20,000 picocuries-per-liter of radiation is allowable in drinking water. Exit signs contain a whopping 25 million picocuries of beta radiation-emitting tritium. — *Toronto Star*, Feb. 15, & *Huntsville Times & Salt Lake City Tribune*, Feb. 17, 2009; Health Physics Society, www.hps.org

Nuclear-Armed Submarines Collide

ATLANTIC OCEAN — Two large British and French nuclear submarines collided at an undisclosed spot in the Atlantic Ocean Feb. 3rd. Both subs were damaged and repair costs are expected to be £50 million (\$68 million). The British sub *H.M.S. Vanguard* carries up to 16 Trident missiles, with a maximum of 48 warheads and the French sub *Le Triomphant* carries 16 nuclear-armed missiles. The freak accident caused an uproar among British and French peace groups. The crash "could have released vast amounts of radiation and scattered scores of nuclear warheads across the seabed," said Kate Hudson, chair of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Investigators and naval authorities in both countries are trying

to puzzle out how two 12,000-ton, state-of-the-art subs equipped to detect even tiny objects happened to crash. Experts were "astonished that this happened at all," said Steve Saunders, a retired British naval officer and editor of *Jane's Fighting Ships*. "To leap to a doomsday scenario" is normal, he said. Some suspect that the submarines' respective anti-sonar devices may have been completely effective in hiding one from the other. The subs were reportedly traveling at low speed, but the damage was significant. *Vanguard* suffered scrapes and dents but *Le Triomphant* had its sonar dome completely destroyed. None of the more than 200 sailors were injured in the accident, military spokespeople said. In a typically cavalier response, a British naval spokesman referred to the incident as being "more embarrassing than worrying."

— *The New York Times*, Feb. 17, *The Daily Telegraph*, *All Things Considered* & the AP, Feb. 16, 2009

RESOURCES

- * **Beyond Nuclear**, 6930 Carroll Ave., # 400, Takoma Park, MD 20912; (301) 270-2209; Email: info@beyondnuclear.org; Web: beyondnuclear.org
- * **Owe Aku**, Email: lakota1@gwtc.net; Web: bringbacktheway.com
- * **Campaign Against Depleted Uranium (CADU) & International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW)**, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester, UK, M7 7HR; Phone: +44 (0) 161273 8293 / 8283; Email: info@cadu.org.uk; Web: cadu.org.uk
- * **Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament**, Mordechai Vanunu House, 162 Holloway Rd., London N7 8DQ; Email: enquiries@cnduk.org; Phone: 0207-700-2393; Web: www.cnduk.org
- * **Christian Peacemaker Teams**, U.S. office: Box 6508, Chicago, IL 60680; Phone (773) 277-0253; Email: peacemakers@cpt.org; Canada office: 25 Cecil St, Unit 307, Toronto ON M5T 1N1; Phone: (416) 423-5525; Email: canada@cpt.org; Web: cpt.org
- * **Global Network Against Nuclear Power & Weapons in Space**, PO Box 652, Brunswick, ME 04011; (207) 443-9502; Email: globalnet@mindspring.com; Web: space4peace.org
- * **Institute for Energy & Environmental Research**, 6935 Laurel Ave., # 201, Takoma Park, MD 20912; (310) 270-5500; Email: ieer@ieer.org; Web: www.ieer.org
- * **Mothers' Milk Project**, Web: mothersmilkproject.org; Email: info@mothersmilkproject.org
- * **Nuclear Information & Resource Service**, 6930 Carroll Ave., # 340, Takoma Park, MD 20912; (301) 270-6477; Web: nirs.org; Email: nirsnet@nirs.org
- * **Radiation and Public Health Project**, PO Box 60, Unionville, NY 10988; Web: radiation.org
- * **Intertribal Council on Utility Policy**, PO Box 25, Rose Bud, SD 57570; Email: info@intertribalcoup.org; Web: intertribalcoup.org
- * **Voices for Creative Nonviolence**, 1249 W Argyle Street #2, Chicago, IL 60640; Phone: (773) 878-3815; Email: info@vcnv.org; Web: vcnv.org
- * **White Earth Land Recovery Project**, 32033 E. Round Lake Rd., Ponsford, MN 56575; Phone: (218) 573-3448; Web: nativeharvest.com

Jet Crashes and Nuclear Reactors

By Harvey Wasserman

The ever-vigilant Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued milestone regulations requiring the builders of new nuke reactors to explain how they might withstand the crash of large commercial jetliners.

But the NRC has exempted the reactors that matter most — the 104 licensed to operate *right now*. As you read this, jets hitting any of them could kill untold thousands of us and render entire regions permanently uninhabitable.

But requiring current reactor owners to do what's now expected of future ones would apparently be an unportable burden.

All reactors would shut immediately without federal limits to their owner's liability for the incalculable death and destruction that could come from a stricken nuke.

The first jet to crash into the World Trade Center on 9/11/2001 flew *directly* over the one dead and two operating reactors at Indian Point, plus the three spent fuel pools there, 45 miles up the Hudson from New York City. Terrorists close to the attack — including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed — have confirmed that reactors were originally targeted, but they changed their minds "for the moment."

This is the NRC's first significant public nod to *any* structural responsibility for such a catastrophe.

But the regulations say taxpayers must pay to prevent such attacks, not the industry. So far, not a single U.S. reactor has any form of anti-aircraft protection, federal, state or otherwise, and many doubt they'd work anyway.

After 9/11 a bitter debate raged over the ability of American reactors to withstand jet crashes. Not one was required to do so, most importantly the fragile General Electric Mark I and Mark II designs installed at more than a third of U.S. nuclear stations. "We have not analyzed what would happen if a 767 crashed into a reactor," according to the Commission's Neil Sheehan. "Until we've done that, we can't say with certainty that they could withstand it."

NRC Chairman Dale Klein recently told CNBC a jet would "bounce off" a reactor containment dome. The industry uses a visually dramatic crash of an F-4 Phantom jet into a movable wall at the Sandia National Laboratory to "prove" its containments are "robust." But the crash test "proves" nothing, since the wall was not attached to the ground and was displaced nearly six feet," says the Nuclear Control Institute's Scientific Director Bernard Lyman. The Sandia test report says "the major portion of the impact energy went into movement of the target and not in producing structural damage." The Phantom's fuel tanks were filled with water, not jet fuel, and its total weight was about 5 percent of a 767. The wall was 12 feet thick, as opposed to 3.5 for a reactor containment dome.

Crash tremors at existing reactors could easily compromise cooling, electrical, safety, communication and other critical components without breaching containment. Human operators

have not been realistically trained to run a control room after surviving — maybe — the impact's shock waves.

As at Three Mile Island, radiation can — and does — escape *en masse* from stacks, outtake pipes and elsewhere around the reactor structure even without containment breach. Nobody knows what prolonged jet fuel fires would do to the already super-heated cores and cooling water.

Nearby pools and dry casks over-brimming with immensely radioactive used fuel rods are sitting ducks. Some are inside the containments. But most sit open to small-scale attack, let alone a jet crash.

The core radiation inside U.S. commercial reactors can exceed by a thousand-fold what was released at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

After a half-century of operation, eight years after 9/11, the official NRC admission that jets crashing into future reactors demand a structural response is long overdue. It confirms that every atomic power reactor is a potential target for terror and error, a pre-deployed weapon of radioactive mass destruction.

"President Obama should replace the Bush-appointed Chairman of the NRC with an individual who will address the threat rather than lie about the vulnerability of nuclear reactors and their wastes to terrorist attack," says Greenpeace's Jim Riccio.

At the very least the new administration should demand that new regulations for proposed new reactors must now be applied to the ones actually operating.

If it can't be done, the nuke power industry should tell us why.

— *Harvey Wasserman edits the NukeFree.org web site. His book Solartopia! Our Green-Powered Earth is at www.solartopia.org. This article was originally published by <http://freepress.org>.*



"FIRST WE HAVE TO CONVINCE THE PEOPLE THAT GOOD HEALTH ISN'T EVERYTHING."

Resolve Health Issues Before Building New Reactors

By Joseph Mangano

Pennsylvania Power & Light Corp. (PPL) of Allentown has written to federal regulators, saying it plans to build a new nuclear reactor at Bell Bend, just a few miles from the Susquehanna site where two reactors now operate. The new reactor would be the largest in the U.S., at 1,600 megawatts.

The new unit would begin operating in 2018 at the earliest, and its cost would be a staggering \$15 billion, an amount that PPL could not cover without taxpayer assistance. Last fall, PPL also applied for federal loan guarantees — even though the national "pot" is barely enough to cover the cost of a single reactor like Bell Bend.

As businessmen jockey over the financial future of the new reactor, the issue of public health risk has been largely overlooked. Even though the reactor would not emit greenhouse gases like a coal plant, is it safe? A logical way to answer the question would be to examine whether or not local rates of radiation-related cancer[s] have risen since the two Susquehanna reactors started in the early 1980s.

Radiation exposure raises risk of all types of cancer, but some cancers are more strongly linked than others. In particular, the only known cause of thyroid cancer is exposure to radiation, according to many scientific studies. Radioactive iodine, one of the many chemicals produced only in atomic bombs and nuclear reactors, seeks out the thyroid, a butterfly-shaped gland in the neck, where it kills and injures cells, leading to cancer.

The local area east (downwind) of Susquehanna covers six counties in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey, with 1.35 million residents. Official health statistics show an alarmingly high local rate of thyroid cancer. In 1999-2004, the seven-county rate was nearly double, or 95.2 percent greater, than the U.S. rate. The local rate of thyroid cancer is the highest of any metropolitan area in the nation, an astounding three to four times higher than in other parts of the nation.

No matter how the numbers are analyzed, local thyroid cancer is high. It's high for men and women, for young, the middle aged and the elderly, year after year. No other cancer has such a high rate in the region. Thyroid cancer isn't a rarity, as more than 200 local residents receive diagnosis each year. The area has a below-average poverty rate and has good access to medical care both locally and in Philadelphia and New York, so there is no obvious reason for this pattern.

It's certainly possible that radioactive iodine released from the Susquehanna reactors in the past quarter-century has harmed local residents. Even though we can't be sure about this, there are precedent studies. Perhaps the most important one was done a decade ago. After years of denial by government officials that atomic bomb test fallout had harmed humans, the National Cancer Institute and Institute of Medicine estimated that exposure to iodine in U.S. bomb test fallout caused as many as 212,000 Americans to develop cancer.

Orders for new nuclear reactors stopped in the U.S. in 1978 because of concerns over health and cost. Recently, utilities like PPL have made plans to start ordering reactors again, and 31 (including Bell Bend) have been proposed. Supporters of nuclear power often state that nuclear power is "clean" but in Northeast Pennsylvania, this should be given a long, hard look.

There should be no rush to build an expensive and quite possibly harmful nuclear reactor, until all health issues are studied and the public is informed of any risk. If local residents are already suffering, there is no need to add to their burden. The more prudent move would be to hold off on new nukes, and instead develop safe forms of electricity such as solar and wind power.

— *Joseph Mangano is the Executive Director of the Radiation & Public Health Project in Ocean City, New Jersey. He is author of Radioactive Baby Teeth: The Cancer Link, 2007; and Low-Level Radiation and Immune System Damage, 1999.*



Food Irradiation Update

By Paul Vos Benkowski

Grocery store trials of irradiated beef and hamburger have failed to salvage the irradiation industry's plans for zapping our food. Customers have rejected the higher prices, and the extended shelf life of the meat has raised wary eyebrows. The food industry itself is still skeptical of irradiation because of the added expense and the well-known public rejection of the word "radiation" when it comes to food.

Food and Water Watch in Washington, DC, one of the country's premier irradiation watchdogs, along with Public Citizen and others, has successfully organized opposition to the nearly untested process. No long-term studies have ever been conducted on the effects of a diet that included irradiated foods over an extended period.

Food and Water Watch reports that irradiation will always be too expensive, technically impractical — involving the transport and use of dangerous radioactive wastes from reactor fuel and nuclear weapons development — and positively ineffective at destroying food borne pathogens.

Patty Lovera of Food & Water Watch notes that food irradiation destroys useful nutrients like vitamins. The process also creates and introduces "URPs" or Unique Radiolitic Products in meat that have not been tested or approved as food additives the way all other additives must. Normally the FDA must okay additives before they're permitted for public consumption.

Food & Water reports, "Very little testing has been conducted on the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated vegetables — and no published research is known to exist on whether irradiated lettuce and spinach are safe for human consumption." Still, in August of 2008, the FDA ruled that spinach and iceberg lettuce can be zapped with enough radiation to kill microorganisms like E. coli and salmonella.

In order to broaden the appeal of irradiated food, or hide its true nature, the FDA is considering a proposal to weaken or change the labeling of irradiated food, a move that is widely reviled by consumer advocates. Considering the recent salmonella outbreak in peanut butter, another push for irradiation is sure to follow. Cost cutting, unsafe production practices and lax oversight will remain the norm unless consumers demand true safety in the food they eat and let their grocers know that they will not buy irradiated food.

NUKEWATCH QUARTERLY



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Uranium Mining, Native Resistance and a Greener Path

The Impact of Uranium Mining on Indigenous Communities

By Winona LaDuke, *Orion*

In a Diné creation story, the people were given a choice of two yellow powders. They chose the yellow dust of corn pollen and were instructed to leave the other yellow powder — uranium — in the soil and never to dig it up. If it were taken from the ground, they were told, a great evil would come.

The evil came. Over one thousand uranium mines gouged the earth in Diné Bikeyah, the land of the Navajo, during a 30-year period beginning in the 1950s. It was the lethal nature of uranium mining that led the industry to the isolated lands of Native America. By the mid-1970s, there were 380 uranium leases on native land and only four on public or acquired lands. At that time, the industry and government were fully aware of the health impacts of uranium mining on workers, their families and the land upon which their descendants would come to live.

Unfortunately, few Navajo uranium miners were told of the risks. In the 1960s, the Department of Labor even provided the Kerr-McGee Corporation with support for hiring Navajo uranium miners, who were paid \$1.62 an hour to work underground in the mine shafts with little or no ventilation.

All told, more than 3,000 Navajos worked in uranium mines, often walking home in ore-covered clothes. The consequences were devastating. Thousands of uranium miners and their relatives lost their lives as a result of radioactive contamination. Many families are still seeking compensation. The Navajo Nation is still struggling to address the impact of abandoned uranium mines on the reservation, as well as the long-term health effects on both the miners and their communities — many of which suffer astronomical rates of cancer and birth defects.

As a college student, I worked for Navajo organizations, trying to inform their people about the uranium-mining industry and the large corporations — Exxon, Mobil, United Nuclear — that proposed mining their lands. It was a humbling experience seeing some of the richest corporations in the world faced by courageous people who fought for the two things that mattered to them more than money: their land and their identity. The Navajo people joined with many others across the country who felt that there was a much better way to make energy. In the end, the people did prevail — new mining proposals evaporated as tribal resistance and legal and administrative battles merged with economic forces. Eventually, contracts for uranium mining were canceled by utilities which no longer sought to build unpopular nuclear reactors.

Now I feel like I am having very bad *déjà vu* — only this time nuclear power is seen as the answer to global climate destabilization. In 2005, the Navajo Nation passed a moratorium on uranium mining in its territory and traditional lands, which was followed by similar moratoria on Hopi and Havasupai lands where mines are proposed adjacent to the Grand Canyon. “It is unconscionable to me that the federal government would consider allowing uranium mining to be restarted anywhere near the Navajo Nation when we are still suffering from previous mining activities,” explained Joe Shirley Jr., Navajo Nation President, at a congressional hearing on potential uranium mines in the Grand Canyon area. To the north, the Lakota organization Owe Aku (Bring Back the Way) is an intervener in a Nuclear Regulatory Commission hearing to allow the Canadian corporation Cameco to expand its Crow Butte uranium mine, just over the Nebraska border from the reservation.

I recently traveled to Australia, the country with the largest known uranium reserves in the world. In my Sydney hotel room the television broadcaster summarized Australia’s economic strategy: “We dig it up, and they buy it.” The mining industry, in a world bent upon combusting and consumption, looks to be very healthy. Australia’s uranium mines include the Beverley Mine, which is in the territory of the indigenous Kuyani and Adnyamathanha people.

Olympic Dam — operated by BHP Billiton, the largest mining corporation in the world — is the country’s second-largest uranium operation and is in the traditional territory of aboriginal people as well. In fact, most major mining operations in Australia are within aboriginal territory. Some are ancient civilizations — resilient in the face of a deep history of genocide and destruction, which continued well into the 20th century. Aboriginal people did not even get the right to vote until 1967. Due to their relative isolation in the outback many of these tribes have had few interactions with outsiders. That is, until recently.

Kakadu is the longtime home to the aboriginal Mirrar people, as well as a recent intruder: British-based Rio Tinto. In the 1970s, Kakadu’s Alligator River System became the focal point of Europe’s uranium demands. Built right in the center of the Mirrar homeland, the Ranger Uranium Mine is one of the largest in the world. The Ranger mine is also in the center of Kakadu National Park, one of only 25 UNESCO World Heritage sites in the world designated on the basis of both cultural and ecological significance. Kakadu includes over 190 major aboriginal rock-art and sacred sites.

The Ranger Uranium Mine opened in the early 1980s, after much protest from the Mirrar people, who made it clear that they opposed the mine. Rio Tinto has assured Australians, UNESCO, and the aboriginal owners that it is

operating under “world’s best practices” of uranium mining, a term some would argue is an oxymoron. Meanwhile, radioactive groundwater contamination is reported to be spreading through the park. A 2004 incident allowed a number of workers to drink, ingest and shower in heavily contaminated water, with a large amount spilling out of the site itself. And in 2006, Cyclone Monica delivered extreme rainfall, causing the radioactive containment ponds to fill. The company responded by lifting tailings dams, redirecting runoff into streams and using the contaminated water for irrigation.

In 1999, Jacqui Katona, a Djok aboriginal woman and Yvonne Margarula, a Mirrar woman, won the Goldman Environmental Prize for their struggle to oppose development at Jabiluka, another mine proposed for Kakadu National Park. Yvonne explained that an agreement to open the mine “was arranged by pushing people, and does not accurately reflect the wishes of the aboriginal people who own that country.” In 2005, after a long and heated battle, the Mirrar people fought off the proposal to open a uranium mine at Jabiluka. But now, with demand for uranium on the rise, the threat is once again looming on the horizon.

With some 16 percent of Australian land controlled by aboriginal people and with many of the mine sites in the aboriginal heartland, the upcoming pressure on communities to buckle to the largest mining companies in the world will be daunting. Coinciding with the proposed ramp-up of the nuclear industry is the negotiation of land settlements for a number of these aboriginal first nations. If history is any indicator, many of these land-rights settlements will mirror what happened in Alaska, where the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act — promoted by oil companies that deemed it necessary to negotiate some agreements between themselves and aboriginal people — established Alaskan Native corporations, which today create a complex set of divided loyalties and communities. This is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the Gwich’in people, who find themselves not only opposing oil companies that want to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, but also Alaskan Native corporations, whose income has derived from the exploitation of the land and its resources.

There is another prophecy that is relevant to this story, though. Ojibwe legends speak of a time when our people

will have a choice between two paths: one path is well worn and scorched, but the second path is not well traveled and it is green.

There is an alternate economic future for indigenous peoples, and it too is green. In order to stabilize carbon emissions in the United States, the country will need to produce around 185,000 megawatts of clean new power over the next decade, which could mean up to 400,000 domestic manufacturing jobs. The Intertribal Council on Utility Policy estimates that tribal wind resources alone represent 200,000 megawatts of power potential. In fact, Native American nations are some of the windiest places in the country.

The Rosebud Lakota put up the first large native-owned windmill in 2003, a 750-kilowatt turbine right in the middle of the reservation. The Turtle Mountain Ojibwe just erected a 660-kilowatt wind turbine; ten more megawatts are planned for Rosebud; and the White Earth Anishinaabeg have several projects under way in Minnesota.

Proposals for up to 800 megawatts of power for northern Plains states are being put forth by the Intertribal Council on Utility Policy. There’s also a 50-megawatt project on lands held by the Campos and Viejas bands of Kumeyaay people in Southern California, and a 500-megawatt project in which the Umatilla Tribe of Oregon is a partner. Boston-based Citizens Energy is working with a number of tribal communities in the U.S. and Canada to bring green power from the reserves to the grid.

In the U.S., native communities have an opportunity to lead the way to a green future. We have a chance to create a just energy economy in the most wasteful and most destructive country in the world. We need help, though. Insuring that climate-change legislation does not reboot the nuclear industry will be a critical part of supporting native struggles to choose the green path over the scorched one.

— Winona LaDuke, the author of *Last Standing Woman*, is the director of the *White Earth Land Recovery Project* at the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota.



Photoshopped by Bonnie Ufer

Canada’s Cameco Contaminates

PORT HOPE, Ontario — Uranium and other toxic chemicals from Cameco Corp.’s Port Hope Conversion Facility have contaminated groundwater and the Port Hope harbor of Lake Ontario. The company produces uranium hexafluoride (UF6) and uranium dioxide (UO2) for the nuclear industry. Recent leaks have compounded historical poisoning and even caused a shutdown of UF6 production in July 2007. Cameco’s operations have contaminated groundwater with two separate plumes heading toward Lake Ontario, one each from its UF6 and UO2 facilities.

Seepage through factory floors in the UF6 area was accidentally discovered in 2007, and Cameco’s 224 monitoring wells confirmed heavy groundwater contamination. The company excavated 17.5 cubic meters of tainted soil from under the UF6 building to a depth of 1.8 meters, although contaminated soil was left under the UF6 building because removing more would have weakened the foundation’s integrity.

Cameco also installed eight water collection wells to capture and treat contaminated groundwater, six around the UF6 plant “to prevent any further spread of contamination,” and two others drilled between the factory and the harbor “to capture groundwater that had already moved beyond the initial collection wells,” according to the company’s Dec. 11, 2008 report on the “Subsurface Contamination.”

West Valley Waste Remediation Could Cost Billions

The name “West Valley” will forever carry the stigma of nuclear power’s dirtiest and most persistent waste.

The state of New York now owns the Western New York Nuclear Service Center, formerly known as West Valley, where worker contamination during the reprocessing of commercial fuel (by Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc.) caused its permanent shutdown.

The facility, 30 miles south of Buffalo, ran from 1966 to 1972, and handled 640 tons of waste fuel for reprocessing. Since 1972, the 3,300 acre site has become an unlicensed radioactive waste dump that may take 40 years and nearly \$10 billion to containerize. Over 600,000 gallons of highly radioactive liquids remain at the site, along with 2 million cubic feet of low-level solid waste and a migrating plume of radioactive groundwater. In the only “clean up” accomplished in nearly four decades, some of the deadly liquid wastes have been “vitrified,” that is formed into glass logs that are stored on site.

The company’s \$60 million in remediation and prevention program also included replacing large sections of flooring, using chemical-resistant coatings on new floors, installing double containment at sump pumps and adding leak detection sensors in some in-ground structures, etc. Cameco blames previous operations at the site for much of the contamination including that in the harbor.

Cameco issued a status report in September 2008 claiming that the UF6 leak had been fixed and announcing the restart of operations. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) okayed the restart, but the company’s dirty reputation may hinder its proposed mine permitting and other regulatory approval. The CNSC reported that the situation at Port Hope “serves to galvanize the environmentalists into action.”

The company’s December report says its, “uranium products are used to generate electricity in nuclear energy plants around the world, providing one of the cleanest sources of energy available today.” A report tag adds, “[We] will ensure that there are no future underground leaks, but that is subject to a number of risks including lack of success or equipment failure...”

Cameco plans to remove an additional 150,000 cubic meters of contaminated soil, and in a whole new take on the concept of Free Trade the waste will be shipped to the U.S. for dumping.

Citizens, scientists and economists are urging the removal of waste buried and stored at West Valley, claiming that leaving the waste on site — an area prone to erosion — risks contamination of the water supply, creeks, the Niagara River and Lake Erie. A state-funded study by Synapse Energy Economics of Cambridge, Massachusetts recommended Dec. 2 — after 37 years of debate — that the site be cleared of radioactive waste. The DOE recommends a phased shutdown of the facility over the next 30 years. As of now, no repository exists that could handle West Valley’s highly radioactive wastes, and debate continues about who is responsible for the cost of the remediation effort.

New York state has been paying 10 percent of the cost and the Energy Department 90. The federal budget currently allocates \$57.6 million for the clean up, which the Committee on Government Operations in 1977 estimated would run \$600 million. The Synapse study suggests it may cost \$9.9 billion.

Radiation Exposure Standards "Scientifically Inappropriate"

calculating risk. The standard is called "reference man," a measure created by the International Commission on Radiological Protection in 1975 and defined as a 5-foot-7-inch, 154-pound "Caucasian" male, 20 to 30 years old, who is "Western European or North American in habitat and custom."

A new report by Arjun Makhijani, President of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research (IEER), the influential scientific watchdog group in Takoma Park, Maryland, declares that the use of Reference Man is "scientifically inappropriate" because the vast majority of people, especially women and children, are excluded and left unprotected.

In a press release announcing the report, IEER said "Reference Man is not used in all cases but it is used in, among others, some drinking water regulations, the standard computer program guiding the cleanup of radioactively contaminated sites and guidance and compliance documents of the Environmental Protection Agency, Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Department of Energy."

Main findings and recommendations

The IEER report's main findings and recommendations call into question the foundations that underlie the use of radioactive materials and nuclear power. We reprint them in full:

1. The use of Reference Man, a hypothetical 20 to 30 year old Caucasian male, in radiation protection regulations and guidelines, including those designed to protect the general public, is pervasive. This is scientifically inappropriate because the vast majority of people, including women and children, fall outside the definition. In general, it also does not protect those most at risk, who are often women and children.

2. Radiation protection regulations are generally given in terms of limits on radiation dose per year or in terms of maximum allowable concentrations of radionuclides in the environment, which also serve to limit radiation dose. The use of Reference Man in radiation dose calculations underestimates dose to children in a large number of

situations, to women in some situations. The underestimation of dose results in an underestimation of cancer risk.

3. Overall, children have a higher risk of cancer for a given radiation dose. This higher risk per unit of radiation dose compounds the problem of underestimation of dose.

4. The regulations and guidelines that rely mainly on Reference Man include the NRC's radiation protection regulations in the workplace and for the general public specified in 10 CFR 20, EPA Federal Guidance Reports 11 and 12, and DOE Order 5400.5 for the protection of the public. The default values in the official computer program used to estimate allowable residual radioactivity use Reference Man. [They are] also used to assess compliance with the Clean Air Act.

5. The Maximum Contaminant Levels for transuranic radionuclides [like plutonium] in drinking water rely on Reference Man.

6. The 2006 report on low-level ionizing radiation of the National Academies, commonly known as the BEIR VII report,

concluded that women are at considerably greater risk of dying from cancer from the same radiation dose (higher mortality risk) and also at greater risk of getting cancer per unit of radiation dose, compared to an adult male.

7. Fetal exposure is only taken into account in radiation controlled workplaces in those cases where a woman declares her pregnancy. The standards in effect are obsolete by a factor of five or more.

8. The failure to estimate doses to children and cancer risks to children when they are in excess of doses and risks received by adults would appear to be in violation of President Clinton's 1997 Executive Order on children, which was reaffirmed by President Bush, with some changes, in 2003.

Take Action:

IEER and the other groups and individuals involved in the "Healthy from the Start" campaign are working to end the use of Reference Man. For more on this crucial effort, visit www.healthyfromthestart.org.

Hawaii Embraces Solar Hotwater, Electric Cars

In a common sense, business- and jobs-supporting move, Hawaii's legislators and Republican Governor Linda Lingle last June enacted a new building code requiring solar hot water heaters or other energy-efficient systems in all new houses starting in 2010. The mandate will reduce home energy consumption by an average of 30 percent, the state-wide equivalent of 30,000 barrels of oil. A family of four can expect to save \$600 every year, and the state will prevent the emission of over 10,000 tons of greenhouse gases. Not only has Hawaii wisely moved to solar hot water, the state has initiated an electric car and battery transfer point system to help eliminate the use of fossil fuels.

The new building code mandate also offers tax credits to owners with homes built prior to 2010. Small businesses in the state have jumped at the opportunity to supply the

construction industry with solar power products. The money spent on solar construction and installation will circulate in Hawaii boosting the state's economy, rather than being exported as petro dollars.

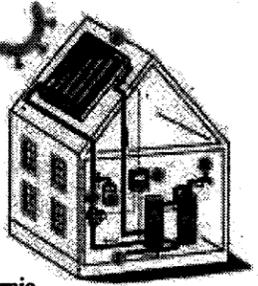
Other states' legislatures should take a lesson from Hawaii's Senate Majority Leader Gary Hooser (D-Kauai, Ni'ihau), who said, "Mandating solar hot water heating for all new homes is a no-brainer. This is the low hanging fruit, a low-cost, proven technology that saves homeowners money and is great for the environment." Spain and Israel require solar heating in new residences, but building codes in most U.S. states are stuck in the no-brain era.

Electric cars, trolleys and busses are being integrated into Hawaii's progressive energy plan. The State, along with the Hawaiian Electric Company, endorsed the "Project Better Place" plan to build an all-electric transportation system using exchangeable batteries and rapid recharging stations. The State has about 1.2 million cars. Since Project Better Place's inception in October 2007, Israel, Denmark, Australia, California, Hawaii and Canada have committed to deploying the world's first electric car networks.

Some small companies like stone designers Bella Pietra in Honolulu have enthusiastically moved to electric cars, buying three that go 30 MPH for six hours and are perfect for downtown deliveries — and, thanks to promotional city ordinances, they get free parking. The electric cars are made in Hawaii and only cost between \$3,500 and \$6,000.

In a related event, last October, Tesla Motors agreed to build a new electric car manufacturing facility and headquarters in San Jose. San Francisco has endorsed Project Better Place and plans on spending one billion dollars on a recharging network to be completed by 2012.

— For details see: *Hawaii Senate Bill 644*, http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/Bills/SB644_CD1_.htm



"DEPLETED" URANIUM WEAPONS UPDATE

Italian Military to Compensate DU Victims

Italy's Minister of Defense Ignazio La Russa announced during a press conference on Dec. 19, 2008, that the ministry will provide 30 million Euros (38 million dollars) to victims of uranium weapons and nano-particle contamination.

Stefania Divertito, of the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW), writes that "It's the first time that an Italian government minister has clearly pronounced the phrase 'victim of depleted uranium.'"

Costa Rican Legislator Offers Uranium Weapons Ban

The International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons sponsored a March conference in San Jose, Costa Rica focused on the campaign for a new convention or treaty that would forbid the manufacture, possession, sale or use of uranium weapons. The ICBUW is made up of more than 100 organizations in nearly 30 countries.

On March 4, President of the Latin American Parliament's Human Rights Commission and member of Costa Rica's legislative assembly Alexander Mora Mora released a draft for a comprehensive ban on uranium weapons.

A member of the Partido Liberacion Nacional and keen advocate for peace and nonviolence, Mora Mora estimates that the bill could become law in under a year. Parliamentarians have been inspired by Belgium's decision to ban uranium weapons and armor in a unanimous vote passed in 2007. Belgium's ban will come into force this June.

Mora Mora announced the development at the opening of the ICBUW's March international conference in San Jose. "Although our member organizations here have been working closely with the legislature's members for some time, Mora Mora is the driving force behind this text and we hope that its impact will spread far beyond the boundaries of Costa Rica," said ICBUW staffer Doug Weir.

It is anticipated that the Costa Rican statutory language will be written into a 1995 law controlling explosive weapons. If it successfully negotiates the state's legislature, the text will ban the use, sale, transit, production and distribution of uranium weapons in Costa Rica and its exclusive economic zone.

International Appeal From Costa Rica

On March 7, participants in the Costa Rica conference issued a formal appeal "to citizens, governments, civil society and international agencies to take urgent action on uranium weapons."

The appeal follows on two years of successful campaigning by the ICBUW in which the Belgian government unanimously adopted a national ban of the weapons, and the United Nations agreed to further investigate the effects of using the devices.

The appeal read in part: "We call on ... citizens and governments to join us in the pursuit of a uranium weapons treaty that will protect the ecosystem from long-term contamination and safeguard the health of civilians living in post-conflict environments. As a first step towards achieving

this goal, we urge states to introduce domestic bans on uranium weapons to create a Uranium Weapon Free Zone across the region.

"We call on governments worldwide to acknowledge the Precautionary Principle and introduce, as the first step towards a uranium weapons convention, an immediate moratorium on the use of uranium weapons, before more states suffer from the results of their use and testing.

"We call on the World Health Organization, International Atomic Energy Agency and United Nations Environment Program to honestly assess the wealth of new data on uranium's health hazards, and support rapid international action, based on the Precautionary Principle, to control the use of uranium in conventional weapons.

"We call on civil society organizations from across Latin America and the world, to join our Coalition and to help forge new links between peace, religious, environmental and arms control organizations; between trade unions and politicians; between scientists and lawyers; between soldiers and peacemakers and between those fighting military bases and testing grounds.

"Through a Uranium Weapon Convention forged in solidarity with the victims ... we can create a ... lasting precedent for the protection of civilians and the environment from toxic and radioactive contamination."

DOE Looking for DU Processor

In December 2008, the DOE opened to bids the operation of two "depleted" uranium (also called uranium hexafluoride, U-238, or UF6) conversion facilities to be built in Portsmouth, Ohio and Paducah, Kentucky. The estimated value of the five-year contracts is \$350 to \$450 million.

The operator would oversee conversion of the DOE's inventory of some 700,000 tons of DU to "a more stable chemical form acceptable for transportation, reuse or disposal." This U-238 is the so-called "legacy waste" left from decades of "enrichment" (increasing the amount of fissionable U-235), for use in H-bombs and reactor fuel beginning with the Manhattan Project during World War II.

The DOE's mention of "reuse" is a reference to the manufacture of DU weapons. Since the 1950s, DU has been stored at Portsmouth and Paducah in large steel cylinders. Cylinders formerly at Oak Ridge, Tennessee have been relocated to the Portsmouth site.

New Documentary on Uranium Weapons

The 2008 documentary "Contaminated Forever," on the deadly impact of depleted uranium contamination, is scheduled to air on several local access TV stations throughout California, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Missouri through a progressive media networking service. The producers, Wild Clearing, have also received word that the film will be aired and web-streamed in parts of New York City.

You can watch the film on the web at: www.contaminatedforever.com. Contact: <wildclearing@wildclearing.com>

WALK FOR PEACE

- * End U.S. Wars in Iraq & Afghanistan
- * Ban Depleted Uranium Munitions
- * Keep Nat. Guard Troops Home
- * Abolish Nuclear Weapons
- * Compensate Victims of War

Camp Douglas to Ft. McCoy

AUGUST 6 to 9, 2009

Thur. Aug. 6: Public Send-Off in Remembrance of Hiroshima, Mill Bluff State Park, Camp Douglas, WI

Fri. Aug. 7: Walk Through Tomah

Sat. Aug. 8: Walk from Tomah to Tunnel City

Sun. Aug. 9: Walk from Tunnel City to Ft. McCoy



A U.S. Army gunner, his face mask painted as a skull, awaits soldiers boarding a Chinook helicopter Oct. 30, 2008, for transport from the Korengal Valley of eastern Afghanistan. Anti-occupation forces attacked a nearby U.S. Army outpost, and the Army responded with machine guns, mortars and helicopter gunships.

How Many Deaths Will it Take? A Call for More Resistance

By Bonnie Urfer

FORT MCCOY, Wisconsin — Since 2003, between 946,000 and 1,033,000 civilians have been killed by the U.S.-led attack on Iraq, and over \$600 billion in tax dollars have been spent on the invasion and military occupation. Many of the soldiers doing the killing are being trained at and deployed from Fort McCoy in central Wisconsin. In February 2009 an additional 3,500 Guard left the state to continue the violence, the largest deployment of troops since World War II. More than half of the 3,500 have already been to Iraq. Peace activists have begun to challenge Ft. McCoy's self-declared mission "to be the premier training center and force projection site of choice for America's defense forces." Over 122,000 people were trained at the base in 2007.

The Winter '08/'09 *Quarterly* reported that 13 people were arrested for civil trespassing last August 10 at Ft. McCoy in protest of the war. Part of that group's message was: "We come to Fort McCoy to act in solidarity with members of the military who choose to nonviolently resist this war by refusing to be deployed to Iraq. We encourage members of the active duty military, Reserve and National Guard to consider refusing deployment orders and to be in contact with the GI Rights Hotline regarding their rights within the military: 1-800-394-9544."

On Jan. 12, twelve members of the group went on trial in federal court in Madison. In spite of their powerful testimony, Federal Magistrate Judge Stephen Crocker told the defendants that their statements were "irrelevant." He found all 12 guilty and fined them each \$75.

Defendant Joy First of Madison, testified that "My co-defendants and I have done everything we can to try to bring the war and occupation of Iraq to an end. We have petitioned the President and members of Congress through countless letters, phone calls and visits. We have been part of vigils and demonstrations, organized and attended town meetings, signed petitions, collected signatures for petitions and used many other means to try to stop the unnecessary killing of innocent people.

"Though what I have done has not stopped the war and occupation of Iraq, I strongly believe it is imperative that we, the people, speak out.... I was arrested ... but I am not sure why.... Citizens are allowed on the base to hunt, and fish. The night before ... there was a concert and hundreds of civilians were allowed on the base. An hour before we tried to deliver our letter, a friend was allowed to go to the PX on base. It was because of our message that we ... were arrested on August 10, 2008, not because we did anything wrong....

"I believe it is my obligation under the Nuremberg Principles to speak out when my government is acting illegally. According to Nuremberg, if we remain silent while our government is engaged in illegal activities then we are complicit, guilty of being in violation of international law....

Renee Espeland, of Des Moines, acknowledged that the Judge viewed her testimony as irrelevant, then addressed the military police in the courtroom saying that soldiers leaving Fort McCoy would return from Iraq to an inadequate medical system unable to address their psychological needs after viewing the horrors of war.

Kryss Chupp of the Chicago-based Christian Peacemaker Teams testified that it is necessary to break the law if it is used to protect institutions waging an unjust war.

On Dec. 31, 2008, another group gathered at Ft. McCoy. Former Nukewatch staffer Cassandra Dixon, board member Gail Vaughn and I walked on to the base demanding an end to the war and the killing of innocents. We were ticketed and released and are awaiting arraignment. While all three charges are different, my ticket says, "fail to leave forest."

In a related effort, the 2002 federal "Authorization for the Use of Military Force in Iraq" has expired and has not been renewed. State Rep. Spencer Black has introduced a state law that would forbid the use of Wisconsin National Guard in Iraq. Fifteen other state legislatures have likewise challenged the use of their Guard troops in the illegal military occupations.

Obama's Bombs Now Smashing Afghan Villages

By John LaForge

President Obama announced Feb. 18 that he is committing another 17,000 U.S. troops to the Big Muddy in Afghanistan. Reflecting presumably on the new President's mental health, *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert writes that "Sending thousands of additional men and women, some to die, some to be horribly wounded, on a fool's errand in the rural, mountainous guerrilla paradise of Afghanistan would be madness."

Military experts have also warned that militarism is incapable of stabilizing Afghanistan's U.S.-destroyed cities and social structure. General David Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command, said last Oct. 1, "... you cannot kill or capture your way out of an insurgency that is as significant in size as the one ... that has developed in Afghanistan."

Even Admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said of Afghanistan Oct. 9, "The trends across the board are not going in the right direction." At the same time an official U.S. intelligence analysis called the war "a downward spiral."

As if speaking directly to President Obama, Sherard Cowper-Coles, the British Ambassador in Afghanistan, is reported to have said that the U.S. occupation was itself making it harder to control the country. "The presence of the coalition, in particular its military presence, is part of the problem, not part of its solution," the ambassador said. Cowper-Coles was referring in part to the inflamed public outrage that the atrocities have created and the bitter condemnations made repeatedly by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Karzai recently demanded to see a U.S. time-line for withdrawal of U.S. military occupiers.

Headlines seem to prove this out: "Afghan Hospital Destroyed, UN Confirms," "7 Children Killed in Coalition Airstrike on Religious Compound in Afghanistan," "More Afghan Civilians Killed in Airstrikes: Officials Report Dozens of Deaths But Some Estimates Exceed 100," "Afghan Civilians Were Killed Needlessly, Ex-Marine Testifies." Still, the bombings, drone warplane attacks and commando assaults continue to massacre innocents by the hundreds. The UN said in September that 577 Afghan civilians have been killed in 2008 by U.S., NATO and Afghan troops, a 21 percent increase from 2007. Then, Feb. 18, the UN reported that the number of civilians killed by U.S. forces soared by almost 40 percent last year.

As one poet asked an earlier president, how many deaths will it take till he knows?

Still, the New Boss is bent on expanding the U.S. war in Afghanistan and on Jan. 18 ordered another 17,000 U.S.

Yucca Funding Slashed

The budget submitted to Congress by President Obama virtually halts the proposed Yucca Mountain high-level radioactive waste repository. After spending \$13.5 billion over 25 years, the lessons learned should be that nuclear power is neither affordable, sustainable nor safe and that the waste cannot be contained — only monitored and repackaged. Stopping Yucca has saved tax payers an estimated \$83 billion in future construction, licensing and transport costs.

The Energy Department (DOE) had been pushing to expand Yucca's capacity to hold 60 years worth of the high-level waste from electric power companies. The current Yucca plan is too small to hold existing waste, let alone what is to be generated over the next 30 years. The country's 104 operating reactors produce an additional 2,200 tons of waste every year.

Commercial power reactors have produced 64,000 tons of waste fuel that now sits at 121 locations in 39 states. Military waste slated for Yucca — 12,800 metric tons from H-bomb production — will remain at sites in Washington, Idaho and South Carolina.

The states of Nevada and California fought hard to stop the project. Last December, Nevada — which has no nuclear reactors — filed a lengthy petition with the federal NRC identifying 229 reasons for its cancellation. California's Energy Commission and Department of Justice filed a 400-page brief warning that, "Proceeding with the project in the manner described by DOE poses a threat to the people, natural resources and environment of California."

Since all parties agree that the leaky, seismically active area will inevitably vent deadly radiation, the EPA and NRC have established "allowable" doses for people nearby. As late as Feb. 18, the NRC adopted an EPA-proposed "final rule" on exposures from any Yucca waste.

The EPA has decided that exposure to 15 millirems (mR) per-year in the form of contaminated water is "allowable" for Yucca's first 10,000 years. After that, the feds would allow neighboring people a 100-mR dose-per-year — a six-fold increase. This dosing allowance is an admission that radiation will inevitably leak, and radiation doses will increase in severity over time. Indeed, the 100 mR dose is a "median" estimate, with half the doses being less than 100 mR and half being over 100, up to 1,000 mR-per-year. A letter from the watchdog group Beyond Nuclear said, "The [government] is promoting intergenerational injustice" which "dooms future generations to higher cancer rates than we accept today."

troops to be sent into the grinder. His war advisor and Pentagon head Robert Gates says that beyond the 31,000 U.S. troops already in the Afghan quagmire, an additional 20-to-30,000 troops should be sent. This estimate, like the willfully dishonest numbers used by President Lyndon Johnson to expand his invasion of Vietnam, cannot be believed. Obama's 61,000-soldier war can not subdue Afghanistan's anti-occupation forces; more than 100,000 Soviet troops could not. Ironically, Obama vowed last November to halt government programs that are past their useful lives. "We can't sustain a system that bleeds billions of taxpayer dollars on programs that have outlived their usefulness or exist solely because of the power of politicians, lobbyists or interest groups. We simply can't afford it," he said. There is no better definition of the U.S. war in Afghanistan.

On this point, retired Army Col. Andrew Bacevich wrote recently in *Newsweek*, "Afghanistan will be a sinkhole, consuming resources neither the U.S. military nor the U.S. government can afford to waste."

It's been reported ...

Among hundreds of such crimes, a few dozen atrocities were considered serious enough to be given the following headlines in the *New York Times*, unless otherwise noted. Numbers in brackets are from the article.

* **Civilians' Deaths in Afghanistan Soared in 2008, a U.N. Study Says** — February 18, 2009

* **Afghanistan: NATO Force Disputes Claims About [5] Civilian Deaths** — January 7, 2009

* **Tensions Rise as Afghans Say U.S. Raid Kills [3] Civilians** — December 19, 2008

* **4 Killed in Shooting by U.S. at a Bus Carrying Afghans** — December 13, 2008

* **U.S. Forces Cite Errors in Killings of 7 Afghans** — December 11, 2008

* **Clash Leaves Civilian Dead In Afghanistan** — November 24, 2008

* **Afghan Officials Say U.S. Strike Killed 40 at Wedding Party** — November 6, 2008

* **"Mistaken Identity" Cited in 9 Afghan Deaths** — October 23, 2008

* **Afghans Cite [25 – 30 civilian] Airstrike Deaths** — October 17, 2008

* **U.S. investigators raise toll in Afghan attack to 33 civilians** — *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 9, 2008

* **U.S. Inquiry is Said to Conclude 30 Civilians Died in Afghan Raid** — October 8, 2008

* **More Afghans Being Killed, Report Says** — September 9, 2008

* **UN Finds Evidence 90 Civilians Dead in US-Led Strikes** — *Agence France-Presse*, August 26, 2008

* **76 Civilians Die in Attack By Coalition, Afghans Say** — August 23, 2008

* **Afghans Say New U.S. Strike Killed [27] Civilians** — July 7, 2008

* **[19] Afghan Civilians Were Killed Needlessly, Ex-Marine Testifies** — January 9, 2008

* **NATO Strike is Said to Kill 14 Civilians in Afghanistan** — November 28, 2007

* **Marines to Conduct Inquiry Into Killings of ["about a dozen"] Afghan Civilians** — October 12, 2007

* **U.S. Airstrike on 2 Taliban Commanders ... Wounds at Least 18 Civilians, Afghans Say** — August 4, 2007

* **Afghans Say Weekend Airstrikes Killed 62 Rebels and 45 Civilians** — July 2, 2007

* **More Afghan Civilians Killed in Airstrikes: Officials Report Dozens of Deaths but Some Estimates Exceed 100** — July 1, 2007

* **7 Children Killed in Coalition Airstrike on Religious Compound in Afghanistan** — June 19, 2007

* **Afghans Say U.S. Airstrikes Killed 21 Civilians** — May 10, 2007

* **Marines face criminal probe in Afghan civilian deaths,** — *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 12, 2007

* **16 Civilians Die as U.S. Troops Fire on Afghan Road** — March 5, 2007

* **U.S. Airstrike at Taliban Kills [16] Civilians, Afghans Say** — May 23, 2006

* **Afghanistan: ["Several"] Civilians reportedly die in airstrike** — *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 12, 2005

* **25 civilians were reportedly killed in a U.S. airstrike** — *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 3, 2005

* **Coalition Strike in Afghanistan Kills 9 Children** — December 7, 2003

* **Pentagon Says U.S. Airstrike Killed [14] Women and Children** — March 13, 2002

* **Afghan hospital destroyed, United Nations confirms** — *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 24, 2001

Through the Prism of Nonviolence Operation Peaceful Resistance

I would submit that we can protect and preserve the open space of democracy by carrying a healthy sense of indignation within us that will shatter the complacency that has seeped into our society in the name of all that we have lost — knowing there is still so much to be saved.

— Terry Tempest Williams, *The Open Space of Democracy*

Without a direct expression of it, nonviolence, to my mind is meaningless. — M.K. Gandhi

By John Heid

What does nonviolence look like in a time feverish for change with a new face in the White House feeding the fires of hope?

This morning's *Arizona Daily Star* reported the deployment of 3,000 U.S. soldiers to Afghanistan, with an additional 30,000 being "contemplated." Wisconsin's National Guard just sent to Iraq its largest contingent since World War II.

Congress is currently debating a \$50 billion bail out for new nuclear reactors and Raytheon boasts that its latest "smart bomb" technology saves civilian lives. Déjà vu Viet Nam. The U.S. remains the world's chief arms exporter even as our military apparatus, the most massive killing machine in history, expands unchecked.

Here in Tucson, 70 undocumented laborers a day are being run through a judicial gristmill called Operation Streamline, a process bereft of ethics, let alone legality. The federal court hopes to increase prosecutions to 100 persons per day.

While the nation is mired in economic morass with educational and social programs being serially eviscerated, there is no serious discussion about cuts to military spending. Quite the contrary. The new administration is proposing increases.

How do we square the advent of a fresh administration that

encourages uncommon hope with the realities on the ground? Do we wait and see what changes will emerge? Do we believe that if only the right captain is at the helm of the ship of state our country will realign its course and become a contributing member to the family of nations? Will human services at last become a priority domes-tically?

Kathy Kelly, from Chicago-based Voices for Creative Nonviolence

cautions that a wait and see attitude, in these times or any, invariably leads to inertia.

A casual read of U.S. history should disabuse us of the notion that our national apparatus will self correct. Even Thomas Jefferson did not believe that was possible. Beneath every piece of social reform legislation there is a story of grassroots organizing, public education and direct action from civil rights to labor rights, suffrage to accessibility etc. "Power concedes nothing without a demand." (Frederick Douglass)

In its November 2006 newsletter, the Syracuse Peace Council reminded readers that the electoral process can never be the primary vehicle for social change. "To suggest that it can, buys into the mythology designed to [teach powerlessness] and force us to accept limited progress toward peace, social justice and genuine democracy."

Creative tension is the cauldron of authentic change. Nonviolent direct action has a fundamental and fertile role to play if these days are to be ones of meaningful reform.

I'm reminded of Gandhi's insight that nonviolence is a lifestyle ... season in and out ... administration in and out ... not a fashion or fad. Not an alternative, or merely a tactic to be dusted off and reemployed when all else fails.

While much of the country struggles with severe winter weather, I'm reminded of a pearl of northland wisdom that John LaForge shared at the height of the Stop Project ELF campaign. He quipped, "When you are pushing a car out of a frozen ditch you don't let up the pressure until its freed." And John ought to know. Let's keep on pushing.

— John Heid is a Quaker peace activist and a long-time Nukewatch volunteer living in Tucson, Arizona.



White areas in Lake Superior above depict the locations of Honeywell, Inc. military wastes dumped by the Corps of Engineers.

DRINKING WATER AT RISK a special Nukewatch report

Nukewatch has produced a 4-page primer on the scandalous dumping of 1,457 barrels of Honeywell, Inc. hazardous military waste into eastern Lake Superior near Duluth, Minnesota.

Our March 2009 report, *Drinking Water at Risk*, covers some of the 1957-to-1962 history of the dumping, reports of radioactive materials making up part of the waste, allegations of radiation being emitted from some of the submerged drums, government disinformation about the scandal, independent investigation of the issue by the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, a list of informational resources and more.

Included is a detailed map of the area of lake bottom where 215 barrels have been identified and another 235 are suspected.

The report is available for \$3 from Nukewatch, with a price break for bulk orders.

Contact: Nukewatch1@lakeland.wis

www.laka.org
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