

## Japanese Rad Waste Reclassified as 'Ore' in U.S.

WHITE MESA, Utah — Five hundred tons of uranium-contaminated soil from the defunct Yurihama uranium mine in Japan is headed to White Mesa Mill in southeastern Utah. Japan paid the International Uranium Corporation (IUC), a Canadian company, \$5.8 million to take the radioactive waste. The soil contamination has been affecting residents of the mountain town of Yurihama since the mine closed in 1988. Japan does not have facilities to dispose of radioactive waste or by-products from the uranium enrichment process.

Environmentalists are alarmed at the transfer, which in effect turns Utah into an international industrial dump site. Considered radioactive waste in Japan, the dirt magically transformed into uranium ore on its way to the U.S. — thereby sidestepping federal and state restrictions. The reclassification means that no transport oversight, NRC licensing and permits are necessary once the contaminated dirt hits the shore in Everett, Washington.

IUC and the Japanese government say the dirt is not contaminated tailings but natural ore. Janice Owens, an import-export licensing agent for the U.S. NRC, said radioactive uranium ore often comes in from Australia and Canada without special permits.

IUC has not processed uranium ore at the White Mesa mill for six years but the price of uranium has increased from \$7 per pound to \$31 and continues to go up, making the mill once again economically viable.

The 10,150 cubic feet of contaminated soil is to be shipped by truck from Everett to Utah's White Mesa Mill where it will be chemically processed into "yellowcake" for use as nuclear reactor fuel. Radioactive waste from that process will be stored in ponds behind the Utah facility and will be regulated by the mining waste laws rather than stricter radioactive waste disposal regulations. (The old Yurihama mine site contains 105,000 cubic feet or 3,000 cubic meters of uranium-tainted soil according to Atsushi Oku, an official with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.)

Japan's Citizens' Nuclear Information Center (CNIC), an industry watchdog group, said the shipment violates the principle of not dumping radioactive waste in another country. CNIC says, "Countries that are unable to handle their own radioactive waste are not qualified to produce such waste." That advice has not yet been taken by the U.S. NRC or Department of Energy.



Containers of radioactive waste have been stacking up in this unlicensed and unlined Nevada Test Site pit since 1987. The DOE wants to dump rad waste for five more years.

## Nobel Prize Awarded to International Atomic Energy Agency

OSLO, Norway — In October, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its Director General, Mohamad ElBaradei, for their efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. "At a time when the threat of nuclear arms is again increasing, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to underline that this threat must be met through the broadest possible international cooperation," the committee said.

While the Nobel committee said otherwise, the awarding of the prize to the IAEA and ElBaradei is a rebuff to the Bush Administration. Bush and company attacked the IAEA's credibility when the agency's inspectors found no evidence of Iraq's alleged, and ultimately nonexistent, nuclear weapons program. When ElBaradei refused to yield his position, the White House mounted an attack on him inside the IAEA, hoping to block his reelection as director. The IAEA is responsible for



verifying compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970. The NPT requires each signatory not already having nuclear weapons to adhere to a Safeguards Agreement covering specified nuclear materials, facilities and activities with "a view to preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other explosive devices." The agency is currently active in overseeing civilian nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea. ElBaradei has refused to endorse Washington's unproven contention that Iran is working to make nuclear weapons.

"This is a message to all the people of the world: Do what you can to get rid of nuclear weapons," Nobel committee chairman Ole Danbolt Mjoes said.

*Note: The IAEA's overall record is mixed, as the reports on pages 4 and 5 make clear. The agency's mandate to promote nuclear power has biased its analysis of reactor safety issues and the health effects of ionizing radiation.*

## South African Nuclear Workers Sickened

PELINDABA, South Africa — Workers at the South African nuclear complex at Pelindaba near Pretoria have been getting sick with cancer and other maladies. Critics claim that the Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa's (Nesca) internal investigation into the illnesses will be a whitewash. A joint meeting was held by ill workers, the environmental group Earthlife Africa, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the justice and peace desk of the Catholic Bishops Conference and Mogwera Khoathane, who was appointed by Nesca to discuss public participation in the investigation. Investigators suggested by Earthlife were summarily rejected by Nesca. Five of 29 former employees have died, 13 have undergone medical examinations and ten have been diagnosed with diseases linked to radiation exposure, including skin cancers and eye diseases. According to Earthlife, more than

200 former employees of the nuclear site have filed for medical assistance blamed on occupational diseases.

Nuclear reactors are a heated topic in South Africa, which plans to construct up to 20 prototype pebble-bed reactors for commercial use. The country has two nuclear sites: Pelindaba and the Koeberg nuclear reactor on the Cape West coast. Both facilities store radioactive waste on site. SA has no high-level radioactive waste dump and low-level waste is dumped at the Vaalputs site in the Northern Cape. A proposed national radioactive waste-management agency would be a wholly-owned subsidiary of Nesca.

— South Africa Mail & Guardian, September 23 2005

## Irish Councilors Say End Dumping at Drigg

DUBLIN, Ireland — Irish councilors are calling for an end to nuclear waste dumping at Drigg in Cumbria on the north-west coast of England. They are urging removal of the waste to a safer inland storage site and immediate clean up of contamination at both the repository and at Sellafield in Cumbria.

Members of the newly-formed All Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities Forum met to discuss nuclear activity across the Irish Sea. Councilors are concerned about coastal erosion that may reach the Drigg waste dump within 500 years, or coastal flooding brought on by melting polar regions. Sellafield faces the same risks. The Forum recommends that all radioactive waste storage at Drigg be temporary and moved inland. Some of

Drigg's waste has a half-life of 245,000 years. South Dublin Councilor Tony McDermott said, "We must assume that the worst will happen and take a precautionary approach to minimize the risks from erosion at these sites."

The All Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities Forum was formed at an inaugural meeting in Dublin in September 2005 to represent the views on nuclear issues of local councils in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Nuclear Free Local Authorities is a network of 75 councils across England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland campaigning to reduce nuclear hazards and increase public and environmental protection.

## Iraqi Children's Tooth Project

Following the U.S. and British use of depleted uranium munitions in the Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003, many populated areas of Iraq became contaminated with fine uranium oxide dust that is readily respirable.

Despite continued reports of substantial increases in cancer and birth defects, there is virtually no data on the extent to which Iraqi civilians have sustained internal contamination.

Everyone has trace levels of uranium in their body, the majority of which is stored in the bones and teeth. Consequently, the primary or deciduous teeth that children normally lose between ages six and 12 represent valuable biological specimens that can be used to study a child's uranium burden.

In total, 52 teeth from northern, central and southern Iraq have been collected. These will be analyzed alongside 16 North American 'archaeological' teeth' from the 1940s — prior to the nuclear age.

The analysis will be done in the British Geological Survey's (BSG) state-of-the-art laboratories in Nottingham,

England. Professor of Geological Chemistry Randall Parrish from the BGS will use multi-collector, inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry to analyze the teeth for their content of four uranium isotopes. The varying proportions of these will indicate the type of uranium to which the children have been exposed.

Professor Parrish will be working alongside Dr. Thomas Fasy from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York.

The project needs \$87,000 to complete the study because each tooth costs \$1000 to analyze. It is hoped that much of the money can be raised in the U.S., but as cosponsors of the project, the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium (CADU) will do its utmost to ensure that the figure is met.

CADU in Manchester, England is looking for organizations that might want to sponsor an analysis of a tooth. Contact: Campaign Against Depleted Uranium, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester, England, M4 7HR Phone: (440) 161-273-8293; Email: info@cadu.org.uk



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