

NUCLEAR SHORTS

Russian Nuclear Sub Threatens Contamination

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — A Russian nuclear submarine that sank in 2003 still sits at the bottom of the Barents Sea with 800 kilograms of highly radioactive fuel in its reactors. The sub, called the K-159, sits at a depth of 240 meters, and water pressure will eventually cause leaking from the reactors, if it hasn't already. The failure of the Russian government to raise the sub is causing widespread concern, especially within the fish-exporting industry which depends heavily on the Barents Sea.

The K-159 sank Aug. 30, 2003 while being towed for dismantlement, killing nine of its ten crew members. The Russian Navy has missed two different start dates for raising the sub. Funding is the main cause of delay, as Russia wants the yearly budget of the Navy to cover the estimated \$59 million cost. — *Bellona* [Italy], Sept. 1, 2005

Corroding Tanks Store Depleted Uranium

PADUCAH, Kentucky — Cylinders storing depleted uranium at three nuclear facilities may be corroding because of toxic gas mistakenly left in them, according to a memo obtained by the *Louisville Courier Journal*. Over 2,500 cylinders at three sites — Paducah and Piketon, Ohio, and Oak Ridge, Tennessee — were previously used to store phosgene, a chemical warfare gas. The Sept. 30 memo, written by Alfred Walter, DOE Assistant Inspector General, shows that the DOE has known since October 2000 that the cylinders may contain residual phosgene.

Phosgene is a corrosive, toxic gas that the Germans used briefly during World War I. Exposure to skin causes lesions and burns, and inhalation causes a victim's lungs to fill with mucus and fluid. The gas cylinders were acquired during the 1940s and '50s from the Army's Chemical Warfare Service.

"We believe the findings may warrant immediate attention," Walters said in the memo. — *Louisville Courier Journal*, Oct. 25, & *Chillicothe Gazette* [Ohio], Oct. 29, 2005

Truckers Fined for Radioactive Driving Hazard

LONDON, England — AEA Technology, a private arm of the British Atomic Energy Agency, was fined £250,000 (\$431,623) after workers from a privately contracted hazardous waste removal company were convicted in a London court for using the wrong safety packaging and failing to notice a missing safety plug before driving 130 miles across Britain to the Windscale reprocessing site at Sellafield. The opening left by the missing plug spewed a continuous dose of gamma (X) radiation emitted by cobalt-60, starting at a hospital in Leeds where the radionuclide had been used, all the way to Windscale in Cumbria. Anyone standing within one yard of the beam would feel sick within ten minutes and after two hours would have been killed. No one knows if anyone along the route was directly exposed to the high concentration of cobalt-60 gamma rays that streamed from the container in March of 2005 (cobalt-60 is used in X-ray machines to treat cancer patients, in food irradiators, and industrial X-ray machines, etc.). — *Washington Times* & *London Sunday Times*, Feb. 18, 2006

Empty Plutonium Casks Fall from Truck

BLACKFOOT, Idaho — A semi truck returning to the Idaho National Laboratory overturned on Interstate-15 and dumped three empty rad waste transport casks onto the highway. Both lanes of the highway were closed for several hours as Idaho State Police hazardous material specialists tested the site. The empty casks, each weighing 12,500 pounds, are used to transport 55-gallon drums of plutonium-contaminated debris from the Idaho National Laboratory near Idaho Falls. The DOE-run lab conducts nuclear weapons and waste research. The truck was returning from the DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, New Mexico. The driver was cited for inattentive driving. — *Idaho Statesman*, Jan. 28, 2006

Radioactive Contamination at Tiny Landfill

NORTON, Mass. — Five to 11 truckloads of radioactive waste per day are expected to leave the 9-acre Shpack landfill site near here during a long-awaited clean up that will take until June. To the neighbors and town officials of Norton, the announced removal of the deadly hazardous waste from this Superfund site is only half the story. Area residents have spent two decades waiting for the federal government to clean up radioactive radium and uranium, as well as dichloroethylene, trichloroethylene and tetrachloroethylene at the site all of which have contaminated groundwater. The site accepted wastes from the 1940s until 1965, when it was closed by court order. The EPA claims it is still searching for the parties responsible for the contamination. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had said that clean up would begin Feb. 9, but incomplete paperwork caused yet another postponement. The first shipment of contaminated soil was scheduled to leave for Worcester, Feb. 16, and from there on to the notorious "Envirocare" dump in Utah. Assessing legal liability for the contamination awaits the EPA's 20-year-long investigation. — *Sun Chronicle*, Feb. 16, 2006

Radioactive Waste Found at Holliston

HOLLISTON, Massachusetts — A solid waste transfer station southwest of Boston was shut down by order of the

Holliston Board of Health after radioactive waste was unknowingly processed and shipped out to a disposal site in Wareham, 40 miles away, where the radiation was detected. The load was refused and the truck returned to Holliston.

Casella Waste Systems, which was named in the shut down order, refused to quit, saying that only the state could issue a stop-work order, and although they "understood the concern and the reaction of the town" trucks continued to haul waste to and from the waste transfer station. The company did admit that its main radiation monitor was malfunctioning and they agreed to use a hand held radiation screening device until the main monitor was repaired, but "this screening was only done for a short while and then discontinued," according to the health board's order.

The company is currently seeking approval from Holliston's town Planning Board to expand operations, despite concerns from neighbors that contaminants from the station will be carried into the drinking water and that the site is already processing more waste than allowed. The company's failure to detect the radiation in the waste is just another in a long list of complaints about the station. The fact that the source of the radioactive waste is not yet known does little to assuage these concerns. — *Boston Globe*, Jan. 26, 2006

H-Bomb Test Called Krakatau

LAS VEGAS, Nevada — On Feb. 23, a joint U.S. and British so-called "sub-critical" nuclear weapons test took place 85 miles northwest of Las Vegas in an underground complex. The bomb test was meant to "gather scientific data that provides crucial information to maintain the safety and reliability of each nation's weapons," National Nuclear Security Administration officials said. The bomb test, aptly code-named "Krakatau" — after the island that nearly disappeared under the awesome force of a volcano in 1883 — was said by NNSA to evaluate the stockpile of 5,521 nuclear weapons by using high-explosive chemicals that when detonated shock disseminating bits of plutonium. Since 1997, there have been 21 "sub-critical" experiments which critics argue violate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. — *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Feb. 23, 2006

Don't Eat the Mushrooms

MOSCOW — Twenty years after the April 1986 radiation catastrophe at Chernobyl, large quantities of contaminated produce are still sold in Moscow markets. The produce is grown in western Russia and neighboring Belarus. This is nothing new to Elena Ter-Martirossov. She is the spokeswoman for Radon, the municipal authority in charge of radioactive security in Moscow. "Around 830 kilograms of radioactive produce was confiscated from Moscow markets in 2005," she stated, preceded by 986 kilograms of contaminated produce in 2004, a ton in 2003, three tons in 2002, and 1.5 tons in 2001. Ter-Martirossov also reported that, "There was a case involving radioactive meat in a shop in 2004, but it is very rare that shops are affected." Radon will be there to handle the removal and treatment of tainted goods. "Most of the produce is berries and mushrooms," Ter-Martirossov explained. "They grow close to the ground and quickly absorb any radioactive particles."

— *Agence France Presse*, Jan. 18, 2006

Norwegian Military "Lost" Rad Waste

MOIRANA, Norway — Sixteen small containers of radioactive materials were found among scrap metal in a salvage dump in Nordland county. The Norwegian military is still missing another 88 small containers and has not yet explained how the containers were lost. Preliminary investigations show that nobody has been exposed to dangerous radiation, according to the National Radiation Protection Authority.

In related news, the Norwegian government has taken the bold step of penalizing seven international military contractors for their development of nuclear weapons or component parts by disinvesting in them. The companies are: BAE Systems, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Finmeccanica, United Technologies, Honeywell International and Safran.

— *Norway Post*, Dec. 26, 2005 & *Janes Defense News Briefs*, Jan. 6, 2006

Pentagon (Over) Spending Spree

WASHINGTON, DC — A retired Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel, Paul Fellencer Sr., has documented over \$200 million in Pentagon waste that shows the military paid outlandish prices for household items. All told, Fellencer documented 135 cases of price gouging that the Pentagon dismissed as "unsubstantiated." Fellencer detailed the over-payments in a spreadsheet complete with stock number and purchase orders. U.S. Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., said about the nonchalance, "We've got an agency that is not doing its job of being a watchdog for taxpayers." Buy paying so-called "prime vendors" rather than buying directly from manufacturers or seeking bids, the Pentagon threw away more than \$200 million Fellencer said. The waste included:

* Deep-fat fryers for \$5,500 each when the same item was on the General Services Administration (GSA) price list for \$1,919.

* An electric waffle iron for \$1,781 compared with the GSA price of \$655.

* A popcorn maker worth \$768 cost taxpayers \$1,033.

* Four toasters at \$1,025 each available for \$790.

— *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Jan. 24, 2006

Uranium Ore Spill Threatens Arkansas River

SWISSVALE, Colorado — A truck hauling uranium ore to the Cotter Corp. uranium mill near Canon City, Colorado overturned and spilled 50,000 pounds of ore across U.S. Highway 50. Gross weight of the vehicle exceeded the legal limit by 2,140 pounds. Cotter distills uranium for nuclear power reactors. The load spilled down an embankment just shy of the Arkansas River. Although contamination of the river was not confirmed, Kim Woodruff of the Dept. of Wildlife and State Parks, said that if the uranium ore does reach the river it would have serious ramifications. "Uranium in the complex river system affects everything from mammals to fish," Woodruff said. The driver of the truck was cited with improper mountain driving and hauling a load heavier than the legal limit by more than a ton.

— *Canon City Daily Record*, Feb. 16, 2006



Photo by David Young, The Daily Record

This overturned Cotter Corp. truck spilled 25,000 pounds of raw uranium ore which likely contaminated the Arkansas River near Canon City, Colorado.

Radioactive Pollution Identified by Activists

PORTSMOUTH, Ohio — Citizen activists with The RadioActivist Campaign collected foam and water flowing from the Portsmouth, Ohio Gaseous Diffusion Plant in November 2003. In the sample, they identified radium-226 at 100 times the normal background level using simple Geiger counter methods. Elevated radioactivity was confirmed by the operator, the U.S. Enrichment Corporation, which produced fuel for nuclear reactors.

— The RadioActivist Campaign, Dec. 12, 2005

RESOURCES

- * **Citizen's Action for Nuclear Disarmament**, 31 Rue du Cormier, 17100-Saintes, France, Email: contact@acdn.net; Web: acdn.net
- * **Campaign Against Depleted Uranium**, CADU, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester, England, M4 7HR; (440)161-273-8293; Email: info@cadu.org.uk; Web: cadu.org.uk
- * **Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space**, PO Box 652; Brunswick, ME 04011; (207) 729-0517; Email: globalnet@mindspring.com; Web: space4peace.org
- * **Human Rights First**, 333 Seventh Avenue, 13th Floor, New York, NY 10001; (212) 845 or Human Rights First, 100 Maryland Ave. NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002; (202) 547-5692; Web: humanrightsfirst.org
- * **Institute for Energy & Environmental Research**, 6935 Laurel Ave., Suite 201, Takoma Park, MD 20912; (301) 270-5500; Email: ieer@ieer.org; Web: ieer.org
- * **International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War**, Kortestrasse 10, 10967 Berlin, Germany; +49-30-6938166; Email: ippnw@ippnw.de; Web: ippnw.de
- * **Institute for Science and International Security**, 236 Mass. Ave. NE, #500, Washington, DC 20002; 202-547-3633; Email: isis@isis-online.org; Web: isis-online.org
- * **Laka Foundation, Documentation and Research Center on Nuclear Energy**, 1054 RD Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Phone: 020 - 6168294; Email: info@laka.org; Web: laka.org
- * **Low Level Radiation Campaign**, The Knoll, Montpellier Park, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5LW, Britain; Phone: +01-59-782-4771; Email: bramhall@llrc.org; Web: llrc.org
- * **Nuclear Age Peace Foundation**, 1187 Coast Village Road, #123, Santa Barbara, CA 93108; (805) 965-3443; Email: napf@igc.apc.org; Web: wagingpeace.org
- * **Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS)**, 1424 16th Street NW, #404, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 328-0002; Email: nirsnet@nirs.org; Web: nirs.org
- * **Nuke Info Tokyo**, Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, 3F Kotobuki Bldg., 1-58-15, Higashi-nakano, Nakano-ku, Tokyo 164-0003, Japan; Email: cnic@nifty.com; Web: cnic.jp/english/
- * **Public Citizen**, 1600 20th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 588-1000; Web: citizen.org
- * **Physicians for Social Responsibility**, 1875 Conn. Av. NW, #1012, Washington, DC 20009; (202) 667-4206; Web: psr.org
- * **Radiation and Public Health Project**, 302 W. 86th St., # 11B, New York, NY 10024; (800) 582-3716; Email: odiejoe@aol.com; Web: radiation.org
- * **RadioActivist Campaign**, (360) 275-1351; Email: search@igc.org; Web: radioactivist.org
- * **SOA Watch**, PO Box 456, Washington, DC 20017; (202) 234-2440; Email: info@soaw.org; Web: soaw.org
- * **Shundahai Network**, PO Box 1115, Salt Lake City, UT 84110; (801) 533-0128; Email: shundahai@shundahai.org; Web: shundahai.org
- * **Union of Concerned Scientists**, 2 Brattle Square, Cambridge, MA 02238; (617) 547-5552; Web: ucsusa.org
- * **World Information Service on Energy**, P.O. Box 59636, 1040 LC Amsterdam, Netherlands; Web: antenna.nl/wise; Email: wiseamster@antenna.nl