



Spy Catches Spies Selling Secrets

By Bonnie Urfer

Lies, deception, secrecy and cover-ups have been the mainstay of the nuclear industry in the U.S. since before the Manhattan Project brought us the first atomic bombs. Today, corrupt individuals in the FBI, U.S. Defense and State Departments are involved in trading nuclear secrets for money, drugs and political gain, according to Sibel Edmonds who worked for the FBI as a Turkish language translator intercepting international conversations before becoming a whistleblower. Edmonds was fired in 2002 after hearing evidence of money laundering, drug imports, attempts to acquire nuclear and conventional weapons technology and treason.

Edmonds says that nuclear weapons secrets are at the core of a Turkish- and Israeli-run network that includes U.S. and British officials who have had them stolen. The secrets were then sold on the black market to countries such as Pakistan, Israel and Saudi Arabia. From there, the nuclear proliferation data may have been passed on for profit to Iran, Libya, North Korea and even Al Qaeda. The American-Turkish Council in Washington has been used as a drop-off point. Edmonds alleges that: a PhD student at Los Alamos, New Mexico provided information; a network of "moles" exists throughout the U.S. nuclear weapons complex; and U.S. officials have been bribed for nuclear secrets including a specific \$250,000 sale of information originating from an Alabama Air Force Base. Abdul Qadeer Khan, Pakistan's premier nuclear scientist, is suspected of receiving stolen information and subsequently selling it to Iran, North Korea and Libya. He may have obtained bomb parts from U.S. and British companies.

For the past five years Edmonds has been gagged by U.S. courts and faces prosecution and prison time for saying too much. She said, "This gag [order] was invoked not to protect sensitive diplomatic relations but criminal activities involving U.S. officials who were endangering U.S. national security." Edmonds has provided information to the U.S. Congress, the Inspector General of the Justice Department and the 9/11 Commission with no subsequent action by the U.S. government. The London *Sunday Times* reported her allegations, as did news sources in Israel, Europe, India, Pakistan, Turkey and Japan, but no media in the U.S. has reported the story.

The scandal covers more than two decades. Edmonds is not the only informer that has been gagged and blacklisted. Richard Barlow, an intelligence analyst working for then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney in 1989, uncovered Pakistan's nuclear program but the information was ignored. According to an article in *Mother Jones* from January 2002, the information would have stopped the sale of \$1.4 billion

in F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan's government in Islamabad. Douglas Feith, a former lobbyist for Turkey, is under investigation for lying and providing false intelligence in the lead-up to the war against Iraq. Edmonds also alleges that Feith was involved in the selling of secrets.

Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the secret Pentagon Papers, writes that Representative Henry Waxman, Senator Patrick Leahy and Senator Chuck Grassley have squelched Edmonds' testimony along with crucial documentation proving some of her statements.

According to *The London Guardian*, Atif Amin, who worked as a senior customs investigator in Britain, has been slapped with a gag rule and threatened with prosecution for exposing the international smuggling ring. On December 5 Amin's house was searched by investigators from the Independent Police Complaints Commission and Hampshire police. Amin headed Operation Akin, which investigated Abdul Qadeer Khan and Libya's nuclear program and secrets sales. He was ordered to drop his investigation by the CIA and M16, Britain's intelligence agency.

Uranium Fuel Site Residents Say No More

Residents of Unicoi County in Tennessee near Erwin want a public hearing on whether to increase weapons-grade uranium-23 storage at a Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) operation in Erwin. The factory makes reactor fuel for the U.S. Navy and converts or "downblends" surplus uranium into commercial reactor fuel for the Tennessee Valley Authority. The NRC approved NFS for additional weapons-grade uranium storage on November 23.

According to the NRC, storage of enriched U-235 poses no problem at the site since no one is using or drinking the groundwater that has already become poisoned from half a century of nuclear work at the site. The groundwater is contaminated with plutonium and other toxins. In 2003, NFS had to pay a \$60,000 fine for lack of accounting of Special Nuclear Materials.

The owner of Impact Plastics Inc. and Preston Tool and Mold Inc. of Erwin, Tennessee has filed suit against NFS over potential cancer-causing contaminants found in a 13-acre plume of groundwater under his business.

In March 2006, NFS failed to report a nine-gallon leak of highly enriched uranium for a year. The NRC admitted that only luck prevented workers from being exposed to a deadly dose of radiation from the spill. Criticality was possible when the enriched uranium leaked from a filter glovebox (enclosed container with flexible gloves) and down an elevator pit.

Sources: *The Sunday Times*, Jan. 6, 19 & 20; Daniel Ellsberg, Brad Blog Op-Ed, Jan. 20, *The Huffington Post*, Jan. 21 & 22, & Indy Media, Jan. 22, 2008; *60 Minutes*, Aug. 2004 & Oct. 2002; *The Guardian*, Dec. 19, 2007; *The Nation*, Sept. 6, 2006; *Mother Jones*, Feb. 2002



Hot Reactor Fuel Again Found Dumped at Hanford

By Bonnie Urfer

Workers at the Hanford Reservation, the 560-square-mile nuclear weapons site in eastern Washington, didn't know what they would find while excavating 600,000 tons of radioactive garbage from 39 pits called "618-7 Burial Ground" created between 1960 and 1973. They didn't expect to find used reactor fuel, the deadliest nuclear waste there is. Yet they recovered 16 whole or partial fuel "slugs."

Digging began in 2004, in a place called "300 Area", where fuel for Hanford's nine reactors was produced and subsequent plutonium and tritium for nuclear weapons was manufactured. Few records exist that document what was dumped and where, since material in the pits was not ever expected to be retrieved.

Employees had to prepare for encountering a long list of potential hazards including hundreds of barrels of radioactive metals stored in liquids to prevent fire, drums of depleted uranium chips or shavings, zircaloy or beryllium scrap, thorium nitrate solution or thorium oxide, chemical solvents, oil, and chromium-contaminated soil. Workers have dug up highly radioactive instrument wires that had been lowered into reactor cores to determine temperature, thousands of feet of piping and thousands of tons of



The Hanford Reservation in eastern Washington is the most radioactively contaminated place in the country. "Clean up" operations continue to cause environmental degradation and endanger the lives of workers exposed to radiation during excavation of decades-old dumps including the one pictured.

laboratory glassware, construction debris and radioactive reactor hardware. They've also removed a ton of mercury.

The drums' contents have the potential to ignite when exposed to oxygen at certain temperatures. Blast shields were set in place and one barrel at a time was placed behind them by employees wearing full radiation gear and air respirators. No more than four barrels were excavated at a time. At the same time the drums were exposed, leaking contents were mixed with a fixative to prevent airborne contamination. Nearby, loads of sand were piled high in case of spontaneous fire.

Most of the radioactive waste will be repackaged and reburied further from the Columbia River, which forms the eastern boundary of the site and is a drinking water source for Portland, Oregon. The DOE has promised that the burial ground cleanup will be completed by December 2008. The process involves three pits, two of which are 650 feet long, 100 feet wide and 20 to 25 feet deep.

Excavation of the pits is considered high-risk due to the proximity of the Columbia River and the town of Richland. Employees developed innovative remote techniques for sorting radioactive material while limiting radiation exposure. Waste has been sorted using backhoes and other heavy machinery equipped with monitors to detect chemical fumes and radiation.

In February 2002, Bechtel Corporation's "Environmental Restoration" employees unearthed 11 fuel elements near the F Reactor dump site. At the time, adjacent 6,400-square-foot water basins served to collect discharged irradiated fuel elements, contaminated shielding and material such as fuel baskets and various reactor hardware.

Four defunct reactors at Hanford have been prepared for the 75-year wait for demolition and disposal. "Cocooning" the reactors involves sealing all exterior openings to prevent animals, vegetation, water or humans from coming in contact with high radiation levels in the core. Eighty percent of the reactor is demolished during cocooning with the exception of an inner 3-foot-thick wall surrounding the core.

— *Tri-City Herald*, Jan. 10, & 17; Associated Press, Jan. 17, 2008

Nuclear Weapons' Waste Shell Game

By Paul Vos Benkowski

FERNALD, Ohio — Eighteen miles northwest of Cincinnati, Ohio sits the Fernald Preserve. It is a 1,050-acre environmental center teeming with wildlife, forested areas, wetlands and prairie grass that is being touted as a "nuclear waste cleanup success." Yet the barbed wired fences remain, as do the radioactive warning signs, and the football field sized mound of waste can't be hidden. The Fernald facility began enriching uranium-238 for the military in 1952. Production stopped in July 1989 and by December of that year the site was added to the EPA's Superfund list and a shell game of nuclear waste clean up began.

At a cost of \$44 billion, contaminated soil and debris were shipped off-site, production plant structures and associated components were shipped out, and altogether over 31 million tons of nuclear waste were taken away. While this is seen by some as a Superfund success story it does not answer the question that plagues the nuclear industry: What about the waste? The people of Ohio may be happy that Fernald's waste is no longer in their back yard, but the citizens of Hamilton County in West Texas are fighting the burial of said waste near their community. The fight in Texas has been going on since Fernald's concrete casks arrived after similar fights in Utah and New Mexico. Texans are worried their state is going to become the nation's nuclear dumping ground especially while the doomed Yucca Mountain plan flounders.

The main fear concerning burial of the casks is that the clay under the site has not been proven safe and that rains and high winds may release the material. Not surprisingly, these were the same fears citizens near the Fernald site expressed.

The Fernald facility is located over the Great Miami Aquifer, one of the largest sole-source aquifers in the nation. An on-site water treatment plant has run continuously since 1993 and has filtered 7,800 pounds of uranium from the water, yet EPA-monitored private wells off-site have detected uranium concentrations higher than what is allowed in drinking water. One well, less than a mile from the site, was found to have more than twice the concentration allowed when it was checked in 2006. The EPA hopes to lower the uranium level in nearby drinking wells by the year 2026.

Cold comfort at best for the people living around Fernald and a harbinger of future problems for the people of West Texas currently fighting against a similar fate. And if they win an injunction against the burial then the nuclear waste shell game will move on to another site and another unsuspecting community will have to fight for their safety.

Uranium Weapons

Manchester, England — The International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons scored a major victory at the UN General Assembly Dec. 5, when 136 countries voted in favor of spotlighting health concerns over the use of depleted uranium (DU). The passage of the resolution obliges member states and NGOs to submit information on DU to the Secretary General, who will in turn produce a report.

Edina, Minnesota — AlliantACTION! members, who watchdog the U.S.'s largest uranium munitions builder, Alliant Techsystems, celebrated the dismissal of all recent charges against activists who have tried to meet with company officials. Even critical stockholders have been arrested simply by trying to attend the annual meeting. The activists intend to hound the weapons merchants as they move their world HQ to another suburb of Minneapolis.

Colonia, New York — The federal government and National Lead (NL) Industries told workers for decades that the radioactive pollution they produced was not a serious health hazard. But January's *Science of the Total Environment* reports that 23 years after uranium munitions production ceased, all the workers tested still carry uranium contamination. So did 20 percent of people tested who lived for at least 10 years near the NL factory while it operated. The findings shocked researchers Professor Randall Parrish of Leicester Univ. in Britain and David Carpenter of Albany Univ. in New York. Considering the length of time that the weapon's dust stays in the body, the use of uranium munitions by the U.S. military, says Carpenter, "could constitute a war crime."

The Hague — Nukewatch staffer John LaForge joined an expert panel presenting DU information, February 14, to the Dutch Parliament's Standing Committee for Defense in the Hague, The Netherlands.