



Scrap Metal Killers

By Paul Vos Benkowski

NEW DELHI — A small piece of metal cut away from a discarded tube at Deepak Jain's scrap metal yard in Mayapuri, west of the capital New Delhi, caused the death of one man and sent eight others to the hospital with radiation poisoning. According to *The Indian Times*, Rajender Prasad died April 26 from multiple organ failure due to exposure to radiation from this capped steel tube about four inches in diameter. Prasad was working at the scrap yard when the tube was cut to establish its value. One man tucked the small strip of metal into his wallet as a souvenir of sorts, where it caused a sore and a black rash on his leg. He is one of the eight currently being treated for radiation exposure.

Upon hospitalization of the victims, the Indian Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) was notified and the police closed down all scrap metal yards in Mayapuri while a team of radiation inspectors recovered eight radioactive sources from Jain's shop, two more from a nearby shop and the "souvenir." Experts have deemed it India's most troubling radiation exposure in recent years.

More worrisome is the source of the radioactively-contaminated metal and how it reached the shop. The deadly material originated from an irradiation machine used by the chemistry department at the nearby Delhi University. The machine had been used in gamma radiation experiments since 1971 and was then sold to Jain at a public auction. Hoping he had bought something of worth, Deepak set about dismantling the machine and thereby exposing himself and others to cobalt-60. Cobalt-60 is a gamma emitter used to irradiate medical instruments, foods and spices. Because of its gamma radiation, it has the power to ionize other metals, such as those found in the human body. Police say that although the machine was old, the cobalt-60 was still of a high intensity.

Although apologetic for the death and the numerous illnesses caused by the radioactive scrap, it is not the first time Delhi University has carelessly discarded hot equipment. Recent investigations have led to the revelation by Ramesh Chandra, a professor in the chemistry department, that his colleagues on the physics faculty buried 20 kilograms of low-level radioactive waste in a pit on campus 20 years ago. "Instead of handing over the hazardous material ... for proper disposal, they just buried it," he said. "Though it's been 20 years the buried isotopes of substances like uranium could still be active." As a result of the most recent exposure, the AERB has suspended the university's license to handle radioactive materials.

The radiation death shines a light on the lax regulations surrounding such materials and the fact that certain countries have become dump sites for the rest of world. Safety appears to be the least important issue when seeking to get rid of unwanted contaminated materials. Four years ago, ten foundry workers were killed by exploding military shells hidden in a container of scrap metal in the city of Ghaziabad. In a country as poor as India, where thriving on the creative use of others' discarded materials is a way of life and survival, the cost of even one human life is too high for such negligence.

U.S. H-Bombs in Europe: Liberal Apologists Slowing Removal

In the last *Quarterly*, we reported that five NATO members, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Norway, formally asked for the removal of the 200 or so U.S. warheads "on European soil belonging to other NATO member states." Poland added itself to the call in April.

This first-ever government-to-government rejection of the nuclear option from within NATO came about partly because of the overwhelming European majority that has demanded that the U.S. weapons be withdrawn. NATO ministers are also conscious of a December 2008 Pentagon report that said a month would be needed to prepare the nuclear bombs for detonation — making a laughing stock out of the claim that they deter anything.

According to *Business Week*, the Pentagon report quoted one unnamed U.S. general as saying that the 200 U.S. H-bombs (deployed in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Turkey and The Netherlands), are useless "because the [U.S.] role of deterring a nuclear attack on its allies can be performed with weapons outside Europe."

Rightwing talking heads and weapons profiteers can be expected to shout that the nuclear abolition movement is "naïve and dangerous," and that what they still call "deterrence" is working in some sense. For 60 years, H-bomb enthusiasts have said exactly the same thing.

These days, the great obstacles to disarmament are liberals like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and one of her predecessors, Madeleine Albright, who defend the Bomb and speak of "deterrence" — even in the face of authoritative rebuttals by such rightwing authorities as former Strategic Air Command Chief Gen. George Butler, former National

U.S. Posturing with Nuclear War Threats

By John LaForge

The key sentence from President Obama's April 6, Nuclear Posture Review — an occasional sort of nuclear war manual — is: "The U.S. will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT] and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations."

However, Obama declared an exception for countries found to be in violation of the NPT.

While causing a stir in rightwing and militarist circles, there is a lot less in the statement than meets the eye.

The major disappointment in Obama's feint is the president's refusal to renounce any and all "first use" of nuclear weapons, which itself would still allow nuclear retaliation. By rejecting a "no first use" pledge, Obama's plan still allows for war plans in which conventional war would go nuclear under U.S. orders.

Peter Feaver, a former National Security Council staffer, notes in an April opinion piece that the U.S. "still threatens to use nuclear weapons against nuclear states that are party to the NPT — read: Russia and China — if they hit us with a nuclear weapon or with a chemical, biological or cyber-attack."

Second, Feaver notes, Obama's declaration retains the U.S. threat to "use nuclear weapons against 'non-state actors' — think Al Qaeda — who seek weapons of mass destruction. Since non-state actors reside within actual

Uranium Weapons Update

Alliant Tech Resisters Lauded by Judge

Four uranium weapons critics charged with trespassing at Alliant TechSystems (ATK) in Eden Prairie, Minnesota last Oct. 2, 2009 (Gandhi's birthday), were put on trial April 23.

The four (pictured below, l to r, Roger Cuthbertson, Geri Eikaas, Steve Clemens and Sr. Kate McDonald) defended their action as a legitimate act of international crime prevention allowed under state statute, a defense that has won jury acquittals in at least four other cases. At issue is ATK's culpability, the nation's No. 1 uranium weapons builder, in making munitions that have been condemned worldwide for their indiscriminate, poisonous and uncontrollable effects.

In his closing remarks, Hennepin County District Court Judge Peter Cahill suspended a decision on guilt or innocence pending dismissal of the charge. Judge Cahill said in part, "... following International Law or the Constitution as the supreme law of the land — which recognizes Treaty power — you may be right. [It may] violate international laws to make such munitions." For more details see <www.alliantaction.org>



Photo by Tom Bottolene

nations, this means that our [nuclear weapons] might hit the territory of those states offering a safe haven, regardless of their status under the nonproliferation treaty."

"Third," Feaver reported, "the new doctrine clearly implies that the U.S. reserves the right to threaten to use nuclear weapons against states that are not party to the non-proliferation treaty. And ... [against] states that are in violation of the treaty, a list that includes Iran, North Korea and Syria. [Feaver neglected Israel, which also refuses to join the NPT.]

"Crucially," according to Feaver, "since the new policy does not delineate what it means for states to be 'in compliance' with the NPT, the U.S. has a major loophole." And Eric Lipps, in a letter to the *Times*, points out that it's huge. "... hedging with what he calls 'outliers' like Iran and North Korea ... the president will retain the right to use nuclear weapons when, in his opinion, it's necessary — which is pretty much the standard that has prevailed since 1945."

As Pentagon boss Robert Gates said April 17, "If you're not going to play by the rules ... then all options are on the table in terms of how we deal with you."

Disarmament Rhetoric vs. Budget Reality

A year ago President Obama spoke in Prague of "a world without nuclear weapons." As recently as April 6, he said his policy was a part of "making nuclear weapons obsolete." The president's Nuclear Posture Review, unveiled the same day, was described as "renouncing the development of any new nuclear weapons."

Contrary to the speechifying, and photo op's, budget numbers indicate some lying in high places. Obama's 2011 budget for the National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees bomb building, increases 14 percent over 2010. According to research by Dr. Robert Civiak, a former funding examiner for the Energy Department at the White House Office of Management and Budget, "The total includes large increases for research and development in nuclear weapons science and technology and to build new infrastructure for the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium parts for nuclear weapons."

Budget plans for new production facilities include \$4.5 billion for a "Chemical and Metallurgy Research Replacement Project" at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico; \$3.5 billion for a proposed "Uranium Processing Facility" at Y-12 in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and a billion or so dollars for a new "Kansas City Plant" to replace the severely compromised system of the same name in Missouri.

On May 14, the president outlined \$80 billion to be spent over the next 10 years to "modernize" the stockpile of nuclear warheads. One headline read: "Obama Expands Plan to Modernize U.S. Nuclear Arsenal." The term is a controversial one which avoids the word "new" in order to claim U.S. compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In contrast with Obama's plans was a suggestion by nuclear weapons enthusiasts Gary Schaub from the Air War College and James Forsyth of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. The two said in a recent opinion piece that the current U.S. nuclear arsenal of 5,113 H-bombs has "4,802 more than we need." They say 311 warheads — with a total of 1900 megatons of explosive power — is all the U.S. could possibly use in a nuclear war.

Security Advisor Paul Nitze and the alleged war criminal Henry Kissinger, who have all become cautionary advocates of the elimination of the arsenal.

On April 22, Secretary Clinton told foreign ministers at a NATO meeting in Tallinn, Estonia that U.S. nuclear weapons should stay. As the 28-nation alliance discussed nuclear weapons for the first time, Clinton said, "... as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance."

Likewise, former Sec. of State Madeleine Albright, was recently put at the head of a team of experts that has published a proposal called "NATO 2020." In it, the Clinton-era military hawk echoes the views of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who said April 22, "I do believe the presence of American nuclear weapons in Europe is an essential part of a credible deterrent." Albright's report, released on May 17, is something of a reply to the dissident NATO members and a rejection of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former senator Sam Nunn all of whom have urged the elimination of so-called "short-range," "tactical" or "battlefield" nuclear weapons of the sort deployed at European bases. "NATO 2020" openly suggests that the U.S. H-bombs remain deployed there "at the minimum level required by the prevailing security environment." Most Europeans now believe that minimum level amounts to zero.

Yet, while Democratic liberals appear out of step, the prevailing security environment is skeptical of nuclear weapons.

Consider the former nuclear hawks who have endorsed abolition. Four former senior Belgian officials, including a retired NATO Sec. Gen. wrote last winter, "U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe have lost all military importance." These retirees come late to the view of Gen. Butler (USAF, Ret.), who as SAC commander controlled the entire U.S. arsenal, and who has said since retiring, "Nuclear weapons are not weapons at all. They are insanely destructive agents of physical and genetic terror. ... They're some species of biological time bombs whose effects transcend time and space, poisoning the earth and its inhabitants for generations to come."

Kissinger, who once advocated the idea of "winnable" nuclear war, wrote in a recent *Newsweek*, "Any use of nuclear weapons is certain to involve a level of casualties and devastation out of proportion to foreseeable foreign-policy objectives. Efforts to develop a more nuanced application have never succeeded. ..."

Paul Nitze, an extremist founder of the anti-Communist Committee on the Present Danger, wrote 11 years ago, "I see no compelling reason why we should not unilaterally get rid of our nuclear weapons. To maintain them ... adds nothing to our security. I can think of no circumstances under which it would be wise for the United States to use nuclear weapons, even in retaliation for their prior use against us. ..."

To holdout against voices of reason coming from all quarters, Clinton and Albright and the Old School will have to work harder than ever. The NATO summit meeting set for Lisbon in November is certain to attract massive anti-nuclear demonstrations.

—JL