

NUCLEAR SHORTS

Vietnam Scraps Plan for Power Reactors

Vietnam's National Assembly voted Nov. 22 to cancel plans to build the country's first nuclear power reactors. Officials cited lower electric demand forecasts, rising reactor costs, and safety concerns.

The Japanese and Russian reactors were to have been built on the coast of Ninh Thuan province, but after weighing reactor risks in the wake of the catastrophic accident at Fukushima, Vietnam moved the planned construction site slightly inland to avoid the threat of future tsunamis. The operational start for the reactors, initially set for 2014, had been postponed to 2028.

Russia's state-run Rosatom Corp. and a consortium of Japanese companies led by the private utility Japan Atomic Power had planned to build the two reactors. The estimated cost had doubled since 2009—when the government first approved the plans—to nearly \$18 billion.

Vietnam's decision to stay free of construction cost increases, reactor disaster risks, and additional waste management expenses, echoes that of other countries from Germany to Indonesia that have decided to either phase out of nuclear or cancel construction plans.

—Reuters, Nov. 22; *Japan News*, Nov. 10, 2016

Visit “Postapocalyptic” Chernoyl for “\$5,495 and Up”

A hair-raising ad in the Travel section of the Nov. 20 *New York Times* features the claim that “nature has managed an impressive comeback” in the Chernobyl exclusion zone. This debunked story might fool vacationers eyeing the so-called Science & Nature tour—with prices starting at \$5,495—called “Chernobyl, 30 Year Later.”

For 8 days beginning May 27, 2017, up to 25 people are invited to “explore the postapocalyptic Chernobyl zone ... with a *New York Times* expert and a range of specialists.” No large-print in the ad uses the word “radiation,” which explains only that, “In 1986, the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, USSR, experienced a cataclysmic disaster, a cautionary tale of science gone awry.” A list of tour spots designed to excite the adventurous traveller notes these high points:



Pripyat Hotel (above), in the radioactive exclusion zone around the devastated Chernobyl reactor site in Ukraine, is a tourist destination.

- Explore the restricted Chernobyl exclusion zone, staying overnight in the Pripyat Hotel, the only one in the town of Chernobyl.
- See the sarcophagus surrounding the reactor, and the new safe confinement structure currently under construction.
- Learn what became of the many plants and animals in the Chernobyl area following the disaster, and how nature has managed an impressive comeback.
- Visit Slavutych, home

of the Center for Radioecology, which coordinates environmental research in the exclusion zone to study the long-term biological and ecological effects.”

A packing list was not included, but make sure to bring along disposable booties, water filter and replacement lungs.

Air Force Pushes New Land-Based Missile

Even after two former secretaries of defense and a former vice chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have called for the elimination of land-based ballistic missiles, the Department of the Air Force this past summer invited industry proposals for building an entirely new arsenal of the long-range nuclear-armed missiles.

Retired Pentagon chiefs Chuck Hagel and William Perry have both signed official reports declaring that the current system of 450 Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are too redundant, dangerous and destabilizing to retain. Retired Gen. James Cartwright, once the second highest ranking military officer in the United States, has also called for permanent retirement of land-based missiles, and Mr. Perry has said cancelling its replacement would save up to \$100 billion.

Gen. Robin Rand of Global Strike Command said in a press release that the Minuteman system will have “a difficult time surviving” future air defenses. However, plans for the follow-on replacement may not survive budget constraints, as even Senator John McCain, R-Ariz., has questioned the usefulness and high cost of keeping all three nuclear weapons systems: missiles, submarines and heavy bombers. —AP, July 29; & IRIA News, July 30, 2016

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“Nuketown,” a game designed for kids, boasts that it “demonstrates the effects of an atomic weapon on a residential neighborhood.”

Atomic Weapons, Snipers & Assault Rifles: “Ideal for Ages 12 and Up”

War toys aren't just wooden guns any more. One recent game ad gushes: “Nuketown was a nuclear testing site in the 1950's and demonstrates the effects of an atomic weapon on a residential neighborhood. A clocktower stands at the corner of Trinity Avenue and Latchkey Road, showing the countdown to detonation. The streets are blocked off with barbed wire barricades making it difficult to reach the fully buildable two-story green house. Two super-poseable micro action figures are armed and ready to survey the debris. Send the soldiers into the house to take sniper shots through shattered windows, duck behind eerie mannequins and flee using the fire escape. Ideal for ages 12 and up.”

The game features: “Buildable Nuketown with 1950s style house with white picket fence, a clock tower, street sign and barbed wire barricade; Two highly detailed and super-poseable micro action figures with detachable accessories; Two micro mannequins; Full-assembly sniper and assault rifles with high-powered scopes.” Like the actual nuclear weapons arsenal which also lacks a purpose, the box urges players to “build the mission!”

—“Mega Bloks Call Of Duty Nuketown Toys & Games”

No More Bailouts of Aging Nuclear Reactors

In August, the state of New York approved a \$7.6 billion bailout of the nuclear giants Exelon, Entergy and the French firm Electricite de France to keep the state's old reactors—Nine Mile Point I & II; Ginna; and FitzPatrick—on life support. If the electricity market was a free one, nuclear power would have folded long ago, but is being propped up by public-funded bailouts nationwide. A 10-year, \$2.34 billion rate bailout for Exelon became law in Illinois Dec. 7, and industry lobbyists are pushing bailout proposals in Connecticut, Ohio, and elsewhere. Some of the lobbyists represent actual nuclear reactor firms, and others are from “astroturf” organizations that pretend to be grass-roots, public interest groups, but are actually industry-funded propaganda outlets slyly promoting “safe, clean nuclear.”

Prior to approving the subsidy in New York, Exelon alone spent \$430,000 lobbying in the state, a small investment considering the \$7.6 billion return. A draft report of Department of Energy recommendations puts future national taxpayer funding of nuclear power at about the same level, per megawatt hour, as the New York deal. A Nuclear Information Resource Service (NIRS) report projects that the cost of New York-style subsidies, if applied nationwide, would be about \$280 billion by 2030.

The New York bailout is already being challenged through a lawsuit by Hudson River Sloop Clearwater and Goshen Green Farms, LLC. The suit argues that insufficient time was given for public comment on the taxpayer-funded subsidy and that “false or misleading statements” characterized nuclear reactors as “zero emissions,” systems that release no greenhouse gases.

NIRS is proactively opposing these bailouts through citizen lobbying before states cave in to the nuclear industry. You can send a letter to the president-elect and to every governor at nirs.org. Click on Alert Archive under the Action Center tab, and find “Stop the \$100 Billion Nuclear Bailout.” —Greenworld, Oct. 14; & Politico, July 13; Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Nov. 30, 2016

Citizen's Groups to Canadian Regulators: Protect the Public, not the Industry

Alarm bells have been rung about current members of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) and their connections to the nuclear industry. In May, whistleblowers, most likely from within the CNSC, described grave reactor risk issues in a letter documenting violations such as underestimated seismic hazards. No independent investigation has yet been required to evaluate the claims made by whistleblowers. An audit released in October by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development concluded, “The CNSC could not show that it had

adequately managed its site inspections of nuclear power plants. ...could not demonstrate that its inspection plans included the appropriate number and types of inspections, and that it had the staff needed to verify that nuclear power plants were complying with all applicable requirements, or that site inspections were carried out according to the CNSC's procedures.” Canadian Green Party leader Elizabeth May said about the allegations, “People tend to sit upright when you tell them about a nuclear reactor that is not getting properly inspected.”

CNSC's president Michael Binder has personally been accused of conflicts of interest. Like the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Department of Energy in the US, the CNSC appears to have been captured by the industry which it routinely promotes and protects. In the article “Liquid Nuclear Waste Convoys a Threat to the Waters of the Great Lakes,” Janet McNeill of Durham Nuclear Awareness refers to the CNSC as the “all-too-compliant regulator.” (See page 1.) Bruce Peninsula Environment Group, several Members of Parliament, and 30 other organizations sent an October 11 letter to Minister of Natural Resources Jim Carr, asking that senior CNSC officials including Binder be removed. —*Toronto Globe and Mail*, Oct. 12, 2016; Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Oct. 4, 2016

Palisades Reactor to Close in 2018

Entergy announced Dec. 8 that it will permanently shut down its Palisades atomic reactor on Lake Michigan by October 1, 2018, 13 years before its license expires. The long-troubled, 45-year-old single reactor joins a growing list of dangerous and expensive industry dinosaurs that can't compete.

The Palisades unit reportedly has the most embrittled reactor pressure vessel of any in the US, so nearly two more years of operation raises the frightening prospect of a catastrophic release of radioactivity due to a “pressurized thermal shock fracture” of the vessel.

The good news is that, after permanent shutdown and removal of irradiated nuclear fuel from the reactor core, a meltdown can no longer happen, and high-level radioactive waste will no longer be made. Of course area residents and environmental watchdogs will have to make sure that dismantlement of the facilities, cleanup of the area, and management of the high-level radioactive waste on-site are done with as little risk to the workers and the surrounding community as possible.

In addition, a just transition must be put in place for the 600 workers at Palisades, and for the host community. There is a tremendous radioactive mess at Palisades that needs to be cleaned up, and high-level radioactive waste that must be safeguarded and isolated from the environment for 1 million years. Entergy's workers and the public must be protected throughout, and the site's complete cleanup must include radioactively contaminated groundwater, soil, and Lake Michigan sediments.

Palisades' catastrophically vulnerable waste storage pool must be emptied, and the high-level waste transferred to Hardened On-Site Storage. Further, this storage pool must be maintained, albeit emptied of waste, even after decommissioning, so that in an emergency, if a dry cask has to be emptied, and its highly radioactive waste fuel transferred to a new dry cask, there is a place to do it. —*Beyond Nuclear*, Dec. 8; *Energy Business Review*, Dec. 9, 2016

Resources

* **Beyond Nuclear**, 6930 Carroll Av., #400, Takoma Park, MD 20912; (301) 270-2209, Email: info@beyond-nuclear.org; Web: beyondnuclear.org

* **Bruce Peninsula Environment Group**, P.O. Box 1072, Lion's Head, Ontario N0H 1W0 Canada; Email: bpeg10@gmail.com; Web: bpeg.ca

* **Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility**, 53 Dufferin Rd, Hampstead QC, H3X 2X8 Canada, (514) 489-5118; Email: ccnr@web.net; Web: ccnr.org

* **Durham Nuclear Awareness**, Email: info@durhamnuclearawareness.com; Web: durhamnuclearawareness.com

* **National Council of Women of Canada**, PO Box 67099, Ottawa, ON K2A 4E4 Canada; (902) 422-8485; Email: res@ncwcanada.com; Web: ncwcanada.com

* **No Dump Alliance South Australia**, Web: nodumpalliance.org.au

* **Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS)**, 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 340, Takoma Park, MD 20912; (301) 270-6477; Email: nirsnet@nirs.org; Web: nirs.org

* **SEED Coalition**, 605 Carismatic Lane, Austin, TX 78748; (512) 797-8481; Email: karen@seedcoalition.org; Web: seedcoalition.org