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Atomic fallout

War vet shares experiences during his service time

Robin Caudell reports 4/9/07: "Frank Bushey has a military wall in his Plattsburgh residence. On it hangs a black-and-white image of his father, Frank A. Bushey, circa 1920 and just back from France. The senior Bushey was attached to the 26th Infantry Division at the Plattsburgh Barracks. With the New York National Guard, he fought against Pancho Villa during the Mexican Insurgency and later in both world wars and the Korean War.

Nearby are photographs of the younger Frank's sons: Craig Bushey, a former U.S. Air Force captain (KC-135 navigator), and Lt. Col. David Bushey, who is deployed with the 25th Artillery Battalion "Wolfpack" in Afghanistan.

Between his father and sons are photographs of a fresh-faced Frank at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. There is also an image of the mushroom cloud of "Shot Badger," taken on April 18, 1953.

It was the sixth of 11 atmospheric nuclear-weapons tests at the Nevada Proving Ground, the Atomic Energy Commission's continental nuclear test site.

Badger was fired on a 300-foot steel tower in Area 2 of Yucca Flat. According to a Defense Nuclear Agency Report: "The primary objective of the event was to investigate the possibility of increasing the yield of a standard fission-type weapon by varying the composition of the device. Other important objectives included evaluating the blast, thermal and radiation phenomena produced by this nuclear detonation and conducting a simulated air and amphibious assault under nuclear battlefield conditions."

The report says Badger yielded only 23 kilotons of the expected 40 kilotons of energy. The blast "illuminated Las Vegas like daylight and was evident 500 kilometers to the southwest in Los Angeles."

Frank Bushey knows what happened within his bones. He was one of 2,167 that comprised the 2nd Marine Corps Provisional Atomic Exercise Brigade, there for tactical troop maneuvers.

'THE GROUND SHOOK'

With rifles, helmets and packs, the Marines entered 4-foot-deep, narrow trenches parallel to the bomb tower, about 3,600 meters away. Like the others, Frank assumed a right-knee kneeling position with his right shoulder pressed against the trench's forward wall during the quiet before countdown. About Badger's detonation, he writes. "The ground shook so bad, it threw us back and forth in the trenches. The sound of the blast was very, very loud. The 23-kiloton bomb had a lot of kick. I smelled something very acrid, and there was a crack that sounded somewhat like thunder, but much higher pitched.

"The whole valley went from total darkness to brighter than 100 suns ... come to life all at once. I was looking down and saw the rocks on the ground in the trenches right through my eyelids. I glanced over to my left and saw the (Marine) that was there, whole skeleton — one huge X-ray."

ALL THE COLORS

The blast's winds were hurricane force. Brush and mesquite burned. Birds fell from the sky. "We got the word to stand and look at the fireball. There were all the colors of the rainbow. It was beautiful and yet ugly in some ways (like angry). Our plan was to attack an imaginary enemy at Ground Zero. We were ordered out of the trenches and into a skirmish-line attack to Ground Zero. A battalion size operation with about 800 Marines. Shortly into the attack the wind starting coming up and into our faces as we advanced."

Frank's nose and throat were embedded with dust. Afterward, he was "hot" and "swept down" for radioactivity three times before deemed OK.

"The First Battalion 8th Marines were exposed to an unexpected and unanticipated amount of radiation dose caused by a wind shift," according to a Defense Nuclear Agency document.

HEALTH CONCERNS

Flash forward.

Sitting at the dining table, Frank recalled Badger as his wife, Martha Rose, mills about. "It was a scary moment for me," he said. "I didn't know if I was going to take my last breath on Earth or not. I knew it wasn't going to be a piece of cake when that thing went off."

Almost 54 years later, he says he is living with the fallout: radiation cataracts removed from both eyes, two triple bypasses, prostate and colon cancer, osteoarthritis and post-traumatic-stress syndrome.

Frank is a member of the **Radiated Veterans of America and the National Association of Atomic Veterans**. The latter group is "dedicated to assisting an estimated 1 million U. S. veterans, from all service branches, who were first-hand participants in atomic weapons test detonations, from July 16, 1945, to Nov. 23, 1992."

In March, the Veterans Advisory Board for Dose Reconstruction concluded: "Congress should consider passing a bill that would recognize America's Atomic Veterans as a 'special group' for VA claims and purposes, and that such bill also offer America's Atomic Veterans 'special relief' that would not require radiation-dose reconstructions when filing a claim for ionizing radiation-induced illnesses."

Frank was a tender 19 when he witnessed atomic energy unleashed. "This would destroy the planet in a very short time if we start to exchange nukes," he says now. "It follows with nuclear winter, and everyone dies."

Divine Strike Bites the Dust

Ed Kociela reports 2/24/07 in *The Spectrum*: "In the end, all it took was 10,000 voices in protest. That's 10,000 voices from mostly red-state Utah where residents were opposed to detonation of 700 tons of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil in an attempt to gather data for the design, manufacture and deployment of nuclear bunker buster weapons.

They called this travesty Divine Strake, one of those military code names that really makes no sense to anybody outside of The Pentagon. But, there was nothing divine about this test, planned to go off in some of the most highly radiated turf in the nation in the middle of the Nevada Test Site where, during the Cold War, the federal government exploded more than 1,000 nukes in pursuit of truth, justice and the American Way.

At one point, the U.S. had 32,193 of these babies locked and loaded, ready to go at the push of a button if the Great Red Menace got out of hand. Now, there are nearly 10,000, more than half of them tipped and ready to go.

But, this administration decided that wasn't enough and wanted to push for the bunker busters, soft-pedaling them as mini-nukes, as if that makes a difference. It caused the people of Utah, Nevada and Idaho to wage a nuclear jihad the moment the test was made public.

The original paperwork described it as the first course of a menu that would eventually lead to the new nukes. And, as anybody with half a mind can tell you, if you build a bomb, you must test it before you deploy it.

But now, at least for the time being, it is over, thanks to a cadre of residents who had the courage to stand up and say, "Not this time!" This was one of those truly rare bipartisan issues.

Staunch, old-line Republicans stood shoulder-to-shoulder with progressives and members of the Democratic Party's left-leaning activists and demanded an end to this test, which they feared would toss tiny little microns of atomically charged dust 10,000 feet into the sky, only to land God knows where.

They had been through this before when, during the Cold War, the government blew nasty nukes up in the desert and these people were hit with the fallout, causing many cancerous deaths and ailments. The feds told them they had nothing to fear, that the fallout was harmless.

Many are gone. Some of those children, severely maimed by the cancer that fell from the sky, are still around, however, and they led the charge. And after the announcement they shed tears of joy for those who will be spared and tears of sorrow for the innocent victims of the worst attack ever on the citizens of this country. It's over. At least for now."

EDI thanks Preston Truman for his ongoing research in identifying these articles and independent reports.

Nuke Workers' Woes Continue

Advocates Continue to Fight for Compensation for 'Cold War Heroes.'

Dennis Carroll reports in *The Hawk Eye* (4/30/07), "Advocates for former U.S. nuclear weapons workers, many of whom are in ill health and in their 80s, charge that the Bush administration's efforts to save money have hindered implementation of a compensation package for the workers, which could result in many of them dying before they can receive the \$150,000 payments and the cost of their medical expenses.

An estimated 500,000 to 600,000 Americans in such disparate communities as Middletown, Buffalo, N.Y., Paducah, Ky., and Golden, Colo., labored for decades under suffocating secrecy, handling the most hazardous of materials with often lax or nonexistent safety precautions as they assembled the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Praised as the unheralded heroes of the Cold War, many have lived a great part of their lives suffering from illnesses believed to be caused by the radioactive and other hazardous materials they handled. Many have died from their illnesses.

The workers, their families, and the public health and elected officials who have come to their aid, contend that a confusing and interminably slow process, intransigent bureaucrats and stonewalling policy makers have, in essence, conspired to deny the workers the compensation promised them in a federal program enacted in 2000.

Advocates find especially troublesome a White House Office of Management and Budget memo that was unearthed by a House Judiciary oversight subcommittee, which is investigating the compensation process. The memo suggested ways of limiting payments to contain the costs of the program.

Laurence Fuortes, an epidemiologist at the University of Iowa's College of Public Health, who has been assisting former workers in Iowa and other states with their compensation claims, said that "clearly the memo reflects a pattern of behavior" at the White House, the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services.

"The pattern of behavior has been to look at this (the compensation program) not so much as a responsibility to redress old wrongs but as something to be gotten around," Fuortes said.

The program is administered by the Department of Labor, which uses estimates of workers' likely exposure to radiation and certain other hazardous materials to determine whether workers qualify for compensation. The estimates, known as dose reconstructions, are performed by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health under the Department of Health and Human Services.

The White House Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health reviews the scientific validity of NIOSH's dose reconstructions, and also recommends whether workers at particular sites should be granted "special exposure cohort" status so they can be compensated without having to endure the dose reconstruction process.

U.S. senators and House members from across the country have heeded the calls for assistance from often elderly, confused and frustrated former nuclear weapons workers and their families who are battling an intransigent federal bureaucracy for what many of them see as meager and belated compensation for the lies they were told and the dangers they were subjected to as they assembled, tested and, in more recent years, dismantled nuclear weapons and their components.

"To get anything done, you have to have the detailed involvement of a United States senator's office," said one legislator's aide who asked not to be identified for fear of jeopardizing his role in helping the workers.

In New York, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton testified at a hearing of the White House radiation advisory board in June of 2006 on behalf of former weapons workers in western New York. "In the late '40s and early '50s the government contracted with Bethlehem Steel, which is in Buffalo, to roll uranium at their plant," Clinton said. "But the workers weren't told what they were working with. They weren't provided with safety equipment to shield them from radiation. They weren't monitored to determine how much radiation they were being exposed to."

Clinton described some of the conditions at the plant. "Uranium dust was thick in the air. They breathed it. They coated their hands with it," she said. "They would sit on areas in the plant to eat lunch and put their lunch down, and the uranium dust would be on their sandwiches. They ingested it. It covered their work clothes. So it's not surprising that many of them got cancer."

Clinton said the 2000 compensation legislation acknowledged "the wrong that the government had done, and promised timely compensation to workers and their survivors." "We have yet to realize the full promise of that legislation," she said.

New York Sen. Charles E. Schumer in December demanded a Labor Department investigation of the compensation program to determine whether the Department and the White House have conspired to limit payouts

Schumer cited recent reports from the General Accountability Office on flaws in the program, and a memo critical of the process prepared by Republican staff for Rep. John Hostettler, R-Ind., then-chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee that is investigating complaints about the program. (Hostettler was defeated in the November elections. Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., now heads the committee.)

In other states, Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., assembled a team of health and legal experts to assist former workers at several sites in Illinois; Colorado's Sen. Ken Salazar and Rep. Mark Udall have or plan to introduce legislation that would make it easier for Rocky Flats workers to qualify for compensation; and in Iowa, Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin and Republican Sen. Charles Grassley have intervened numerous times on behalf of former workers at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Middletown and the former Ames uranium processing lab. Both Iowa facilities were eventually granted the special cohort status.

The Labor Department has since disavowed the OMB memo, but congressional overseers, the workers and their advocates are skeptical, saying the process continues to be adversarial toward the workers.

Under the measure enacted in 2000, former nuclear weapons workers who were employed at designated Department of Energy sites or worked for DOE contractors could be eligible for \$150,000 and payment of medical expenses from the date a claim was filed.

Diseases covered include certain radiation-induced illness and chronic beryllium disease. Beryllium is a light-weight metal used in the construction of nuclear weapons. It was often machined, exposing workers to the beryllium dust, which can cause lung disease. Many of the tools used by weapons workers were made of beryllium, which does not easily cause sparks.

Other benefits are possible depending on where the employees worked and what hazardous materials they were exposed. Under the lengthy dose reconstruction administered by NIOSH, workers at scores of former DOE nuclear weapons sites around the country have been required to demonstrate what dangerous materials they were exposed to, the doses they received, and the amount of time they were exposed.

That has been one of the biggest stumbling blocks for the workers and their advocates because it puts the burden of proof on the workers, many whom are elderly, in ill health and with failing memories.

It was a frustrating, confusing experience for Lela Miller and her family. The 90-year-old is fighting lung disease and colon cancer in a nursing home in Donnellson. She worked at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Middletown for 31 years, beginning in 1951, when the Iowa plant was the only facility in the country assembling nuclear weapons.

"It's been a bitter experience, and I think at times it has been cruel," said her son, Steven Schmeiser, of the claims application process. "It was designed by the legislation to be a simple resolution of who worked where and what were the possible connections with beryllium disease and cancer." But the attitude of program administrators has been mean-spirited, and the workers generally have been treated as adversaries, he said.

Schmeiser also said his mother was required to resubmit the same medical and work records several times to the ever-relocating DOE and DOL processing centers around the country. As the process dragged on, the workers' frustrations multiplied, and many of them either died or got too old to continue the process, Schmeiser said.

Another problem for former workers has been that many of the facilities' operators were lax in monitoring worker exposure to radiation and other hazards. Often any exposure and worker health records that were kept were lost, otherwise were unavailable or were of questionable value.

The Department of Labor "wants claimants to produce a preponderance of evidence," said Terrie Barrie of the **Alliance of Nuclear Worker Advocacy Groups** in Craig, Colo. "We can't do it." Barrie's husband, George, worked at the Rocky Flats plant from 1982 to 1989, and suffers from chronic nephritis, which, she said, doctors believe was caused by radiation exposure. Terrie Barrie said that although her husband wore a dosimetry badge to measure radiation exposure, there are "large gaps in the record."

Other worker advocates have noted that at some facilities workers simply dumped their dosimetry badges into a bucket at the end of their work day with no way to identify the wearers of the badge.

Workers and their advocates also point to rejection of claims based on what they see as trivial issues and bureaucratic ineptitude. Fuortes of the University of Iowa cited a claim that was initially denied because the worker used the term "CT" scan instead of "CAT" scan. Fuortes said the terms are generally accepted references to the same medical diagnostic procedure.

He also cited claims that were wrongly denied because the claims processors disallowed certain diseases that, in fact, are included among the program's list of qualifying cancers.

Another worker was denied compensation, Fuortes said, because even though there was overwhelming evidence that the claimant worked at a qualifying Kansas City area facility, his wage check was issued by the operator's offices in another city. That decision, as well as the others Fuortes cited, were eventually reversed.

Rep. Hostettler, former chairman of the Judiciary claims oversight committee, sharply rebuked program administrators during a Nov. 15, 2006, hearing of his committee. "This program was supposed to ensure workers that the deceit was over and the Government was finally going to do right by them," Hostettler said. "Those tasked with implementing the program have failed that purpose miserably, and they need to be exposed for what they have done." Hostettler said program administrators had adopted a "hostile attitude" toward the workers and that the "babysitting of these individuals must continue."

Hostettler added: "Time is of the essence for fulfilling our promise to this quickly aging population of atomics weapons employees. Perhaps soon those who run this program will do the right thing and take care of these workers and their families competently and with an attitude of respect that is clearly not present at this time."

Dennis J. Carroll, a former reporter with The Hawk Eye, is a freelance writer based in Denver.

The Real "Masters of Space"

By Karl Grossman

As a graphic proclaiming "Red Storm" flashed on the screen, CNN anchor Lou Dobbs intoned: "Communist China tonight refusing to explain its motives for conducting its first-ever anti-satellite missile test. That test, the latest in a series of dangerous new challenges by the Chinese military to this country's interest."

The segment on *Lou Dobbs Tonight* (1/24/07) didn't mention anything about the U.S. military's space strategy of recent years. There's not a word about a key 1998 U.S. strategy document, the U.S. Space Command's *Vision for 2020*, which envisions space-based laser weapons zapping targets on Earth, and speaks of the U.S. military "dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment" and "integrating Space Forces into war-fighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict."

Nor was mention made of the 2001 Rumsfeld Commission report, which declared, "In the coming period, the U.S. will conduct operations to, from, in and through space to support its national interests both on the earth and in space." The Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization, chaired by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, also urged that the U.S. president "have the option to deploy weapons in space."

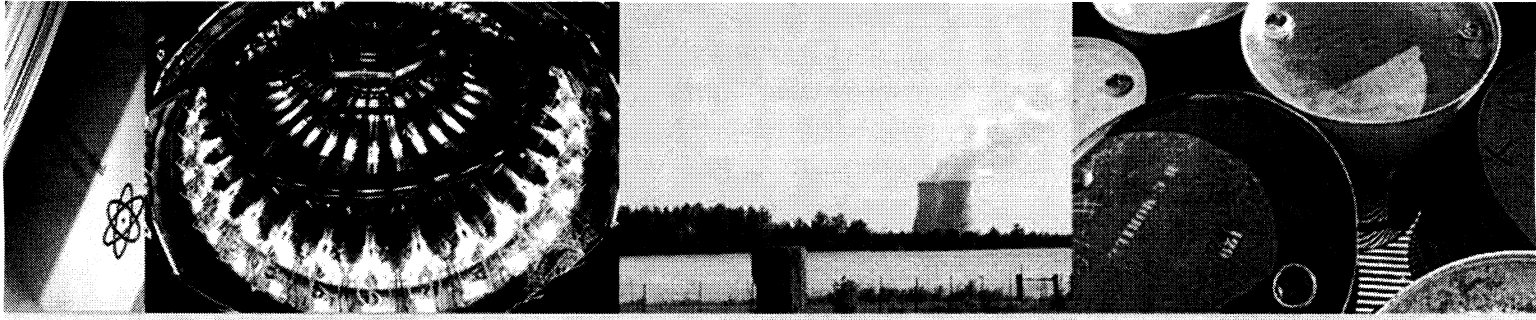
Also left out was a new U.S. National Space Policy adopted by the White House last year that took a still more aggressive U.S. position on space warfare, announcing that the U.S. will "develop and deploy space capabilities that sustain U.S. advantage."

Just as the continuing U.S. development of space military capabilities wasn't reported, nor were the repeated efforts led by China, Russia and U.S. ally Canada to have the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the basic international agreement setting aside space for peaceful uses, broadened to include a ban on the deployment, testing or use of weapons in space--or the U.S. opposing this initiative, all but alone at the U.N., in vote after vote.

Great detail need not be offered to provide context. For instance, the British journal *New Scientist* (1/27/07) simply noted: 'Despite protests from the Bush administration over China's action, analysts point out that the U.S. has consistently refused to discuss a new UN treaty on the peaceful uses of outer space. Instead, it will this year spend at least \$1 billion on anti-satellite weapons research.'

While China's ASAT test is troubling, it is also hypocritical of the U.S. to criticize them for doing something that our country has been doing since the 1980s. The Pentagon today is developing a host of ASAT weapons technologies that would give them the ability to knock out other countries' satellites. Sadly, the American people don't know anything about this because the corporate-dominated media refuse to cover the story. The move by the U.S. to turn the heavens into a war zone "has all the elements of a big story--money, power, domination, corruption," says Gagnon. "But the corporate-dominated media rarely go near it. The big money is keeping a lid on this story for a reason."

Karl Grossman, professor of journalism at SUNY College at Old Westbury, is author of Weapons in Space (Seven Stories Press) and The Wrong Stuff (Common Courage Press) and host of the TV documentaries Star Wars Returns. Also see: www.space4peace.org.



Global Nuclear Energy Partnership:
A COSTLY RADIOACTIVE WASTE SHELL GAME

A summary of
“Radioactive Wastes and the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership”

by Robert Alvarez,
Institute for Policy Studies
in collaboration with Friends of the Earth
and the Government Accountability Project

The Department of Energy (DOE) is now heralding the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) as the fulfillment of the government’s decades-long effort to diminish the environmental footprint of nuclear byproducts so they no longer pose a public health threat. This review has found, however, that the program is likely to squander billions in taxpayer dollars on an unproven reprocessing technology that will generate unprecedented and unmanageable amounts of highly radioactive wastes without plausible disposition paths.

To reduce the amount of radioactive wastes slated for a deep geological repository, the DOE is seeking to store the vast majority of radioactive byproducts in shallow burial. Far from containing toxins, however, this proposal would pose threats to nearby water supplies. The site selected for the GNEP reprocessing facility would become a de-facto waste dump, creating unprecedented public health and security threats.

- ⊙ The amount of long-lived radioactivity disposed of into the environment at a reprocessing site could be thousands of times greater than from nuclear weapons production. Much smaller concentrations of similar wastes at the DOE’s Savannah River Site have been characterized by the National Academy of Sciences as representing “a long term safety concern.”
- ⊙ More than four thousand shipments of spent nuclear reactor fuel will be transported on rails and highways through cities and farmlands to the reprocessing site, posing unprecedented emergency response and security challenges.
- ⊙ DOE plans to separate cesium and strontium for storage and disposal, after 300 years, in shallow land burial at the reprocessing site. This would result in the largest, lethal source of high-heat radioactivity in the United States and possibly the world. If placed in a crowded area, a few grams of radioactive cesium would deliver lethal doses in a matter of seconds. Concentrations of strontium and cesium could be so large that if they were disposed of in shallow land burial as low-level wastes, shortly after separation they would have to be diluted to a volume as large as 500 million cubic meters, enough to fill 500 Empire State Buildings.

Despite DOE's claims that recycling of reactor spent fuel will solve the nuclear waste disposal problem, a small fraction is likely to be recycled.

- ⊙ Even though uranium constitutes more than 95 percent of the materials in spent nuclear fuel by weight, it will require costly treatment for reuse in reactors – estimated in the billions of dollars. As a result, DOE's plans include the landfill disposal of tens of thousands of tons of recovered uranium.
- ⊙ Due to cost and safety concerns, less than one-third of global plutonium stocks separated by other nations has been used as fuel in power reactors. The remaining unused plutonium is enough to fuel more than 30,000 nuclear weapons.

Reprocessing nuclear spent fuel requires the separation of nuclear explosive materials, increasing proliferation dangers.

- ⊙ DOE claims that a new reprocessing technology under development would generate "proliferation resistant" materials. However, all transuranic materials that would be separated under GNEP could be used in a nuclear explosive.
- ⊙ The amount of plutonium contained in separated transuranic materials proposed under GNEP could be as much as 638 metric tons – more than two and a half times the amount in world-wide nuclear arsenals.

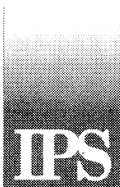
The DOE's record with high-level wastes does not inspire confidence and should serve as a warning.

- ⊙ After 25 years and an estimated liability of more than \$100 billion, the DOE has treated less than one percent of the radioactivity from past reprocessing for geological disposal.
- ⊙ The GNEP plan rests on unproven and untested technology to chemically reprocess spent fuel from power reactors in the United States and possibly other nations.

The projected costs for the GNEP program combined with technical uncertainty place undue economic strain on the federal government and taxpayers.

- ⊙ Full federal financing, in the tens of billions of dollars, followed by debt forgiveness are essential to establishing GNEP.
- ⊙ The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) advised the DOE in 1996 that capital and operating costs for a reprocessing plant could range from \$30 to \$150 billion. The NAS panel also concluded that if major elements of the GNEP program were fully funded it would cost \$500 billion and take 150 years.
- ⊙ Analysis done for the DOE in 2006 indicates that reprocessing, waste management and transmutation costs would add as much as 33 percent to the price of nuclear generated electricity.

DOE lacks a credible plan for management and disposal of radioactive wastes stemming from the GNEP program, particularly regarding waste volumes, site specific impacts, regulatory requirements and life-cycle costs. Given DOE's long record of ignoring waste disposal problems before they were created, the U.S. Congress should suspend funds to deploy the GNEP program.



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