Gov't Doctor Resigns, Charges Sick Worker Program Flawed

Dr. Eugene Schwartz, the former medical director of the government’s compensation program for nuclear weapons workers, resigned his position recently, claiming he was forced out for revealing flaws in the program.

In April, Dr. Schwartz provided information to the Department of Labor and the Government Accountability Office, the congressional watchdog, exposing major flaws in the government’s Site Exposure Matrix (SEM), a repository on toxic substances present at sites in the nuclear weapons complex. The SEM is used to determine a claimant’s eligibility for compensation.

Dr. Schwartz confirmed what many claimants already suspected: the SEM includes an incomplete list of diseases and inconsistent, incomplete, or missing linkages between exposure to toxic substances and disease. As a result, many individuals are having their claims improperly denied.

The problems that Dr. Schwartz identified have impacted claimants from Livermore and Sandia labs. In several cases, claimants have been denied compensation because the government claims there is no evidence linking their exposure at the labs to their conditions. However, many of these claimants have found peer-reviewed studies to support their claims. These are exactly the same studies that should already be included in the SEM, but unfortunately many are not.

The system forces claimants to become medical researchers, conducting time-consuming and expensive research to prove their claims. The SEM is supposed to fill this role, but its deficiencies mean that claimants are faced with the choice of giving up on their claims or taking this work on themselves.

Another major issue that Dr. Schwartz found with the SEM is that it does not consider combinations of exposure. As a result, many claimants who were exposed to various combinations of toxic and radioactive substances are having their claims denied. Again, there are multiple studies showing links between disease and combinations of exposure, but these are not included in the SEM either.

In a sign that little has changed at the Department of Labor under the Obama administration, Dr. Schwartz, a Harvard-trained doctor with a master’s degree in nuclear engineering, claims that he was forced to resign for revealing these flaws.

Continued on page 2

Nuclear Materials at Livermore

The government has removed 2/3 of the plutonium and highly enriched uranium (HEU) from Livermore Lab, according to a recent Dept. of Energy press release. Tom D’Agostino, head of the National Nuclear Security Administration, called it “real progress.” We give it a more mixed review.

For starters, the DOE does not plan to complete the removal of these bomb-making materials from Livermore Lab until the end of 2012, three years from now.

We have called for their removal by 2010. Livermore Lab is vulnerable every day to a catastrophic release of these materials in the event of an earthquake or terrorist attack. The nearest fault zone lies less than 200 feet from the Lab.

As we have reported in previous newsletters, the Lab failed its terrorism drills last year. In one test, the mock terrorists stole plutonium and HEU. In another, the mock attackers succeeded in staging a “radiological sabotage event.” The DOE press release failed to disclose the urgency of the situation at Livermore Lab.

We have been clear, too, that the plutonium and HEU should be removed from Livermore Lab to a safer storage location solely for security purposes, meaning that these materials should never again be used in bomb R & D.

Some of the locations to which DOE is moving the material do not meet our criteria. For example, we object to Livermore plutonium going into bomb experiments at Los Alamos. And, we will continue to work to ensure that the plutonium going to the Savannah River Site is not used in mixed oxide fuel (MOX) for nuclear reactors.

Finally, the DOE press release mistakenly gave the impression that all of the plutonium and HEU will be removed from the Lab. Instead, DOE plans to keep smaller, but still deadly, amounts of these radioactive materials on-site. One reason is for their use in the National Ignition Facility.

Tri-Valley CAREs will continue to press for removal of all plutonium and HEU by 2010, and to ensure it is safely stored rather than used in bombs or reactors. Stay tuned.
Youth & Mentors Think Outside the Bomb

This past August, activists, educators, students, organizers, and community members gathered in New Mexico to take part in the fifth-annual, national Think Outside the Bomb (TOTB) conference.

The four-day conference featured panel presentations, workshops, lectures, art, and music by some of the preeminent voices for nuclear abolition. This 2009 TOTB gathering had a special focus on the interrelated issues of indigenous rights and the role of uranium in the production of nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

The conference commenced with an address by scholar and indigenous rights’ activist, Ward Churchill. Churchill analyzed uranium mining in the southwestern United States, mobilizing historical details to argue for indigenous self-determination and against ongoing practices of settler-colonialism.

Each day was organized into amazing panel discussions and break-out groups, as well as meals and evening events. On the second day of TOTB, conference participants were able to enjoy poets (Priest and 337) from Kansas City, Missouri, and Bad Heart Bull and Brando of Chicago.

The third day of the conference featured a field-trip to Jackpile, a gaping, open-pit uranium mine, and Laguna Pueblo, where TOTB participants were able to meet with and ask questions of Pueblo Village trustee, June Lorenzo.

The conference concluded with a camping trip in the forest neighboring the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Los Alamos is the site where the world’s first nuclear bombs were created in the 1940s.

The concluding ceremony was presided over by Gilbert Sanchez, former San Ildefonso Pueblo Governor, who shared stories of his life working to promote environmental and social responsibility on the land of his people. He reminded participants to go through life with careful steps and invited everyone to return to his community and to continue the struggle for nuclear abolition.

Laura Zelko, a TOTB participant who is a second-year UC Berkeley student and chair of her school’s Department of Energy Laboratory Oversight Committee (DOELOC), said, “There were such a variety of tactics discussed. It inspired me to work in my own community.”

Tri-Valley CAREs’ staff, members and alum played a number of roles in the conference. Janine Carmona helped organize it and booked many of the speakers, Adrian Drummond-Cole represented us as a participant, and our former Outreach Intern, Chelsea Collonge, was integral to providing food for participants and logistical support in Albuquerque.

Over sixty youth participants attended this year’s conference from around the United States and Canada. From California, two Monterey High School students attended, as did a large student contingent representing several UC campuses. TOTB is a national network of youth organizers and youth allies working together to educate and empower the next generation to work toward a world free of nuclear weapons. For more info about TOTB, go to www.thinkoutsideethebomb.org.
Alerts 4 U

Wednesday, October 14

Petition President Obama
11:30 AM, signature gathering
Dollar Tree in Livermore
(925) 443-7148 for details

Tri-Valley CARES is gathering signatures on a petition to President Obama supporting his declaration committing us as a nation to global nuclear disarmament, and highlighting that this important goal is achievable in our lifetimes. Board member Beverly King is heading up our local signature drive. Call the office at (925) 443-7148 for a complete list of dates and times you can join Bev at area stores and the Farmers’ Market.

We have also provided a copy in this newsletter to circulate among your friends and family. We are joined in this campaign by scores of organizations around the country. Together, we aim to gather enough signatures to show Obama that the abolition of nuclear weapons is the will of the people.

Thursday, October 15

Senate Action: Don’t Nuke the Climate!
National Call-in Day - all day
(202) 224-3121 Capitol Switchboard

As we go to press, CA Senator Barbara Boxer and MA Senator John Kerry have just introduced their long-anticipated climate bill, titled the “Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act.” The bill does not yet have a number; however, you can refer to it by title when you make your calls. The bill already contains a controversial nuclear power section, yet Republicans are going on record saying that they want billions more in nuclear subsidies. Senators John McCain and Lamar Alexander have been particularly vocal. Yet, they are unlikely to vote for the Boxer-Kerry bill no matter how much nuclear pork it ultimately contains (sound familiar?).

Your mission? First, call our CA Senator Barbara Boxer, the bill’s principal author, with the message to “cut, not lend up” nuclear subsidies in the climate bill. Then, call CA Senator Dianne Feinstein and get on record with a similar message. Tri-Valley CARES is joining its friends at NIRS for this action. Call our office and speak to Marylia Kelley about other activities Tri-Valley CARES is planning in order to ensure that global warming does not become an excuse for big business to “nuke the planet in order to save it.”

Thursday, October 15

Tri-Valley CARES meets
7:30 PM - 9 PM, Livermore Library
1188 So. Livermore Ave.
(925) 443-7148 for details

Come and meet our new staff member, attorney Scott Yundt, who will help facilitate this month’s meeting. Agenda items will include what’s new with nuclear weapons, Livermore Lab, nuclear waste, national initiatives like the Nuclear Posture Review — and more. Your participation now will help safeguard communities from pollution and change our national policies. Join us and be part of the solution!

At a Bonnie Raitt - Taj Mahal concert
(L to R) Elena Dorabji, Marylia Kelley, Mary Pernar & Bev King. TVC tabled at 4 concerts — Power to the Peaceful, Crosby, Stills & Nash, and 2 “BonTaj”. Thanks go out to all of our volunteers. Many thanks, too, to our friends at Guacamole Fund and to the artists who so generously invited us.

Remembrance

Tri-Valley CARES has had a busy summer, with numerous speaking engagements, meetings with elected officials, youth events, hosting activists from near and far, strategic planning and much, much more.

Still, one of our most important actions this summer, and every summer, is co-sponsoring the Hiroshima commemoration at the gates of Livermore Lab.

More than a hundred activists gathered at the northwest corner of Livermore Lab early in the morning on August 6, in solemn remembrance of the 64th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, the U.S. would let loose a second nuclear bomb, this time over Nagasaki.

We came to Livermore Lab, where today’s nuclear weapons stockpile is being “modernized,” to demand an end to nuclear weapons and war.

Participants listened to music, heard from long-time activists Marylia Kelley of Tri-Valley CARES and Andrew Lichterman of Western States Legal Foundation and then formed a procession to the gates of the Lab.

The theme for this year’s demonstration was “WMD: We Must Disarm.” Many carried the message to Lab employees and passersby on Vasco Road with signs and banners. Twenty-two were arrested for peaceably standing, kneeling or sitting in the Lab’s west gate.

The event was co-sponsored by American Friends Service Committee, Ecumenical Peace Institute, Livermore Conversion Project, Peace Action West, Tri-Valley CARES, Western States Legal Foundation and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.
As we put the finishing touches on our newsletter, President Barack Obama’s two addresses at the United Nations promoting disarmament ring in the air (see insert). Then, the House and Senate Committee on Appropriations released its 394 page final Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 nuclear weapons budget.

The budget and the President’s words truly come from different planets. We who aspire to a world without nuclear weapons have work to do. Let us roll up our shirt sleeves and begin.

One of the nuclear weapons issues Tri-Valley CAREs has been tracking is the Dept. of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) plan to design a new modification of the B61 gravity dropped nuclear bomb. Called the B61-12, this proposed tactical bomb would, at a minimum, include a “mix and match” of features from 4 existing models of the B61. Its purpose? To defend our allies in Europe. In nuclear posture terminology, this is called “extended deterrence.”

Never mind that many people in Europe would like the U.S. to remove its nuclear weapons from their soil. Never mind that many in the U.S. point to the new Nuclear Posture Review that Obama is undertaking as a golden opportunity to reject the entire notion of “extended deterrence.” Never mind that the U.S. should be trying to negotiate the dismantlement of all tactical nuclear weapons with Russia (which has lots of them) rather than designing new and improved versions for our future stockpile.

Instead of looking at the big picture, many in Congress are nearsightedly focused on keeping nuclear weapons designers busy at their deadly pursuits.

The conference committee provided $6.4 billion for NNSA nuclear weapons activities in FY2010. Of that, nearly $92 million is allocated for the B61. And, of that, $32.5 million will fund a “Phase 2/2A study” for the B61-12.

There are little shards of good news. The $32.5 million in the final bill is half of the $65 million for the B61-12 in the NNSA request and the Senate “mark”. The House had sought to zero it out, and the $32.5 million is the compromise.

Further, the final bill limits the scope of work on the B61-12 in FY2010 to modification of the non-nuclear portions of the bomb. The bill also mandates two studies, one by the National Academy of Sciences on the national security value of the B61-12 and one by the JASONs on its technical merits as a 21st Century weapon. It remains to be seen whether these studies criticize the bomb or merely rationalize it.

What can we do? The answer is plenty. Our Senator Dianne Feinstein sits on the Senate Energy & Water Appropriations subcommittee, one of four committees involved in nuclear weapons funding. Call her local (415/393-0707) or DC office (202/225-6161) and speak with a defense aide. Let Senator Feinstein know that you oppose further development of nuclear weapons, including the B61-12. Ask that future funds be cut to zero. Additionally, request that the two studies being done on the B61-12 include unclassified versions so that the public can see the findings.

You can also stay active and informed on nuclear issues. It may seem like a “drop” in the bucket, but many drops create a mighty ocean. And, it will take all of our efforts to turn our country around so that we are facing toward a future without nuclear weapons rather than paying lip service to nuclear disarmament as we head in the opposite direction.

Note: We at Tri-Valley CAREs are still analyzing the 395-page budget that was just released. Check www.trivalleycares.org frequently for updates and new information in the coming days and weeks.
Obama Elevates Nuclear Disarmament at the UN

“Now, we harbor no illusions about the difficulty of bringing about a world without nuclear weapons. We know there are plenty of cynics, and that there will be setbacks to prove their point. But there will also be days like today that push us forward — days that tell a different story. It is the story of a world that understands that no difference or division is worth destroying all that we have built and all that we love..." — President Barack Obama addressing the UN Security Council, September 24, 2009

To begin, on September 23, U.S. President Barack Obama stepped to the podium and addressed the United Nations General Assembly. He outlined the “four pillars that are fundamental to the future we want for our children.”

And, the foremost pillar on which he spoke was nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. “First,” said the President, “we must stop the spread of nuclear weapons and seek a world without them.” This was not George W. Bush and John Bolton at the UN.

On the following day, Obama made history when he chaired a special session of the UN Security Council. It was only the fifth time in 63 years that such a summit had been called, and it was the first ever to be called for and presided over by a U.S. President. It was also the first summit to be devoted solely to matters of nuclear arms control and disarmament.

The special session was an unmistakable signal that Obama intends to establish the United States as a leader in international diplomacy writ large and on nuclear issues in particular.

If Obama’s galvanizing speech in Prague on April 5, declaring “America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” was his opening bid, the UN Security Council session on Sept. 24 was intended to up the ante and bring the weight of the UN and international law to bear on the issue.

The centerpiece of the special session was Resolution 1887, which passed unanimously and with obvious enthusiasm. The Resolution purposely follows the basic outlines of Obama’s Prague speech and endorses a re-vitalized commitment to work toward a world without nuclear weapons, as well as actions such as entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a START follow on treaty, better security for bomb-making materials, a strengthened Non-Proliferation Treaty, and other, similar measures.

While it is no exaggeration to call the Resolution an important and welcome step in the right direction, it is nonetheless worth pointing out its weaknesses, too.

Most notably, Resolution 1887 urges, declares, calls upon and reaffirms throughout 28 of its clauses. The only time the word “decides” begins a sentence is in the Resolution’s final, 29th clause, deciding that the UN Security Council will “remain seized of the matter.” In sum, the Resolution falls short of mandating specified nuclear disarmament within a time-bound framework.

Some people may complain that’s too high a bar to set for a Resolution. And, they would be right to point to the “sea change” in policy that Obama is seeking to initiate. Yet, those of us who are diligently working each day for a world free of nuclear weapons should also take sober note of the length of the course we still need to travel — and of the obstacles that remain to be overcome.

Recent days have seen our President displaying good policy instincts in the international arena, changing course on the Bush missile defense plans in Europe, rejoining the entry into force conferences on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (Bush sent no one, Obama sent the Secretary of State), and more.

On the other hand, the U.S. budget for nuclear weapons activities is alarming. And, the weaponers are planning to “modernize” both the nuclear weapons complex and the stockpile during the Obama era, rather than dismantle them (see page 4).

Please turn over to sign our petition to President Obama on abolishing nuclear weapons.
PETITION CIRCULATED BY: Tri-Valley CAREs • 2582 Old First Street, Livermore, CA, 94551 • (925) 443-7148 • www.trivalleycares.org

PETITION TO PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA
On the Global Abolition of Nuclear Weapons

Dear President Obama,

We wholeheartedly applaud you for declaring in Prague, "I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." We commend you for your courageous and historic recognition that "as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act."

We call on you to make good on that commitment and fulfill that responsibility by announcing at the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference your initiation of good faith multilateral negotiations on an international agreement to abolish nuclear weapons, within our lifetimes! Yes we can!

"One nuclear weapon exploded in one city -- be it in New York or Moscow, Islamabad or Mumbai, Tokyo or Tel Aviv, Paris or Prague -- could kill hundreds of thousands of people. And no matter where it happens, there is no end to what the consequences might be -- for our global safety, our security, our society, our economy, to our ultimate survival."

—President Barack Obama, Prague, April 5, 2009

1. NAME EMAIL ADDRESS PHONE ✅ FOR MORE INFO
MAILING ADDRESS CITY/TOWN STATE/ZIP CODE

2. NAME EMAIL ADDRESS PHONE ✅ FOR MORE INFO
MAILING ADDRESS CITY/TOWN STATE/ZIP CODE

3. NAME EMAIL ADDRESS PHONE ✅ FOR MORE INFO
MAILING ADDRESS CITY/TOWN STATE/ZIP CODE

Since 1983, Tri-Valley CAREs has strengthened global security by preventing the further development of nuclear weapons and working tirelessly for their elimination. Check the box to get more information. You will receive a free newsletter and low-volume alerts on local issues.