

17 December 2008

*[PLEASE NOTE: The Chem-Bio dailies will be published on an intermittent basis over the holidays. Normal publication will resume on 05 January 09.]*

## **Chem-Bio News**

**1. HATFILL REJECTED BY TOP U.S. COURT ON NEW YORK TIMES LIBEL SUIT:** *"The U.S. Supreme Court refused to revive a defamation lawsuit against New York Times Co. by Steven Hatfill, the former government scientist once wrongly suspected of involvement in the 2001 anthrax attack."*

**2. JAPAN BEGINS TRYING TO REMOVE CHEMICAL WEAPONS ABANDONED IN CHINA DURING WWII:** *"A Japanese commission began trying to remove abandoned chemical weapons Saturday in the Harbaling area of China's Jilin Province. The weapons had been buried there since World War II."*

**3. MARKEY: NRC RELUCTANCE TO RESTRICT DIRTY BOMB MATERIAL COULD BE CATASTROPHIC:** *"Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today slammed a recommendation from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) dismissing efforts to ban or replace a potentially deadly radionuclide, cesium chloride."*

**4. PANAMA BEGINS RADIATION DETECTION EFFORTS AT TWO PORTS:** *"The U.S. and Panama announced today that radiation detection efforts have begun at two of the busiest seaports in Latin America."*

**5. U OF R [UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER] TO INVESTIGATE "POST-RADIATION PILL":** *"The University of Rochester is getting \$10.4 million contract from the federal government to investigate medical countermeasures in the event of radiation exposure."*

**6. RULE OK'S CHEMICAL TANKERS THROUGH CITIES:** *"In this instance, the regulation leaves the decision of which route to take with deadly chemicals primarily in the hands of the railroads."*

## **Chem-Demil News**

**1. US ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY - M55 ROCKET STABILITY TESTING:** *"As the stabilizer is depleted, the propellant could generate additional heat, rapidly enough to lead to autoignition."*

**2. PINE BLUFF CHEMICAL ACTIVITY - FINAL CHEMICAL WEAPONS DISPOSAL CAMPAIGN BEGINS AT ARSENAL:** *"Employees at the Pine Bluff Chemical Activity (PBCA) and the Pine Bluff Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (PBCDF) successfully transported and processed the first mustard agent-filled ton container of the Arsenal's stockpile."*

# **CB Daily Report**

### **HATFILL REJECTED BY TOP U.S. COURT ON NEW YORK TIMES LIBEL SUIT**

By Greg Stohr

Bloomberg.com

December 15, 2008

“The U.S. Supreme Court refused to revive a defamation lawsuit against New York Times Co. by Steven Hatfill, the former government scientist once wrongly suspected of involvement in the 2001 anthrax attack.

The high court, without comment, today rejected Hatfill’s appeal in his suit against the company stemming from a series of columns in 2002 by Nicholas Kristof that described the scientist as the “likely culprit.”

Hatfill challenged a federal appeals court’s conclusion that he was a public figure on the subject of bioterrorism. That finding meant he had to show that the Times and Kristof acted with “actual malice,” the toughest legal standard for a defamation plaintiff to meet. Hatfill said he became prominent only because of Kristof’s accusations.”

The full article can be found at: [http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aYLV\\_SWvUfnQ&refer=home](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aYLV_SWvUfnQ&refer=home)

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### **JAPAN BEGINS TRYING TO REMOVE CHEMICAL WEAPONS ABANDONED IN CHINA DURING WWII**

China View

December 13, 2008

“A Japanese commission began trying to remove abandoned chemical weapons Saturday in the Harbaling area of China’s Jilin Province. The weapons had been buried there since World War II.

The number of weapons and length of excavation was not made public.”

The full article can be found at: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-12/13/content\\_10498983.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-12/13/content_10498983.htm)

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### **MARKEY: NRC RELUCTANCE TO RESTRICT DIRTY BOMB MATERIAL COULD BE CATASTROPHIC**

“Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today slammed a recommendation from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) dismissing efforts to ban or replace a potentially deadly radionuclide, cesium chloride. Though the National Academies of Sciences have labeled cesium chloride so dangerous that it should be phased-out completely, today’s NRC recommendation calls for a sole focus on improving the security of cesium chloride radiation sources.

“It seems painfully obvious to take dangerous nuclear materials out of circulation when there are safer, effective alternatives available,” said Rep. Markey. “But the NRC is blind to this chance to protect the public. Cesium chloride is a prime example of a radioactive material that can and should be replaced as soon as possible. The best form of security is simply not having dirty bomb materials sitting around that need to be secured.”

Cesium chloride is a highly radioactive isotope that appears in powdered or pellet form, making it highly portable and very dangerous. In 1987, scavengers in Brazil opened an abandoned canister containing 1400 Curies of powdered cesium and circulated its contents among the community, which resulted in 244 people contaminated, 54 people hospitalized, 19 people with radiation-induced skin burns, and 4 people dead.”

The full article can be found at: <http://markey.house.gov/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=3496&Itemid=125>

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## **PANAMA BEGINS RADIATION DETECTION EFFORTS AT TWO PORTS**

US National Nuclear Security Administration News Release  
December 12, 2008

“The U.S. and Panama announced today that radiation detection efforts have begun at two of the busiest seaports in Latin America. Officials from the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) participated in a ceremony today in Panama.

Under a special cost-sharing arrangement, Manzanillo International Terminal (MIT), located in Colón at the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal, contributed to the detection efforts by funding the design and installation of the radiation detection equipment at the port. The Port of Balboa, located in Panama City at the Pacific entrance to the Canal and operated by Panama Ports Company, a subsidiary of Hutchison Port Holdings, is assisting with efforts to scan containers that are transiting by rail between the Port of Balboa at the southern terminus of the Canal and MIT, Colón Container Terminal, and the Port of Cristobal at the northern terminus of the Canal.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.nnsa.energy.gov/news/2243.htm>

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## **U OF R [UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER] TO INVESTIGATE "POST-RADIATION PILL**

RochesterHomepage.net

December 15, 2008

"The University of Rochester is getting \$10.4 million contract from the federal government to investigate medical countermeasures in the event of radiation exposure. The goal is to develop a pill that can be taken in the first 24 to 48 hours after a radiation event, in the event that there aren't enough medical personnel to handle a large amount of people.

Researchers will test out eltrombopag, a drug in development that treats low blood platelet counts. It's maker, GlaxoSmithKline, is going to supply the drug to the university."

The full article can be found at: <http://rochesterhomepage.net/content/fulltext/?cid=53031>

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## **RULE OK'S CHEMICAL TANKERS THROUGH CITIES**

By Alexandra Marks

The Christian Science Monitor

December 15, 2008

"The Bush administration has finalized a controversial regulation that will allow railroads to continue to ship dangerous chemicals through major cities.

That has infuriated some city officials, security experts, and environmentalists because it preempts all local efforts to control if, when, and how those railroad tank cars move through their communities."

"The finalization of the rail routing rule is one of the latest "midnight rule changes" pushed through by the outgoing administration in an effort imprint its preferences on the federal bureaucracy."

"In this instance, the regulation leaves the decision of which route to take with deadly chemicals primarily in the hands of the railroads. Critics contend that this leaves too many communities vulnerable to a serious security threat and that state, local, and federal officials should have more input to ensure the chemicals are transported along the shortest, safest, and most secure routes."

The full article can be found at: <http://features.csmonitor.com/politics/2008/12/15/rule-ok%E2%80%99s-chemical-tankers-through-cities/>

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## ***Chem-Demil News***

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### **US ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY - M55 ROCKET STABILITY TESTING**

US Army Chemical Materials Agency Fact Sheet

December 3, 2008

"In the early to mid-1960s, the United States produced more than 400,000 M55 chemical rockets for military use. However, none of the rockets were ever used in combat. In 1981, they were declared obsolete and of no military value.

The chemical rockets currently are in storage and awaiting destruction at the U.S. Army stockpile site in Richmond, Ky. The M55 rockets that were once stored at Anniston, Ala.; Pine Bluff, Ark.; Tooele, Utah; Hermiston, Ore.; and Johnston Atoll in the Pacific have been safely destroyed.

Each rocket weighs nearly 60 pounds, is almost seven feet long, and contains approximately 10 pounds of chemical nerve agent (GB or VX). In addition, the rockets also contain M28 propellant, which, over time, deteriorates through a series of chemical reactions that generate heat. To control the rate of these reactions, chemical compounds called stabilizers were added to the propellant during manufacturing.

The stabilizer is consumed over time as the propellant ages. As the stabilizer is depleted, the propellant could generate additional heat, rapidly enough to lead to autoignition. The chance of this so-called "autoignition" has been the subject of many studies on the rockets' safety.

Army scientists began testing and monitoring the chemical munitions in the early 1970s. Between 1985 and 1989, they sampled propellant from M55 rockets in storage. In addition, agent-contaminated propellant samples were collected from the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System (JACADS) in 1995 and from Tooele, Utah, in 1999.

Comprehensive laboratory testing on the stability of the propellant and stabilizers has now been completed. The testing included exposure of propellant samples to chemical agent, investigation of the effects of chemical agent on the propellant, and assessment of heat removal from stored rockets.

These laboratory tests were performed using the field samples collected in the 1980s. The results were compared to the contaminated samples taken from JACADS and Tooele.

The laboratory tests determined that uncontaminated propellant is stable for at least 100 years, but that agent contamination accelerates propellant degradation and stabilizer depletion. The tests also demonstrated that the rockets dissipate heat effectively. The JACADS and Tooele samples confirmed the laboratory results and further demonstrated that only small portions of the propellant showed effects from agent contamination.

Detailed computer models were developed to evaluate the likelihood of rocket autoignition based on the test results. Army scientists were able to form predictions regarding propellant autoignition. The results of this evaluation conclude that autoignition of the aging rockets is very unlikely and the rockets can continue to be stored safely until they are destroyed.

While these studies have demonstrated that the storage of the M55 rocket presents no immediate threat of autoignition, the rockets still present a risk of initiation from external events such as lightning and earthquakes. The only way to ensure the complete safety of the surrounding public and environment is to destroy the munitions in a safe and efficient manner.

The full article can be found at: <http://www.cma.army.mil/fndocumentviewer.aspx?docid=003672671>

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## **PINE BLUFF CHEMICAL ACTIVITY - FINAL CHEMICAL WEAPONS DISPOSAL CAMPAIGN BEGINS AT ARSENAL**

US Army Chemical Materials Agency News Release  
December 8, 2008

"Employees at the Pine Bluff Chemical Activity (PBCA) and the Pine Bluff Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (PBCDF) successfully transported and processed the first mustard agent-filled ton container of the Arsenal's stockpile.

December 4, PBCA safely transported the first enhanced onsite container (EONC) carrying mustard agent-filled ton containers to PBCDF. December 7, PBCDF processed the first ton container.

"With the start of the last chemical weapons disposal campaign we are one step closer to finishing the storage mission and making our community safer with the elimination of all our stockpile," said Lt. Col. Cliff Johnston, PBCA commander.

The ton containers are the last disposal campaign at the Arsenal. Unlike the previous disposal campaigns that dealt with nerve agent, mustard is a blister agent. Following the completion of disposal operations, PBCDF will begin its facility closure phase. During this time the disposal facility will be decontaminated and dismantled in accordance with the site's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) permit.

"Current estimates predict the duration of the ton container disposal campaign to be about three years," said Mark Greer, PBCDF site project manager. "We are confident that we will complete disposal operations by the Chemical Weapons Convention Treaty date of 2012."

Chemical weapons disposal operations began at the Arsenal in March 2005 with the GB nerve-agent filled rockets. The second disposal campaign, VX nerve-agent filled rockets, ended in February 2008; and the third disposal campaign, VX nerve-agent filled landmines, ended in June 2008.

"Our employees did an excellent job completing this outage, and will continue to move forward with operations with the safety of the workforce and public as our top priority," said David Reber, project general manager for Washington Defense Group, EG&G Division of the URS Corporation, which operates the plant for the Army.

Prior to chemical weapons disposal operations, the Pine Bluff Arsenal safely stored 3,850 tons of chemical agent or 12 percent of the Army's original chemical weapons stockpile for more than 60 years."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.cma.army.mil/fndocumentviewer.aspx?docid=003679686>

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