23 June 2010

Chem-Bio News

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2. NC TO BE NATIONAL MODEL FOR BIOTERRORISM WARNING SYSTEM: *"The model, called North Carolina Bio-Preparedness Collaborative (NCB-Prepared), will alert health officials and practitioners within hours of symptom outbreaks that might indicate a bioterrorist attack, threat of disease, food-borne illness or other threats to public health and safety."*

3. RUSSIAN WEAPONS EXPERT DEATH PROBABLY ACCIDENTAL: *"Alexander Pikayev, 48, was found lying on the floor in his apartment in Triq Buġibba, with a wound to his head. Police were called to assist after relatives could not contact him. An autopsy revealed that he suffered from a fractured skull and intracranial haemorrhage."*

4. [UK] LACK OF FUNDS PUTS NUCLEAR SUBS IN DANGER OF 'CALAMITY': *"Worsening shortages of staff and funds could jeopardise the safety of Britain's Trident nuclear weapons, the Ministry of Defence has secretly warned."*

5. NNSA COMMISSIONS NEW SAFEGUARDS TOOL AT CHORNOBYL SITE: *"The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) today announced the successful commissioning of a new tool to help Ukraine fulfill nuclear safeguards obligations still complicated by the 1986 explosion at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant (CNPP)."*

CB Daily Report

Chem-Bio News

ABNORMAL RADIATION DETECTED NEAR KOREAN BORDER
By Hyung-Jin Kim
The Associated Press in The San Francisco Chronicle
June 21, 2010

"Abnormally high radiation levels were detected near the border between the two Koreas days after North Korea claimed to have mastered a complex technology key to manufacturing a hydrogen bomb, Seoul said Monday.

The Science Ministry said its investigation ruled out a nuclear test by North Korea, but failed to determine the source of the radiation. It said there was no evidence of a strong earthquake, which follows an atomic explosion.

On May 12, North Korea claimed its scientists succeeded in creating a nuclear fusion reaction — a technology necessary to manufacture a hydrogen bomb. In its announcement, the North did not say how it would use the technology, only calling it a "breakthrough toward the development of new energy."

South Korean experts doubted the North actually made such a breakthrough. Scientists around the world have been experimenting with fusion for decades, but it has yet to be developed into a viable energy alternative.

On May 15, however, the atmospheric concentration of xenon — an inert gas released after a nuclear explosion or and radioactive leakage from a nuclear power plant — on the South Korean side their shared border was found to be eight times higher than normal, according to South Korea's Science Ministry.

South Korea subsequently looked for signs of a powerful, artificially induced earthquake. Experts, however, found no signs of such a quake in North Korea, a ministry statement said.

"We determined that there was no possibility of an underground nuclear test," it said. The ministry said the gas is not harmful.

While any fusion test would have registered seismic activity, according to nuclear expert Whang Joo-ho of South Korea's Kyung Hee University, the presence of xenon could also have come from a leak.

Since the wind was blowing from north to south when the xenon was detected, a Science Ministry official said the gas could not have originated from any nuclear power plants in South Korea.

But the official — speaking on condition of anonymity, citing department policy — said the xenon could have come from Russia or China. Whang agreed, saying a nuclear test or radioactive leakage would be the only reasons that could explain the atmospheric concentration of xenon reported by the ministry."

The full article can be found at: http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2010/06/20/international/i233607D30.DTL

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NC TO BE NATIONAL MODEL FOR BIOTERRORISM WARNING SYSTEM
TechJournal South
June 21, 2010

"North Carolina will be the national model for a new system to detect the earliest signs of an impending bioterrorism attack and provide warnings in time to minimize damage to human and animal life as well as the environment.

The model, called North Carolina Bio-Preparedness Collaborative (NCB-Prepared), will alert health officials and practitioners within hours of symptom outbreaks that might indicate a bioterrorist attack, threat of disease, food-borne illness or other threats to public health and safety.

The congressionally funded one-year, $5 million project is a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Initial collaborators include UNC-Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University and SAS Institute. The effort includes participation of the N.C. Division of Public Health and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Durham, as well as others from the public and private sectors."

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"The project was launched today at UNC's Gillings School of Global Public Health. Speakers included Price; Tom McGinn, senior health advisor, office of health affairs, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; Lanier Cansler, secretary, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services; Tony Waldrop, vice chancellor for research and economic development, UNC-Chapel Hill; and Warwick Arden, provost, NC State.

NCB-Prepared will draw on a wide array of human health data (such as physician's clinical notes, electronic hospital records, school nurse logs, prescription databases and over-the-counter medication sales) and information from the rest of the biosphere (such as animal health records, air quality measurements and food safety data). Using advanced analytical programs, the project aims to detect a public health threat long before it would surface in traditional disease surveillance systems.

The project builds on existing state surveillance capabilities such as NC-DETECT, one of the most advanced surveillance systems in the country, which analyzes hospital emergency room and other data several times a day."

The full article can be found at: http://www.techjournalsouth.com/2010/06/nc-to-be-national-model-for-bioterrorism-warning-system/

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RUSSIAN WEAPONS EXPERT DEATH PROBABLY ACCIDENTAL
By Claudia Calleja
The Times of Malta
June 20, 2010

"The death of a Russian weapons expert, whose lifeless body was found in a St Paul's Bay apartment last Wednesday, appears to have been an accident, according to sources.

However, police are not ruling out the possibility of foul play at this stage since they are waiting for the outcome of the magisterial inquiry and further forensic tests, including toxicology results.

Alexander Pikayev, 48, was found lying on the floor in his apartment in Triq Buġibba, with a wound to his head. Police were called to assist after relatives could not contact him.

An autopsy revealed that he suffered from a fractured skull and intracranial haemorrhage.
"It seems that he slipped and hit his head with the jamb of a door in the apartment. A dent on the jamb supports this theory," sources said, adding that results of further tests were still pending.

The fact that the apartment was locked from the inside and nothing inside was disturbed reinforced the belief that it was an accident, the sources added."

The full article can be found at: http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20100620/local/russian-weapons-expert-death-probably-accidental

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[UK] LACK OF FUNDS PUTS NUCLEAR SUBS IN DANGER OF 'CALAMITY'
Herald Scotland – UK
June 20, 2010

"Worsening shortages of staff and funds could jeopardise the safety of Britain's Trident nuclear weapons, the Ministry of Defence has secretly warned.

In an internal safety report for 2009 just released under freedom of information law, the MoD says that it is facing increasing difficulties managing its nuclear programme, —with due regard for the protection of the workforce, the public and the environment".

Experts fear the outcome could be disastrous. They point out that the MoD has already run into major problems with decommissioning defunct nuclear submarines, and with leaks from its ageing radioactive waste facilities at the Faslane naval base in Gare Loch.

"This really is rapidly tipping into a calamitous situation," John Large, a leading nuclear consultant, told the Sunday Herald. The MoD's entire safety system is under-resourced, outdated and largely unaccountable, he alleges.

"The signs are that the MoD's nuclear regulatory and safeguard framework is already creaking and cracking at the seams with a number of crucial nuclear safety and environmental protection programmes being put on hold or subject to expedient repair and maintenance."

The MoD's blunt warning comes in a report produced last year by the Defence Environment and Safety Board, the internal body charged with over-seeing the safety of all military activities. The primary concern was —the pressure that resource constraints are placing on safety", it concluded."

The full article can be found at: http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/lack-of-funds-puts-nuclear-subs-in-danger-of-calamity-1.1036026

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NNSA COMMISSIONS NEW SAFEGUARDS TOOL AT CHORNOBYL SITE
US National Nuclear Security Administration Press Release
June 21, 2010

"The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) today announced the successful commissioning of a new tool to help Ukraine fulfill nuclear safeguards obligations still complicated by the 1986 explosion at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant (CNPP).

Following the accident at Chornobyl twenty-four years ago, a temporary sarcophagus was built around the damaged reactor to mitigate the radiation effects of the explosion and to protect the environment. Today, several countries are helping Ukraine build a more stable and permanent structure to replace the sarcophagus. But excavation at the construction site will likely unearth significant amounts of radioactive nuclear fuel and fragments ejected from the reactor at the time of the accident. This material presents a complex technical challenge for the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) nuclear safeguards system because the material, including uranium and plutonium, still must be measured and declared, even after a quarter century.

Last year, Ukrainian authorities requested U.S. assistance with this task, and technical experts at Los Alamos National Laboratory were able to modify an existing instrument capable of measuring dispersed nuclear material, such as that found in the dirt in Chornobyl.

NNSA's International Nuclear Safeguards and Engagement Program (INSEP) and Los Alamos National Laboratory developed the Chornobyl Drum Assay System (CDAS) in cooperation with the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant and the State Nuclear Regulatory Committee of Ukraine. This new tool will help Ukraine analyze the content of the soil and debris in the evacuation site, and thereby honor its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"The International Nuclear Safeguards and Engagement Program in general, and this new tool in particular, are good examples of how NNSA has successfully applied decades of nuclear security expertise to confront complex technical challenges," said Kenneth E. Baker, NNSA's Principal Assistant Deputy Administrator for the Office of Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation. "Together with our Ukrainian partners, we are leveraging the unparalleled expertise from our national labs to solve real-world problems, such as helping to clean up the Chornobyl site, as well as strengthening the global nonproliferation regime."

Over the next few years, Ukrainian experts will use the new tool to analyze the soil for radioactive material, and add these measurements to its inventory declaration to the IAEA.

INSEP is a key component of NNSA's Next Generation Safeguards Initiative (NGSI), a robust, multi-year program to develop the policies, concepts, technologies, expertise, and international infrastructure necessary to strengthen and sustain the international safeguards system. INSEP draws on the unique expertise of the DOE and NNSA national laboratories to engage partner countries to improve the development and application of international safeguards through all stages of nuclear development. Through regional bilateral engagements, INSEP provides training, equipment and expertise needed by international partners to resolve unique safeguards challenges, like those at Chornobyl.

INSEP also develops and tests next generation safeguards technologies through collaborative technical projects with foreign partners. These technologies are intended to reduce the requirement for on-site inspector presence at particular facilities and increase the consistency of international safeguards reporting."

The full article can be found at: http://www.nnsa.energy.gov/mediaroom/pressreleases/chornobyl062110

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