

Chem-Bio News

1. UW-MADISON PROFESSOR BARRED FROM LAB FOR POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS

EXPERIMENTS: "A UW-Madison professor who studies an infectious disease lost his laboratory privileges for five years after conducting unauthorized experiments with a potentially dangerous drug-resistant germ."

2. USSR PLANNED NUCLEAR ATTACK ON CHINA IN 1969: "The Soviet Union was on the brink of launching a nuclear attack against China in 1969 and only backed down after the US told Moscow such a move would start World War Three, according to a Chinese historian."

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5. NNSA [NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION] HONORS TOM HUNTER, WELCOMES PAUL HOMMERT AS DIRECTOR OF SANDIA LABS: "The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Administrator today thanked Dr. Thomas O. Hunter for his 43 years of service at Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) and congratulated Dr. Paul J. Himmert on his selection as the next Director of SNL. SNL today announced that, after five years of service as lab director, Dr. Hunter is stepping down and that he will be replaced by Dr. Himmert, effective July 9, 2010."

6. THE DIRTY TWO DOZEN: HOW A BIT OF WEEKEND DIY UNEARTHED 24 WW2 GRENADES IN A QUIET BACK GARDEN: "As fumes began billowing from the hole the financial adviser called 999 and bomb disposal experts later discovered a cache of 24 Dad's Army phosphorous grenades."

7. [IN] ARE OUR RADIOACTIVE DEVICES SAFE?: "Over 12,000 radioactive sources were in civilian use in 2009 all over the country, in at least 4398 institutions, according to available data from the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB). Not counted are X-ray units, which reportedly number a staggering 50,000. Use of radioactive sources in medical, industrial and research fields has become widespread in India as the number of nuclear reactors (from which radio-isotopes like cobalt-60 emerge) has increased."

Chem-Demil News

1. UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT - TRACE AMOUNTS OF HD MUSTARD VAPOR DETECTED

TODAY [13 MAY 2010]: "Trace amounts of HD mustard chemical agent vapor were detected today inside a storage structure or "igloo" that houses bulk containers. The leaking container will be identified, inspected, repaired as necessary, and decontaminated."

CB Daily Report

Chem-Bio News

UW-MADISON PROFESSOR BARRED FROM LAB FOR POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS EXPERIMENTS

By DEBORAH ZIFF And RON SEELY

Wisconsin State Journal

May 11, 2010

"A UW-Madison professor who studies an infectious disease lost his laboratory privileges for five years after conducting unauthorized experiments with a potentially dangerous drug-resistant germ."

One person who worked in professor Gary Splitter's lab got brucellosis but university officials don't know if that individual, who has since recovered, caught the strain used in the unauthorized experiments. Brucellosis is a disease that is usually found in farm animals but can spread to humans and cause flu-like symptoms or worse."

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"The 2007 experiments, which the National Institutes of Health calls a "major action violation," in part prompted the university to beef up its biological safety oversight. The university was also fined \$40,000.

The university on Tuesday released some 500 pages of documents related to the investigation, which took more than two years to complete, in response to a State Journal records request."

The full article can be found at:

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/university/article_bc095ae8-5d4a-11df-8e83-001cc4c03286.html

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USSR PLANNED NUCLEAR ATTACK ON CHINA IN 1969

Andrew Osborn and Peter Foster

The Telegraph (UK)

May 13, 2010

"The Soviet Union was on the brink of launching a nuclear attack against China in 1969 and only backed down after the US told Moscow such a move would start World War Three, according to a Chinese historian."

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"The extraordinary assertion, made in a publication sanctioned by China's ruling Communist Party, suggests that the world came perilously close to nuclear war just seven years after the Cuban missile crisis.

Liu Chenshan, the author of a series of articles that chronicle the five times China has faced a nuclear threat since 1949, wrote that the most serious threat came in 1969 at the height of a bitter border dispute between Moscow and Beijing that left more than one thousand people dead on both sides.

He said Soviet diplomats warned Washington of Moscow's plans "to wipe out the Chinese threat and get rid of this modern adventurer," with a nuclear strike, asking the US to remain neutral.

But, he says, Washington told Moscow the United States would not stand idly by but launch its own nuclear attack against the Soviet Union if it attacked China, loosing nuclear missiles at 130 Soviet cities. The threat worked, he added, and made Moscow think twice, while forcing the two countries to regulate their border dispute at the negotiating table.

He quotes Soviet ministers and diplomats at the time to bolster his claim."

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"Mr Liu, the author, admits his version of history is likely to be contested by rival scholars. It is unclear whether he had access to special state archives but the fact that his articles appeared in such an official publication in a country where the media is so tightly controlled is being interpreted by some as a sign that he did have special access."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/7720461/USSR-planned-nuclear-attack-on-China-in-1969.html>

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NEW METHOD DEVELOPED TO CAPTURE FINGERPRINTS ON DIFFICULT SURFACES

Nanotechwire.com

May 12, 2010

“CSI notwithstanding, forensics experts cannot always retrieve fingerprints from objects, but a conformal coating process developed by Penn State professors can reveal hard-to-develop fingerprints on nonporous surfaces without altering the chemistry of the print.”

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“This happens because most of the techniques currently used for developing fingerprints rely on the chemistry of the print. Fingerprints are made up of a mixture of secretions from the body that reacts with different chemicals to form a visible or fluorescent product. Infrared and x-ray imaging also target specific chemicals left behind by the ridges and valleys in the skin.”

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“The conformal coating applications suggested by Shaler and Ahklesh Lakhtakia, Charles Godfrey Binder professor in engineering science and mechanics, use the physical properties of the fingerprint, not the chemistry of the substances left behind. In fact, the researchers believe that even after the fingerprints are developed using the coating, forensics experts could sample the fingerprint material to determine specifics about the person who left the prints.”

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“The researchers used a form of physical vapor deposition -- a method that uses a vacuum and allows vaporized materials to condense on a surface creating a thin film. Normally, the deposition process requires exceptionally clean surfaces because any speck of dust or grease on the coated surface shows up as a deformity. However, with fingerprints, the point is to have the surface material's ridges and valleys -- topography -- show up on the new surface so analysts can read them using an optical device without the necessity of chemical development or microscopy.”

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“One benefit of this approach would be the ability to retrieve fingerprints off fragments from incendiary or explosive devices and still be able to analyze the chemicals used in the device.”

The full article can be found at: <http://nanotechwire.com/news.asp?nid=9866>

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UN TO INVESTIGATE ‘POISON GAS ATTACKS’ ON AFGHAN SCHOOLGIRLS

The Times (UK)

May 13, 2010

“The United Nations is to investigate claims that a mysterious illness that has hit Afghan schoolgirls recently was caused by poison gas attacks.

Girls at a number of schools, mainly in Kabul and northern Afghanistan, have suffered nausea and vomiting for no apparent reason — prompting President Karzai to point the finger of blame at Taliban

fighters, known for their opposition to education for women.”

The full article can be found at:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/afghanistan/article7124664.ece>

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NNSA [NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION] HONORS TOM HUNTER, WELCOMES PAUL HOMMERT AS DIRECTOR OF SANDIA LABS

US National Nuclear Security Administration News Release

May 13, 2010

“The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Administrator today thanked Dr. Thomas O. Hunter for his 43 years of service at Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) and congratulated Dr. Paul J. Hommert on his selection as the next Director of SNL. SNL today announced that, after five years of service as lab director, Dr. Hunter is stepping down and that he will be replaced by Dr. Hommert, effective July 9, 2010.

Hunter has been a prominent figure in the nuclear weapons program and the national security policy arena and we will miss his expertise and leadership. He began his career with Sandia in 1967 and held a number of leadership roles before becoming the Labs Director in 2005. During Dr. Hunter’s tenure, Sandia underwent significant change. In addition to the core mission of nuclear security, SNL began leveraging its scientific, technological and engineering capabilities to support work on other national challenges as well.”

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“Hommert’s career spans multiple institutions. He worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory from 2003 to 2006, where he led the Applied Physics Division (known within the nuclear security community as “X” division). Dr. Hommert also worked for three years as the director of research and applied science at the United Kingdom’s Atomic Weapons Establishment, which provides and maintains that nation’s nuclear deterrent.

Hommert started working for Sandia in 1976 and currently leads the Lab’s nuclear weapons programs. In this role, Dr. Hommert manages over 3,000 staff members and is responsible for the oversight of engineering support and design for the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. Dr. Hommert also served as vice president of Sandia’s California Laboratory and led Sandia’s homeland security and defense strategies.”

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

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THE DIRTY TWO DOZEN: HOW A BIT OF WEEKEND DIY UNEARTHED 24 WW2 GRENADES IN A QUIET BACK GARDEN

The Daily Mail (UK)

May 10, 2010

“A man has unearthed a hoard of World War II phosphorus grenades in his back garden.

Ian Cooke, 28, a financial advisor, was digging in his garden when he smashed through a buried glass bottle.

His surprise turned to shock when he then pulled his spade out of the ground to find that the tip of it was smoking.

As fumes began billowing from the hole the financial adviser called 999 and bomb disposal experts later discovered a cache of 24 Dad’s Army phosphorous grenades.

The Royal Logistic Corps was still extracting the devices from the back garden of the house in Halesowen, West Midlands, yesterday.

Mr Cook, 28, said he found the weapons, which would have been prepared for the Home Guard during World War II, two feet below the lawn as he dug holes for the joists of garden decking on Saturday.

He said: 'I noticed a smell like diesel and then saw a glass vial in the bottom of the hole. When I dipped the tip of my spade in it, the metal started smoking and I realised this was serious.'

The full article can be found at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1275689/Weekend-DIY-project-unearths-24-WW2-grenades-mans-garden.html>

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[IN] ARE OUR RADIOACTIVE DEVICES SAFE?

Subodh Varma

The Times of India

May 9, 2010

“With all the cobalt-60 pencils now reported to be safe, the immediate threat of deadly radioactive material on the loose in the country appears to have receded. But the real question that the embarrassing Delhi University episode raises is — how safe are the radioactive devices currently in use across the country?

Over 12,000 radioactive sources were in civilian use in 2009 all over the country, in at least 4398 institutions, according to available data from the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB). Not counted are X-ray units, which reportedly number a staggering 50,000. Use of radioactive sources in medical, industrial and research fields has become widespread in India as the number of nuclear reactors (from which radio-isotopes like cobalt-60 emerge) has increased.

Just five years ago, radioactive materials were being used in about 3268 institutions and about 35,000 X-ray units. In some specific kinds of uses, the numbers are expanding dramatically. Gamma irradiators for agricultural uses have almost doubles from 8 in 2004 to 15 in 2009, while the number of nucleonic gauges has increased six-fold from 1365 to 7850 in this period. Consumer products that use radioactive materials (smoke detectors, electron capture etc.) have increased from a mere 85 to a whopping 851 currently. Some of these do not have threatening levels of radioactivity.”

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“For this cradle-to-grave responsibility, the AERB currently has just 170 scientific and technical staff. Their numbers have been increasing - in 2004, there were 112 such qualified people. But even after expansion, it is impossible for 170 persons to monitor thousands of radioactive sources spread all over the country.”

The full article can be found at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Are-our-radioactive-devices-safe/articleshow/5908448.cms>

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Chem-Demil News

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT - TRACE AMOUNTS OF HD MUSTARD VAPOR DETECTED TODAY [13 MAY 2010]

US Army Chemical Materials Agency Press Release

May 13, 2010

“Trace amounts of HD mustard chemical agent vapor were detected today inside a storage structure or “igloo” that houses bulk containers. The leaking container will be identified, inspected, repaired as necessary, and decontaminated.

There is no danger to the public or environment. The igloos have a passive filtration system that prevents chemical agent vapor from escaping outside the structures.

Depot officials routinely notify the public when such incidents occur. Army officials also notify off-post emergency operations centers in Umatilla and Morrow counties, Ore.; Benton County, Wash.; those in Oregon and Washington states; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.cma.army.mil/fndocumentviewer.aspx?DocID=003682877>
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