



## VANA NEWSLETTER - BC BRANCH



September 2003 Vol. 14, No. 7

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Web Site: [www.vana.ca](http://www.vana.ca)

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### Letter from Your Executive

Your exec joins in hoping that you have had a long, sunny and relaxing summer and are strengthened to resume VANA's good fight against nuclear weapons and war. The darkest hour is just before the dawn, goes the saying, and we all fervently hope that the currently resurgent nuclear weapon threats will be followed soon by a return to sanity - especially in Washington, DC.

The gigantic, enduring threat to humanity lies in the huge US and Russian nuclear weapon stocks. Currently, the US has approximately 7,000 strategic weapons. Russia, has 4,850 strategic warheads deployed. All of these weapons are on "Hair-trigger-alert" and "Launch-on-warning" status. Details of the Russian nuclear weapon posture, appear below.

Added to the enormous peril from these strategic weapons, is the enthusiasm among the US military and the Bush administration for a new generation of "Bunker-buster" and small nuclear weapons, coupled with a willingness to use these thin-end-of-the-wedge weapons. A revealed, secret-meeting of the top brass of the US N-weapon and Military establishment held at the Air Force base at Offut, Nebraska is described below.

As if these threats were not sufficiently horrific, the threat of nuclear terrorism against the 103 US nuclear power stations - "Bombs-in-Place"- is described in an article below. This threat has certainly been worsened by Bush policies, In the face of these threats, how does the world's prime anti-war organization fill its role in these dangerous times? The opinion of former United Nations Assistant Secretary General, Denis Halliday, who resigned in protest over the perversion of the UN's humanitarian role by the USA and UK, appears below.

No one is better equipped to give us perspectives on

these threats than Joseph Rotblat, Honorary VANA member. Interviewed in Halifax, this summer, he sees increasing public ignorance and Washington's belligerence as the biggest dangers. Read his words, below. Finally, at the bottom of this Pandora's box of troubles are two hopeful items.

First, several recent New York Times articles have been highly critical of Bush policies. These articles may indicate that the US establishment now sees the Bush administration as a liability, and is turning against it. Consider the opening sentence of this New York Times, 20 August op-ed: "Yesterday's bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad was the latest evidence that America has taken a country that was not a terrorist threat and turned it into one."

**We will elaborate on this theme by showing a new video, "Why Iraq?" by Noam Chomsky, at our branch meeting on Monday September 22 at 1:30 at the Unitarian Church Hall (49<sup>th</sup> and Oak). Be sure to come and to spread the word about it. All those interested are welcome.**

Second, at a ceremony in Vancouver on 9 August commemorating the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, a proclamation by the Mayor of Vancouver, was read declaring Vancouver's readiness to make common cause with Hiroshima, Nagasaki and other cities in a campaign to alert their citizens to the continuing nuclear weapon threat, in order to mobilize their energies to "rid the world of the threat from these monstrous weapons of total destruction."

VANA will certainly be involved in this campaign. Ed Livingston President, (604-730-6990, Fax: 604-730-6931 e-mail: [phcl@netcom.ca](mailto:phcl@netcom.ca)) and David Morgan, editor (604-985-7147, Fax: 604-985-1260, mail: [daimorgan@shaw.ca](mailto:daimorgan@shaw.ca); for the exec.

# Have a Happy 90<sup>th</sup> Ben!

Ben Swankey, a former editor of this newsletter and a long-time VANA member, has reached the ripe young age of 90. At a reception in his honour, VANA presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation “[I]n Recognition of His Life-Long Struggle for Peace and Social Justice.” Greetings were sent by VANA Life Member, Libby Davies, MP; Sven Robinson, MP, Maude Barlow, president of the Council of Canadians and many others. Derek Corrigan, the mayor of Burnaby addressed the gathering as well as Jim Sinclair, head of the BC Federation of Labour. Finally, Vancouver City Councillor Ellen Woodsworth read a proclamation by mayor, Larry Campbell, declaring September 13 “Ben Swankey Day.” Congratulations, Ben and may there be many more such days in the future.

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## **Russian nuclear forces, 2003**

*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July/August 2003 Vol. 59, No.4, pp. 70-72 (Excerpts)

As of mid-2003, Russia has approximately 8,250 operational nuclear warheads in its arsenal. This includes about 4,850 strategic warheads, and 3,400 non-strategic warheads. Estimating the size, composition, and status of the Russian nuclear stockpile has always been difficult. At the end of the Cold War in 1991, the Soviet Union may have had as many as 35,000 nuclear weapons-though not all of them were fielded. The number of warheads in the Soviet arsenal peaked in the 1980s, after which the Soviets began to dismantle them on a substantial scale. U.S. Defense Department and CIA estimates suggest that Russia dismantled slightly more than 1,000 warheads per year throughout the 1990s.

**Based on the best available information, we estimate that the total current arsenal of intact**

**warheads is around 18,000. Of those, some 8,250 are considered active and operational;** the rest occupy an indeterminate status.

One important recent development was the demise of the START II Treaty, precipitated in part by the Bush administration's withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and its signing of the Moscow Treaty. The START II Treaty never entered into force. One of its significant requirements was a ban on MIRVed (multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles) ICBMs; **now, after START's collapse, Russia has reversed course and plans to retain its multi-warhead SS-18s and SS-19s as the core of its strategic nuclear arsenal until at least 2016.**

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## **Dr Strangeloves' meet to plan New Nuclear Era**

By Julian Borger, *The Guardian*, Thursday 07 August 2003 (Excerpts)

US government scientists and Pentagon officials will gather today behind tight security at a Nebraska air force base to discuss the development of a modernized arsenal of small, specialized nuclear weapons which critics believe could mark the dawn of a new era in proliferation. This is a confab of Dr Strangeloves. The fact that the Pentagon is barring the public and congressional staff from this key meeting on US nuclear weapons policy suggests that the administration seeks to discuss and deliberate on its policies largely in secret.

The Pentagon has not released a list of the 150 people at the secret meeting, but according to leaks, they will include scientists and administrators from the three main nuclear weapons laboratories, Los Alamos, Sandia and Livermore, senior officers from the air force and strategic command, weapons contractors

and civilian defense officials.

Requests by Congress to send observers were rejected, and an oversight committee which included academic nuclear experts was disbanded only a few weeks earlier. The purpose of the meeting, at Offutt air force base, only became known after a draft agenda was leaked earlier this year, which included **discussions on a new generation of low-yield "mini-nukes", "bunker-buster" bombs** for possible use against rogue states or organizations armed with nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. While insisting that it has no plans to resume testing, the administration has asked Congress for funds for a project that would cut down the amount of time it would take for the cold war-era test site in Nevada to start functioning again.

## **Bombs in place: The 103 N-power plants, USA Our Nuclear Achilles' heel**

*Rachel's environment & health news #749 August 8, 2002 (Excerpts)*

We need to examine nuclear technology from the viewpoint of rogue weaponry. This is the true Achilles' heel of nuclear technology. The likelihood that radioactive materials will one day be spread across an American city.[3] When it happens, it seems likely to permanently damage, if not end, our traditions of an open society with democratic checks and balances.

In 1982, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) ruled that owners of nuclear plants do not have to design against such threats as kamikaze airliner crashes because to do so would make nuclear electricity too expensive to be competitive. "Reactors could not be effectively protected against such attacks without turning them into virtually impregnable fortresses at much higher cost," the NRC said.[4]

The U.S. has 103 operating nuclear power plants (plus 7 that are closed), most of which are storing intensely-radioactive spent fuel in 40-foot-deep pools of boron-treated water to shield against radiation and to keep the fuel from heating up, catching fire, and releasing radioactivity. Unlike reactor cores, the spent fuel pools are not covered by a concrete containment dome; they are covered only by a metal building.

If the water were to drain out of a spent fuel pool, the fuel would be exposed to a combination of air and steam, causing the zirconium outer "cladding" of the fuel assemblies to catch fire and burn fiercely.[4] The Nuclear Regulatory Commission acknowledges that such a fire could not be extinguished and could burn for days, releasing large amounts of radioactivity.

Water could drain from a spent fuel pool in several ways -- leakage, evaporation, siphoning, pumping, earthquake, reactor failure, accidental or intentional drop of a fuel transport cask, explosion inside or

outside the pool building, or airplane impact. The main concern in spent fuel is cesium-137, a highly-radioactive element that enters food chains masquerading as potassium. The spent fuel currently held in the U.S. contains 20 to 50 million Curies of cesium-137. A single spent fuel pool contains more cesium-137 than was released by all the atmospheric nuclear weapons tests in the Northern Hemisphere combined. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission acknowledges that as much as 100% of the cesium-137 in spent fuel might be released by a zirconium fire.

A spent fuel pool typically holds 5 to 10 times as much radioactivity as the reactor core, and a zirconium fire would likely release more radioactivity than a core meltdown and would probably be easier for a disciplined group of suicidal terrorists to initiate. Draining the pool is all it takes. The Indian Point nuclear power plant, 35 miles north of New York City, currently holds 1589 fuel assemblies in its spent fuel pool (compared to 386 fuel assemblies in the cores of its two operating reactors).[5] The Nuclear Regulatory Commission in 1982 estimated that a core meltdown at Indian Point could cause 46,000 fatalities and 141,000 injuries. [NY TIMES April 4, 2002, pg. A23.]

Many spent fuel pools were not designed to hold all the fuel assemblies they presently hold. Current plans call for a spent fuel mausoleum beneath Yucca Mountain, Nevada, but it won't be ready before 2010 at the earliest and it, too, may never materialize.[6; and NY TIMES Feb. 15, 2002, pg. A19.] Meanwhile more spent fuel is being squeezed into existing pools each year. Astonishingly, the nuclear industry is now planning to build 25 to 50 new nuclear power plants in the U.S. and the Bush administration has announced that it will provide millions of tax dollars, plus relaxed regulations, to help them do it.

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**On the Light Side** - Ten men and one woman, rescued from a sinking ship, were hanging on a rope under a helicopter. The crew yelled down that the load was too heavy and they might all crash in the sea. So the eleven decided that one had to drop off. The woman then made a very touching speech. She said that she would voluntarily let go of the rope because, as a woman, she was used to giving up everything for her husband and kids, and for men in general, without ever getting anything in return. Choked-up by her generosity, all the men started clapping their hands...

## What is the status of the UN today?

by Neil MacKay, *The Sunday Herald* (Glasgow, Scotland), August 24, 2003

Halliday, Former UN Chief, Says Bomb was Payback for Collusion with US

Denis Halliday, the former UN Assistant Secretary-general and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, attacked the UN as an aggressive arm of US foreign policy in the immediate aftermath of the truck bomb attack on the UN mission in Baghdad which killed at least 23 people - many of whom were Halliday's former friends and colleagues.

"The West sees the UN as a benign organization, but the sad reality in much of the world is that the UN is not seen as benign," said Halliday, who was nominated for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize. "The UN Security Council has been taken over and corrupted by the US and UK, particularly with regard to Iraq, Palestine and Israel.

"In Iraq, the UN imposed sustained sanctions that probably killed up to one million people. Children were dying of malnutrition and water-borne diseases. The US and UK bombed the infrastructure in 1991, destroying power, water and sewage systems against the Geneva Convention. It was a great crime against Iraq.

"Thirteen years of sanctions made it impossible for Iraq to repair the damage. That is why we have such tremendous resentment and anger against the UN in Iraq. There is a sense that the UN humiliated the Iraqi people and society. I would use the term genocide to define the use of sanctions against Iraq. Several million Iraqis are suffering cancers because of the use of depleted uranium shells. That's an atrocity. Can you imagine the bitterness from all of this?"

He warned that "further collaboration" between the UN and the US and Britain "would be a disaster for the United Nations as it would be sucked into supporting the illegal occupation of Iraq".

"The UN has been drawn into being an arm of the US - a division of the state department. Kofi Annan was appointed and supported by the US and that has corrupted the independence of the UN. The UN must move quickly to reform itself and improve the security council - it must make clear that the UN and the US are not one and the same."

Halliday said the US should withdraw from Iraq within six months and allow free elections to be held. The UN could then start the work of helping the Iraqis rebuild their nation. "Bush has blown \$75 billion on this war, so he should spend \$75 billion on reconstruction - and the money shouldn't just go to Halliburton [an oil firm now operating in Iraq which was once run by vice-president Dick Cheney] and the boys either. Once the US goes from Iraq, the terrorist will go as well.

"Bush and Blair have misled their countries into war. By invading Iraq and placing the US inside the Islamic world, America is inviting terrorists to come on the attack."

Halliday, who resigned from the UN in 1998, knows his comments will upset London, Washington and Kofi Annan, but he claims many senior UN figures feel the same anger.

[www.commondreams.org/headlines03/0824-04.htm](http://www.commondreams.org/headlines03/0824-04.htm)

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## Rotblat on current N-threats -17 July 2003

Rotblat - who abandoned nuclear physics in disgust after the bombing of Hiroshima, and instead became a pioneer of medical radiation therapy -says 2003 is no time for the peace movement to sit back with complacency and regard the nuclear threat as a fading memory.

"In England we have an opinion poll every month that asks the same question. "What is the greatest

threat to the world's security?"

"During the Cold War more than 40 percent of the public said nuclear weapons were the greatest threat. With the end of the Cold War, that number has dropped to one percent, but the public is wrong. Nuclear weapons have not been dismantled." He frets that terrorists or rogue states could acquire some of (continued on page 5)

**Rothblat-** (continued from page 4)

the hundreds of tonnes of highly enriched uranium floating around Russia since the demise of the Soviet Union, and relatively easily turn such material into a crude bomb with as much power as the one exploded at Hiroshima.

He worries of a nuclear exchange between the United States and China over Taiwan, and he says the threat of nuclear conflict in Korea, or between India and

Pakistan, remains high.

**But his deepest misgivings lie in Washington**, where he says the Bush administration has radically altered the long-accepted rules governing nuclear arms - announcing in 2002 its intention not to consider U.S. nuclear missiles as simply a defensive arsenal of last resort, but as pre-emptive offensive weapons.

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### **The city: Sleeping champion of the anti N-weapon movement**

The cities of New Zealand led a campaign to exclude N-armed US ships from NZ ports. Recognizing the public support for this campaign, the NZ federal government finally adopted this policy. Consider also, that one-hundred-and-seventy-two US cities issued statements last year opposing any war against Iraq. These cities included New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington DC, Boston and Detroit. Cities seem to be about the highest level of government where democracy has much meaning. City politicians are well known to their citizens, who know their backgrounds and who can appear before them to speak at council meetings. City politicians have to deal with human problems face-to-face to a far greater extent than higher levels of government. In many ways, democracy ends at the horizon. Cities, therefore, have the greatest potential as champions of the anti-nuclear weapon movement. Vancouver is fortunate in having a left-of-centre city council who are open to such a role. VANA in Vancouver will certainly be working with this

council to advance the anti-nuclear-weapon struggle. Below is a copy of the Proclamation of "Nagasaki Day" by the City of Vancouver. Note how this is a lot more than a "feel good" announcement.

VANA in Vancouver will certainly approach the newly re-constituted City Peace & Justice Committee, whose first act was to initiate this proclamation, with ideas for actions this campaign might consider, such as:

1. Arranging for the VANA exhibition "Hiroshima, Nagasaki & since" to be shown in Secondary Schools and maybe City Hall (as happened in Winnipeg)

2. A conference of world mayors in Vancouver considering ways of how to "alert their citizens, " to the continuing nuclear weapon threat...."

We will inform members in other areas on our progress with a view to having similar actions elsewhere

### **"NAGASAKI DAY"**

**WHEREAS The thirty-thousand nuclear weapons in the world today, many of them in missiles on hair-trigger-alert and launch-on-warning posture, are the greatest threat to survival, not only for this city, but for all the world's cities and indeed for civilization itself;**

**AND WHEREAS Urgent negotiations are required to produce an agreement to take all nuclear armed missiles off hair-trigger alert;**

**AND WHEREAS All states having nuclear weapons should honour the Non Proliferation Treaty and work for the abolition of these weapons;**

**AND WHEREAS The City of Vancouver sends its warmest greetings to the cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima and proclaims its readiness to make common cause with these cities and other cities of the world in a campaign to alert their citizens to the continuing nuclear weapon threat, in order to mobilize their energies to rid the world of the threat from these monstrous weapons of total destruction**

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, Larry Campbell, Mayor of the City of Vancouver,**

**DO HEREBY PROCLAIM Saturday, August 9th, 2003 as " NAGASAKI DAY" in the City of Vancouver.**

## Iraq, the US and the UN

By Ed Shaffer

“The best laid schemes o’ mice and men gang aft a-gley,” wrote Robbie Burns back in 1785. The present leaders of the United States would have benefited from heeding this warning. Confident that, because of their overwhelming economic and military power they could do anything they wanted, they decided to invade Iraq to steal its oil. It would be so easy, they thought. The *New York Times* of October 12, 2001 – just one month after 9/11- reported that

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“Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz, is laying the groundwork for a strategy that envisions the use of air support and the occupation of southern Iraq with American ground troops to install a Iraqi opposition group based in London at the helm of a new government, the officials and experts said. **Under this notion, American troops would also seize the oil fields around Basra, in southeastern Iraq, and sell the oil to finance the Iraqi opposition in the south and the Kurds in the north, one senior official said.** “

Wolfowitz along with his bosses Rumsfeld, Cheney and Bush were sure that either the

Iraqis would welcome the Americans with open arms or offer no serious opposition. The whole thing looked so easy. This conclusion illustrates how the arrogance of power blinds the powerful to reality.

Wolfowitz’s schemes have now “gang a-gley.” The Americans, having shown themselves incapable of ruling Iraq, are turning to the United Nations for help. They want both troops and money from that body. They are acting like a thief who asks the police to help him haul away his loot. The UN should reject this proposal but come up with an alternative..

By asking for aid, the US has admitted that it is bankrupt. The normal procedure in dealing with a bankrupt enterprise is to remove its management. The UN should therefore place the US in receivership, dismiss the unelected elite who run it and replace it with a competent regime. The regime’s mandate should include rewriting the constitution by abolishing those provisions allowing a person who loses the popular vote to become president. This would be a necessary first step in transforming the United States into a democracy.

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## VANA MEMBERSHIP

**To renew your membership in or to join VANA, please fill out the form below and send, along with a cheque payable to VANA, to Shayle Duffield, RR#1 Z-46, Bowen Island, BC V0N 1G0. The dues are \$30, \$20 of which go to the national office and \$10 to the branch. (You can use the enclosed addressed envelope)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Code \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Prov \_\_\_\_\_

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