

## INTERNATIONAL

# Caribbean leaders pushing ban on nuclear shipments

By Wesley Gibbings  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad (IPS) — Caribbean leaders are hoping for the day when the British, French and Japanese governments will listen to the pleas of their small island nations regarding the shipment of nuclear waste through their waters.

It has been many years since these tiny Caribbean islands urged the international giants to find an alternative route for the shipment of nuclear waste, noting that any disaster in the region will spell doom for their vital tourism industry and perhaps for Caribbean societies altogether.

"With our Caribbean neighbors, we have made our position consistently clear and continue to call upon those responsible for this dangerous practice to be sensitive to the concerns of the peoples of the Caribbean," said Ralph Maraj, Trinidad and Tobago's Foreign Affairs minister.

During the 1997 General Assembly of the United Nations, every independent English-speaking Caribbean nation took the opportunity to voice their objections to the nuclear waste shipment. A UN committee is investigating the matter. The Caribbean nations

will pursue the matter even further this year, given the decision by the United Nations to designate 1998 as the "Year of the Ocean."

As it stands now, the cries of the English-speaking Caribbean seem to have fallen on deaf ears in London, Paris and Tokyo.

Tom Clements of the international environmentalist group, Greenpeace, confirmed that the latest nuclear shipment on the British freighter "Pacific Swan," left Cherbourg, France on Jan. 22 and will pass through the Panama Canal because it is the cheapest and fastest route. British Nuclear Fuels Limited and Cogema in France have confirmed the shipment will definitely pass through the Panama Canal.

As the "Pacific Swan" made its way through the Caribbean Sea enroute to the Panama Canal, Caribbean governments including Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada and Guyana were not informed of the ship's passage through the region.

Dave McIntosh of the Environmental Management Authority in Trinidad and Tobago issued a warning to those involved in shipping the nuclear waste through the region. "The EMA would

rather that these shipments do not take place (because) if there are any accidents, it would destroy the basis for our livelihood," he said.

The EMA has started a media campaign in Trinidad announcing plans to develop "a program to bring the import and export of hazardous waste to Trinidad and Tobago in line with international standards."

He said that Trinidad is required to follow "the stipulations of the Basel Convention, the international agreement on transboundary movement of hazardous waste that has been signed by 109 states.

"As one of the parties to the convention, Trinidad and Tobago must develop legislation to implement the requirement of the Convention. This legislation will include an approval process for import and export of hazardous waste," McIntosh said.

But while Caribbean governments are expressing fears of a nuclear waste disaster in their territorial waters, other governments and international agencies have a different worry on their mind: They are preoccupied with the possibility of terrorist activities.

The Nuclear Control Institute paints a discouraging

picture. In a letter to the Panama Commission, the control institute said that the shipment represents "bad news for the people of the Caribbean, Central America and the Pacific who face radiological catastrophe if a nuclear waste shipment gets into a severe accident, sinks in a storm or is attacked by terrorists. Such an attack could result in both the sinking of the ship and the dispersal of deadly radioactive material."

Observers are wondering if the U.S. Armed Forces in the Panama Canal will be put on full alert during the passage of the Pacific Swan and what other procedures have been drawn up to ensure the safety of the ship.

Clements says it is ironic that while the U.S. government bans the shipment of plutonium from the Panama Canal for security reasons, the same cannot be said of nuclear shipment. In fact, Washington has already indicated that it will not intervene in the current 30-ton shipment through the Canal. Those involved in shipping the nuclear waste dismissed the cries of the small Caribbean nations about a possible disaster, pointing to their safety record during the last 150 shipments.

## WORLD BRIEFS

### DESPITE BAN, KENYA STILL USING DEADLY DDT PESTICIDE

NAKURU, Kenya (PANA) - Water samples from Kenya's Lake Nakuru, a natural habitat for flamingoes and other exotic birds, has shown the presence of dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane, a toxic insecticide commonly known as DDT. Kenya banned DDT's importation a decade ago. Conservationists say samples from the lake, a tourist haven because of its abundant wildlife, show that the DDT in the lake is in its parent form. This means the chemical was recently introduced into the saline lake. Conservationist Ramesh Thampy of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature said it is possible that the chemical is still being imported under another label. He said the survival of the lake, a designated wetland site, was also being endangered by the encroachment of its catchment area by farmers who use fertilizers and other pesticides that finally end up in the lake. This is even more significant because the lake has no outlet. Thampy said better waste disposal management in the town of Nakuru, including the handling of garbage, is needed if the lake is to survive as a useful natural resource.

### ARIZONA PREPARING FOR AFRICAN TRADE, INVESTMENT FORUM IN MAY

DAKAR, Senegal (PANA) - South African President Nelson Mandela, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and First Lady Hillary Rodham-Clinton, are among the dignitaries invited to attend a major African trade and investment forum in Arizona in May. Ami Business Promotions Inc., organizer of the May 11-16 conference and exposition on business, trade and investment opportunities in Africa, say front-line African private and public business leaders and their counterparts in the United States will attend the event at the Scottsdale Old Town Holiday Inn, with support from more than a dozen U.S. federal and state organizations. Bob Sherman, president of the Phoenix-based Ami Business Promotions Inc., told PANA the forum will also witness the official inauguration of the Arizona-Africa Commission, which was set up last year to foster closer trade, cultural and educational ties between the State of Arizona and Africa. Following on the heels of two similar successful forums held in Scottsdale in 1996 and 1997, Sherman said the May conference will emphasize the immense opportunities for the expansion of U.S. commercial relations in all sectors of Africa. For more info contact Ami Business Promotions, Inc., Phone (606) 279-7278, Fax: (606) 2797703, E-mail: amicon@goodnet.com, Website <http://www/goodnet.com/~amicon>

## AZT regimen

(Continued from Page 13)

In 1996, provides the first conclusive scientific data on the preventive effectiveness of a short-course regimen of AZT.

Although final data are not yet in, the CDC has now received conclusive interim data from Thailand.

Enrollment into the study has been completed and over 90 percent of the data has now been reviewed by CDC and the independent Data Safety and Monitoring Board overseeing the research.

Because this regimen has proven both safe and effective, the placebo-control component of CDC's Abidjan study is no longer necessary.

Therefore, the CDC and its collaborators have begun offering all pregnant women enrolled in the Abidjan study the short-course AZT regimen.

Research collaborators worldwide are currently being notified of the findings.

In a joint statement Monday by UNAIDS, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the French National Agency for AIDS Research (ANRS), it was announced that an international meeting will soon be held to discuss the far-reaching scientific and policy implications of these findings.

"As the international health community now faces the challenges of making this preventive opportunity a reality for HIV-infected women worldwide, the really hard work begins," said Dr. Kevin DeCock, director of the Division of HIV Prevention.

"The remarkable news is that we begin with the first conclusive evidence that simpler, practical therapies can

make a difference."

The CDC stressed that these studies were not designed to

address perinatal prevention needs in the United States and other industrialized nations.

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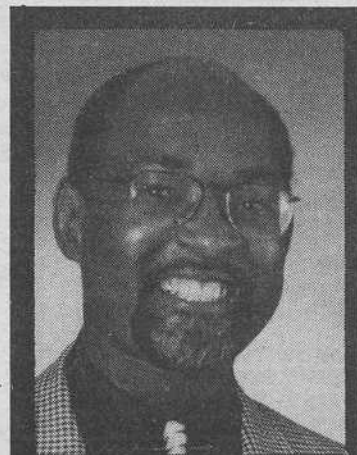
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