

## Our nuclear big friend

Bechtel has a long and tangled history of involvement in the continuing legacy of radioactive contamination from U.S. nuclear projects. Starting with the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb and engineering the first reactor to generate electricity, Bechtel has been heavily involved in both commercial and military nuclear activities.

More than 90 percent of Bechtel's commercial nuclear work is in the U.S but the company is also involved in a few infamous nuclear projects abroad. For instance, Bechtel International Systems Corp. leads the international consortium with the management contract for containing the damaged Chernobyl reactor and its intense radioactivity.

Bechtel is also involved in a project to build two reactors in North Korea, where nuclear issues recently came into the spotlight following the decision of the country's leadership to begin reprocessing commercial nuclear waste to support a nuclear weapons program. Bechtel is also on the forefront of a troubling industry initiative to promote a nuclear power expansion in the U.S. - as if the safety, security, and waste problems associated with the existing 103 reactors aren't bad enough. When public support for nuclear power in the U.S. dropped to an all-time low after the Three Mile Island disaster, Bechtel spearheaded an industry lobbying initiative known as the United States Committee for Energy Awareness to pressure Congress for a renewed commitment to nuclear power. This group later became the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), which is now the nuclear industry's principal lobbying organization. Bechtel's Kennon G. Hess, president of the company's nuclear power division, currently sits on NEI's board of directors.

Another example is the Tarapur nuclear plant in India built by Bechtel. The plant emitted high levels of radioactivity directly into the Arabian Sea, and large quantities of radioactive material including open drums of radioactive waste were found strewn around the facility. In one area, 3,000 to 4,000 gallons of radioactive fuel were leaking per day. In 1974, the Indian government used plutonium produced by the Tarapur reactor to detonate an atomic bomb. (Bechtel: Profiting from Destruction, a collaborative report by CorpWatch Global Exchange Public Citizen, June 2003)

## Reagan and Bechtel

"As governor Reagan proved most helpful to the Bechtels' corporate interests, particularly in the area of nuclear power. Prior to Reagan's election, nuclear-plant construction in California had been moving relatively slowly, largely because of the failure of the state Public Utilities Commission, to raise electric rates significantly. That all began to change when, after intense lobbying by Bechtel and the state's two largest utilities, PG&E and Southern California Edison, Reagan appointed board members to the PUC who hired rates by a total of more than \$2 billion per year" (Laton McCartney, Friends in Highplaces, The Bechtel story : the most secret corporation and how it engineered the world, Simon and Schuster, 1988, p.215)

## Bechtel and McCone

In 1937, Bechtel became joined forces with John McCone's engineering company to form an engineering/construction firm called Bechtel-McCone Company. After the war, the W.A. Bechtel Company bought out John McCone's share in Bechtel-McCone and incorporated as Bechtel Corporation. John McCone went on to head the Atomic Energy Commission and later the CIA. In 1988 Bechtel was awarded a contract to build a chemical plant in Iraq, but construction was halted with the Iraq invasion of Kuwait. On April 17, 2003, following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, USAID awarded a \$680 million reconstruction contract to Bechtel.

## Our nuclear pollution in California

Today in the nuclear weapons complex there are 10,500 contaminated sites, 2.3 million acres under DOE ownership, and 120 million square feet of buildings. The 1995 high base cost, estimated by the DOE Environmental Management program, to clean up the environmental legacy is \$350 billion. That excludes the Nevada Test Site, Hanford, the Savannah and Clinch rivers, and the Columbia river which are considered to be "national sacrifice zones" because the technology does not exist to clean them up. (source : "Estimating the Cold War Mortgage: The 1995 Baseline Environmental Management Report" US DOE Office of Environmental Management Executive Summary, March 1995. "Closing the Circle on the Splitting of the Atom: The Environmental Legacy of Nuclear Weapons Production in the US and What the DOE is Doing About It" US DOE Office of Environmental Management, January 1996).

The damage to the human health not only of Americans, but also to the global population, was predicted by the European Committee on Radiation Risk (ECRR), in a 2003 independent report on low level radiation for the European Parliament, to be 61,600,000 deaths by cancer, 1,600,000 infant deaths, and 1,900,000 foetal deaths. "In addition the ECRR committee predicts a 10% loss of life quality integrated over all diseases and conditions in those who were exposed over the period of global weapons fallout." (source : ECRR: 2003 Recommendations of the European Committee on Radiation Risk - Health Effects of Ionizing Radiation Exposure at Low Doses for Radiation Protection Purposes, Regulator's Edition: Brussels, 2003". [www.euradcom.org](http://www.euradcom.org))

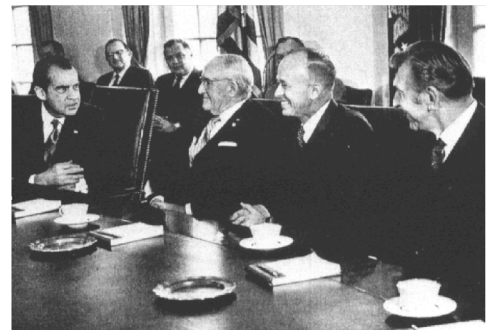
The cost to the predominantly black community at Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco is much greater. Navy ships brought back to Hunter's Point shipyard for decontamination by the Navy, after the first atmospheric tests in the Pacific, led to the establishment of the secret Naval Radiological Defense Lab (NRDL) which operated at the shipyard into the 1970's. Secret experiments exposing animals, plants, soldiers, prisoners, and local residents to radiation were conducted at the NRDL, where 550 civilian scientists worked with 65 Naval officers to study the biological effects of ionizing radiation. The radioactive waste and dead animals from the lab were dumped at the shipyard, filled a back bay, and sunk off the Golden Gate bridge in a battleship and 55 gallon drums, contaminating one of the richest fisheries in the world. The community today has the highest rates of breast cancer in women under 40 in the US, as well as high rates of other radiation related diseases. A former City of San Francisco coroner found that every Hunters Point resident he had done an autopsy on, had cancer no matter what the cause of death.

In an Radiation and Public Health Project (RPHP) study on health improvements by race in San Francisco County, after the shutdown of the Rancho Seco nuclear power plant in 1989, health improved for all ages, diseases and races except for blacks. Black infant mortality also increased after startups and accidents, but unlike improvements for whites and Asians which decreased after the 1989 shutdown, black infant mortality reflected startups and shutdowns at other nuclear power plants in California.

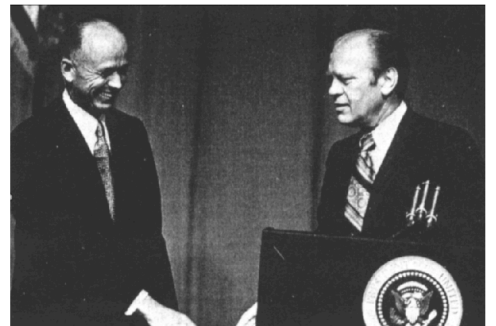
(source : "Depleted Uranium: The Trojan Horse of Nuclear War" by Leuren Moret, World Affairs Journal August 2004. [www.mindfully.org/Nucs/2004/DU-Trojan-Horse1jul04.htm](http://www.mindfully.org/Nucs/2004/DU-Trojan-Horse1jul04.htm). "Depleted uranium: Dirty bombs, dirty missiles, dirty bullets - A death sentence here and abroad" by Leuren Moret, Aug. 18, 2004, San Francisco Bay View. [www.sfbayview.com/081804/Depleteduranium081804.shtml](http://www.sfbayview.com/081804/Depleteduranium081804.shtml))



President Hoover (left) at the Grove.



In January 1971, President Nixon called Steve Bechtel, Jr (second from right), and other construction-industry leaders to the White House to ask their advice in halting the wage-price spiral.



After Nixon resigned, Bechtel turned to President Ford for support in furthering its nuclear development plans. Here Steve Bechtel, Jr., who was serving as chairman of the World Energy Conference Organizing Committee, welcomes Ford to the committee's opening session in Detroit on September 23, 1974. (McCartney, Friends in High places, Simon & Schuster, 1988)