



Peace and Justice Commission

ACTION CALENDAR
December 18, 2012

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Peace and Justice Commission
Submitted by: George Lippman, Chairperson, Peace and Justice Commission
Subject: Formal Request for Information from Federal Agencies Conducting Radiation Fly-over Research Study

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution formally requesting information from the Department of Homeland Security's Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) on its August 27, 2012 and September 1, 2012 radiation fly-over research study, and that copies of the Resolution be sent to the Department of Homeland Security DNDO, the NNSA, President Barack Obama, Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, and Congressperson, Barbara Lee.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

None.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

At its regular meeting on September 10, 2012, the Peace and Justice Commission adopted the following recommendation:

Adopt a Resolution formally requesting that the DHS DNDO and the NNSA release a copy of the results of its recent radiation flyover research project to the City of Berkeley.

M/S/C: (Meola/Bohn)

Ayes: Bohn, El-Quolaq, Haney, Kenin, Lippman, Maran, Meola, Siegel, Sochet

Noes: None.

Abstain: None.

Absent: Nicely (unexcused)

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Peace and Justice Commission, consistent with its mandate to promote peace and justice, locally, nationally and internationally, recommends that the Council support this

Resolution and formally request information on the results of recent radiation fly-over research studies.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the Commission's recommendations or the contents of its Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Robert Meola, Commissioner, Peace and Justice Commission, 510-644-1102
Eric Brenman, Secretary, Peace and Justice Commission, 510-981-5114

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Background Materials

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

REQUEST INFORMATION FROM THE DHS DNDO AND NNSA REGARDING THE
FLY-OVER RADIATION STUDY THEY CONDUCTED IN THE BAY AREA

WHEREAS, the Peace and Justice Commission advises the City Council on all matters relating to the City of Berkeley's role in issues of peace and social justice (Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Chapter 3.68.070); and

WHEREAS, the Department of Homeland Security's Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) conducted a joint research project via helicopter flyovers of the Bay Area between August 27 and September 1 of this year, 2012, "to assess natural background radiation levels"; and

WHEREAS, due to radioactive pollution produced in the environment since July 16, 1945, the research project is misidentified and cannot measure naturally occurring background radiation levels.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City of Berkeley formally requests the DHS DNDO and the NNSA to release a copy of the results of that flyover research project to the City of Berkeley.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the results report specifically and individually on the amounts and types of radiation detected in the areas of the Lawrence Berkeley Labs and atom smashing facilities, the Lawrence Livermore Labs and the former military sites at Treasure Island and Hunters Point in San Francisco as well as all other areas flown over in the course of the research project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be sent to the Department of Homeland Security Nuclear Detection Office, the National Nuclear Security Administration, President Barack Obama, Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, and Congressperson, Barbara Lee. A record signature copy of said Resolution to be on file in the office of the City Clerk.

Western States Legal Foundation

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August 30, 2012

Department of Homeland Security Domestic Nuclear Detection (DNDO) Public Affairs Office

To Whom it May Concern:

We have received a number of inquiries and are curious ourselves about the helicopter repeatedly flying over the area around office in Oakland, California. According to the NNSA's press release of August 24, 2012, this helicopter is "taking measurements of naturally-occurring background radiation." The press release is rather vague in its description of the purpose of these measurements.

It is also incorrect in its characterization of current levels of radiation being "naturally-occurring." Prior to July 16, 1945 it would have been possible to measure naturally occurring levels of background radiation, but this has not been the case for 67 years. The U.S. "Trinity" test at Alamogordo, New Mexico, followed in short order by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, produced the first wind-borne plumes of long-lived radioactive particles to traverse the globe. Since that time, over 2,000 nuclear test explosions have been conducted around the world, above ground, underwater and underground, dumping huge amounts of radiation into the environment. 25% were exploded in the atmosphere, over 200 of these by the United States. Major and routine releases of radiation from more than 400 nuclear power plants around the world, including the catastrophic accidents at Three-Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima – which is ongoing – have also contributed. At the local/regional level, the Lawrence Berkeley Lab (originally called the Lawrence Berkeley Radiation Lab), the Lawrence Livermore National nuclear weapons Lab, the General Electric research reactors at Vallecitos, the decontamination of naval vessels exposed to fallout from atmospheric nuclear tests in the Pacific at Hunters Point, and the transportation of nuclear weapons and nuclear fuel at sea and over land have made their own contributions. You may be able to come up with a 2012 "baseline" radiation measurement, but it will not be from "naturally-occurring" radiation.

The community notice sent by the Oakland Police Department suggested that we contact your office for more information about the helicopter flyovers. We have some questions:

- 1) What is the significance of the timing of this data collection?
- 2) What criteria was used in selecting the areas for the flyovers?
- 3) What will the data be used for?

- 4) Will a report on the findings be released to the public? If so, when?
- 5) Are additional flyovers planned for the future? Is so, when and where?

Western States Legal Foundation was established in 1982, "To secure, for individuals and organizations seeking to protect the natural environment, all constitutional, civil and statutory rights to which they are entitled under the law." We believe that the public has a right to know the answers to the above questions. Thank you for your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Cabasso
Executive Director

Op-Ed submitted to the “San Francisco Chronicle” by Jacqueline Cabasso

This week, residents of San Francisco, Pacifica and Oakland are experiencing a low-flying helicopter criss-crossing their neighborhoods. According to the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), this helicopter is “taking measurements of naturally-occurring background radiation.”

The NNSA’s press release is misleading in its characterization of current levels of radiation as “naturally-occurring.” Prior to July 16, 1945 it would have been possible to measure naturally occurring levels of background radiation, but this has not been the case for 67 years. The U.S. “Trinity” test at Alamogordo, New Mexico, followed in short order by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, produced the first wind-borne plumes of long-lived radioactive particles to traverse the globe. Since that time, over 2,000 nuclear test explosions have been conducted around the world – above ground, underwater and underground – dumping huge amounts of radiation into the environment. 25% were exploded in the atmosphere, over 200 of these by the United States. Major and routine releases of radiation from more than 400 nuclear power plants worldwide, including the catastrophic accidents at Three-Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima have also contributed.

At the local/regional level, the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory (originally called the Lawrence Berkeley Radiation Laboratory), the Lawrence Livermore National nuclear weapons Laboratory, the General Electric research reactors at Vallecitos, the decontamination at Hunters Point of Navy ships exposed to fallout from U.S. atmospheric nuclear tests in the Pacific, and the transportation of nuclear weapons and nuclear fuel at sea and over land, have made their own contributions of long-lived man-made radiation. It may be possible to come up with 2012 “baseline” radiation measurements, but they will not be from “naturally-occurring” radiation.

We have some questions. What is the significance of the timing of this data collection? What criteria were used in selecting the areas for the flyovers? How will the data be used? Will a report on the findings be released to the public? Are additional flyovers planned for the future? We believe the public has a right to know the answers to these questions.

Almost seven decades into the nuclear age, it is disingenuous for our government to perpetuate the myth of “naturally-occurring background radiation.” Like global warming, radioactive contamination of the environment is almost entirely the result of human activities. These include uranium mining and processing, generation of nuclear energy, and production, use and testing of nuclear weapons. Invisible radioactive isotopes, some of which remain lethal for hundreds of thousands of years, don’t respect national borders and present a cumulative, universal threat to public health, leading to cancers, leukemia, and birth defects.

Rather than misleading the public, our government should provide reliable information about current sources of radioactive pollution, whether from the Livermore Lab or the

ongoing releases from Fukushima, and their potential health impacts. Instead of continuing to invest in life-threatening nuclear technology, the U.S. should lead negotiations for the global elimination of nuclear weapons and nuclear power, investing instead in life-affirming sustainable, renewable energy sources, protection of public health, and long-term stewardship of deadly radioactive nuclear waste.

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Excerpt From:

Councilmember Susan Wengraf CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 6

Newsletter #22

September 2012

Low-flying Helicopter

Late on the afternoon of August 29th, after enduring several hours of very loud noise and vibrations, I received this press release from the National Nuclear Security Administration via the Berkeley Police Department. The helicopter was flying directly over my home at about 300 feet above the ground all afternoon. I know that many of you had a similar experience. I apologize for the lack of information that you were given regarding these maneuvers. I am personally not satisfied with the information and intend to pursue it further.



Press Release

Aerial Survey of Bay Area Planned Aug. 27 - Sept. 1

Beginning Aug. 27, a helicopter may be seen flying at a low-level altitude over portions of San Francisco, Pacifica and Oakland, Calif. The helicopter will be taking measurements of naturally-occurring background radiation. The helicopter will make daily flights between Aug. 27 and Sept. 1, 2012.

The flyovers are a part of a joint research project between the Department of Homeland Security's Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) to assess natural background radiation levels. The survey will cover approximately 69 square miles over the selected locations. NNSA's twin-engine Bell 412 helicopter, operated by the Remote Sensing Laboratory Aerial Measuring System in Las Vegas, Nev., will perform the survey. The helicopter will fly in a grid pattern over the locations about 300 feet above the ground. The

flights will be limited to daylight hours and the survey is estimated to take about five days to complete.

The background data will be used by DNDO and NNSA to improve aerial radiation measurement capabilities used by local, state and federal entities.

