

Thomas D'Agostino, the acting head of NNSA, issued a statement after the report was released saying its recommendations were "consistent with NNSA's ongoing plans to move forward with RRW."

Jim Dawson

Chemical society reinstates ousted Iranian members

Last December the American Chemical Society rescinded the memberships of 36 scientists in Iran and 1 in Sudan, claiming the move was necessary to adhere to US law. In mid-April the society applied to the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) for a license to provide membership services to scientists in countries under trade sanctions. Then, in a turnaround, ACS sent a letter in mid-May to the ousted scientists welcoming them back as members.

In a widely circulated letter dated 30 April, ACS executive director and CEO Madeleine Jacobs explains that lawyers reviewed OFAC regulations and consulted with OFAC before advising ACS that providing membership services to sanctioned countries violates US law. Surprisingly, Jacobs says she learned about the expulsions from a 30 March report in *Science*. "We had a serious breakdown in communications," she writes.

Some ACS members and members of other professional societies were upset that the Iranians were expelled and that Jacobs did not immediately reverse the decision. "A lot of people are getting a lot of letters and e-mails about this, from people in the US and outside," Zafra Lerman, chair of ACS's subcommittee on scientific freedom and human rights, said before the reversal was announced. They are asking, she added, why, if the government did not come to ACS, is ACS taking and standing by this preemptive action? Indeed, OFAC spokesperson Molly Millerwise said, "There hasn't been a new restriction announced by OFAC... [but] guidance can be open to interpretation."

Hamid Javadi, an engineer at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California and president of the Iranian-American Physicists Network Group, said, "We are worried that the action by ACS may force other scientific organizations to follow suit." Expelling people "is wrong," he added. "It dismisses the most scientifically educated, independent, critical thinking, and open-minded members of Iran as US OFAC tries to contain the Iranian government."

Other scientific organizations kept an eye on the matter. But Cecelia Jankowski, managing director of regional activities for the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers—which was at the center of an earlier publishing battle with OFAC (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, May 2004, page 28)—said, "We have not seen anything new from OFAC related to membership activities in the past couple of years." Added American Physical Society associate executive officer Alan Chodos, "APS is not planning to do anything similar to what ACS did." Both IEEE and APS have members in Iran.

In her 30 April letter, it seemed Jacobs was not changing the ACS's course of action. But on 11 May, ACS reinstated the 14 ousted Iranian scientists who had been paid-up members. "To express our regret over the disruption of your membership, we are reinstating your ACS membership, and your ACS membership dues for the next 12 months are being paid for you," the society wrote to the former members. The other 22, and the scientist in Sudan, can renew their memberships.

The letter—which ACS officials declined to share, but which was disclosed to *PHYSICS TODAY* by another source—goes on to say that the reinstatement follows additional contact with OFAC "and our own rigorous review of federal requirements." As for the license application ACS submitted to OFAC, it's still pending, says Jacobs. She adds that ACS "is planning to work with the National Academy of Sciences and other scientific societies to get OFAC to clarify what is and isn't allowed in terms of scientific membership services."

"I can't believe it took so long," Lerman says. "But what ACS did is the right thing. And I am very happy with the solution."

Toni Feder

Purdue reopens fusion fraud probe

Under pressure from Congress, Purdue University has started a new investigation into possible research misconduct by Rusi Taleyarkhan, a faculty member who claimed in a 2002 paper in *Science* that he had achieved sonofusion in an experiment at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, April 2002, page 16). The new investigation comes after a staff report by the subcommittee on investigations and oversight of the House Committee on Science and Technology sharply criticized earlier, more

limited investigations by Purdue officials into issues related to the publication of Taleyarkhan's research.

Taleyarkhan, in an e-mail to the *New York Times*, called the congressional staff report "a gross travesty of justice."

In 2006 Purdue set up a fact-finding committee that focused not on the validity of Taleyarkhan's original research but on "independent" follow-up papers confirming the research. Those papers listed as coauthors two graduate students who worked with Taleyarkhan. One of the students later said he had nothing to do with the writing of the papers, and the other refused to discuss who did. Purdue's fact-finding committee's report had specific allegations of fraud, the congressional report says, but Purdue officials responded by setting up another inquiry committee to undertake another fact-finding investigation. That investigation concluded that there was no research misconduct as defined by Purdue's research standards. Attempts by several independent groups, including a group sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, to replicate Taleyarkhan's sonofusion work have failed.

In discussions with Purdue officials about beginning a new investigation, subcommittee chairman Brad Miller (D-NC) said he was "disappointed to learn" that three of the members selected to conduct the new probe were on the panel that did the previous investigation. Miller insisted, and Purdue officials have now agreed, on appointing at least one new member.

Congress is involved in the issue because the research was conducted at a national laboratory with some federal funding. The science committee's investigations subcommittee was shut down when Republicans took control of the House 12 years ago but was reestablished when Democrats won the House last November.

Jim Dawson

news notes

Reactor security. Fingerprinting and criminal background checks are now required to gain unescorted access to US research and test reactors. Most of the 33 such reactors are operated by universities, with a few at company and government labs. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) announced the tightened security measures on 1 May.

Similar measures were already in force for power reactors, but security at reactors used for educational purposes had been less strict.

The new order affects only people who need access to critical areas, mainly staff who operate the reactor or deal with its fuel, says David Moncton, director of MIT's nuclear research reactor—one of a handful in the country that still use highly enriched uranium. Students and others will still have access to the “experimental floor and other places where experimenters are allowed to go,” he says. The order presents “no significant burden,” he adds. “And to the extent that it does, it’s an increase in security—maybe marginal, because, at least at MIT, we were already very secure.”

The move is in accord with the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and “is one of many steps the NRC has taken in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, to keep US research reactors secure,” NRC chairman Dale Klein said in a press statement. **TF**

Lunar partners. NASA and the British National Space Centre—which coordinates UK civil space policy—signed an agreement in April to cooperate on NASA's Moon-Mars program.

“Space exploration is an endeavor in which the US and UK have a long history of bilateral cooperation to celebrate

per-year management contract for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California to a team led by Bechtel National and the University of California. The winning team, which also includes BWX Technologies and the Washington Group International, is almost identical to the consortium that was awarded the 2005 management contract for Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. National Nuclear Security Administration official C. S. Przybylek, who made the final decision on the bids for the contract, said there are some differences between the two groups—the University of California is the lead partner at LLNL, while Bechtel will be the lead partner at LLNL. The losing bid was from a team led by Northrop Grumman Corp.

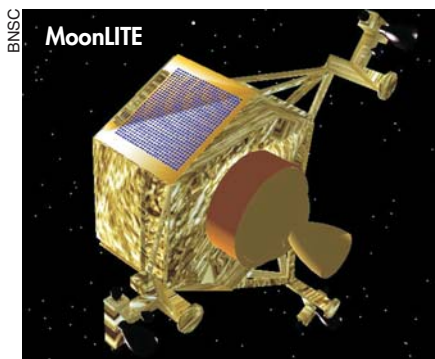
The University of California has managed both labs since they were created, but a series of security problems at LLNL, and to a lesser extent at LLNL, led Congress in 2003 to require that the contracts be put out for bid. Bechtel, a global engineering, construction, and project management company, is expected to tighten up management practices at both labs.

The new LLNL contract also includes as partners Battelle Memorial Institute, four small business subcontractors, and Texas A&M University in College Station. The contract begins 1 October 2007 and runs for seven years. It can then be extended annually for up to 13 years after the initial 7-year period. George Miller will stay on as director. **JLD**

Chronicle corporate physics. A new endowment at the American Institute of Physics (AIP) will support the preservation of the history of physicists in industry. The Marc H. Brodsky Fund for Oral History of Physicists in Industry honors Brodsky's 13-year role as the institute's executive director and CEO (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, July 2006, page 22) and his career as a corporate physicist.

The endowment will pay for the continuation of a program begun in 2002. More than 100 scientists have been interviewed thus far under the History of Physicists in Industry project (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, April 2007, page 28), but the original funding runs out this December. Among the endowment's lead donors is Brodsky's brother Julian, cofounder and vice chairman of Comcast Corp. A champion of libraries and history, Julian Brodsky had seen a Comcast fire destroy valuable archives, and he wanted to support the AIP History Center project while commemorating his brother's career.

Marc Brodsky, who called the endowment “very gratifying,” said it is critical to continue the oral history program—the only one of its kind in the US, according to project director Joe Anderson—because records of corporate physicists' lives and work are spotty and scarce. AIP, which publishes *PHYSICS TODAY*, hopes to raise the endowment, now at \$90 700, to \$2 million. **KHK ■**



and build upon,” says NASA administrator Michael D. Griffin. The UK has already completed a feasibility study of two robotic mission options to the surface of the Moon: MoonRaker, a small propulsive lander to provide in situ geological dating, and MoonLITE, a dual-purpose satellite equipped with missile-shaped penetrators carrying seismometers to investigate the lunar interior and powerful telecommunications equipment to test at the Moon.

The agreement is part of an effort by 14 space agencies to create a global exploration strategy for visits to the Moon and Mars. More multilateral agreements with other space agencies are expected this summer. **PKG**

LLNL contract. The US Department of Energy awarded the \$45.5 million-

web watch

To suggest topics or sites for Web Watch, please visit <http://www.physicstoday.org/suggestwebwatch.html>. Compiled and edited by Charles Day

<http://www.phy.mtu.edu/facilities/NightSky.html>

Bob Nemiroff of Michigan Technological University and his collaborators run the **Night Sky Live Global Observatory**, a worldwide network of portable fisheye telescopes that continually monitor and archive the night sky. You can view the sky from any of the network's telescopes by visiting the observatory's website.



<http://www.backwoodshome.com/energy.html>



The maverick men and women who write for **Backwoods Home Magazine** have extensive practical experience with the frugal use of energy. Articles on making and using a solar cooker, powering medical equipment during a utility blackout, and other topics are freely available on the magazine's website.

<http://www.scitopia.org>

Through **Scitopia** you can now search for articles in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings published by 13 scientific societies, including the American Geophysical Union, the American Institute of Physics, the American Physical Society, and the Optical Society of America. Scitopia goes live in June.

scitopia.org