

STATE AND NATIONAL

Study says AIDS will not have lasting effect on U.S. society

By Anna Burdeshaw
Staff Writer

Despite earlier fears that the spread of AIDS eventually would devastate all sectors of American society, the National Research Council said in a report released last Thursday that the disease would remain confined primarily to "socially marginalized groups."

The NRC, a division of the National Academy of Sciences, is a private organization that is often commissioned by Congress to advise the federal government on scientific issues. Compiled by an 11-member panel, the report was the result of a study begun in 1989 designed to evaluate the social impact of AIDS in

the United States.

In the report, the panel concluded that, while AIDS had caused some temporary changes in health care, clinical research and education, it did not believe these changes would be permanent.

"There were, in the beginning, genuine fears that everyone is at risk for AIDS," said Dr. James Trussell, director of the Office of Population Research and a member of the committee in charge of the study. But Trussell said homosexual males and IV drug users were and would remain the only groups affected in epidemic proportions.

"There will be people (outside of these groups) that will be infected,"

Trussell said. "(But) there is no evidence that an epidemic will develop."

The report drew criticism from some AIDS activist groups who claimed that the panel largely ignored many aspects of society clearly influenced by the disease.

"I thought it was a shocking report," said Paul Boneberg, executive director of Mobilization Against AIDS. "It was insensitive to the point of being prejudiced."

Boneberg said the study had not considered the effect of AIDS on art, culture, foreign relations or the sexual behavior of most Americans.

Pointing to the AIDS-awareness demonstration "A Day Without Art," during

which pieces of artwork were covered or removed from display throughout the country, Boneberg said "the impact on the arts will influence American culture for many years."

Boneberg said he thought it was impossible for any part of society to escape the effect of AIDS.

"There is no reason to believe that HIV will remain in marginalized communities," Boneberg said. "HIV is globally predicted to affect 100 million people by the year 2000."

Tom Skinner, spokesman for the Centers for Disease Control, an Atlanta-based disease monitoring facility, said that 253,448 people in the United States currently had cases of full-blown AIDS.

Jeff Levi, director of Public Policy and Program Development at the AIDS Action Foundation, could not be reached for comment but said in a prepared

statement that he also disagreed with some of the panel's conclusions.

"The report's detailed analysis belies some of its rhetoric about a society unaffected by AIDS," Levi said. "The report discusses at length the dramatic changes in how public health programs are conducted, how clinical research is done, and how drugs are regulated. These are not small changes."

Trussell defended the study's findings, saying the members of the panel still were concerned about the spread of AIDS.

"All of us think that HIV is a terrible thing," Trussell said. "We are all concerned about it."

He added that, despite the results of the study, the public should not dismiss the disease.

"Our fear is that once the public at large recognizes that homosexual males and IV drug users are the only high-risk

groups, they will lose interest," Trussell said.

Levi said in his statement that while previous administrations might have allowed the public to become less concerned about AIDS, he believed President Bill Clinton would emphasize AIDS-related issues.

"With a new president and a new secretary of health and human services in office committed to responding responsibly and effectively to this epidemic, AIDS may well not 'disappear' from the sociopolitical radar screen, as this report suggests," Levi said.

Boneberg also said he was optimistic about the Clinton administration's stance on the spread of AIDS.

"President Clinton shows as profound an understanding of the disease as any federal official I've ever seen," Boneberg said.

Nuclear plant's troubles continue

By Lesley Gilbert
Staff Writer

A power plant owned by Carolina Power & Light has remained on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's list of troubled nuclear facilities following a six-month evaluation period.

Ken Clark, a spokesman for NRC's southeast regional office, said a given nuclear plant's status was determined at a meeting of the five NRC commissioners, who were briefed about the facilities' operating competence by officials from regional inspection and enforcement offices.

Clark said being placed on the commission's watch list indicated that technical problems had been found

within the plant, located in Brunswick, N.C.

"It means (the plant) has been designated by the NRC staff as a plant which the NRC feels needs more additional monitoring than perhaps others do," Clark said.

Although the plant was not placed on the NRC watch list until July 1992, it halted external operations in April 1992 to deal with maintenance problems, said Elizabeth Bean, a spokeswoman for the Brunswick Plant.

Clark said that several problems at the Brunswick plant were identified as early as 1987 but that CP&L had taken no steps to remedy them until 1992.

Clark said one of the problems with the plant involved a flaw in the construction of the diesel generator building's walls, a problem that originated approximately 20 years ago when the building was constructed.

Wade Pridden, a CP&L spokesman in Raleigh, said the maintenance problems at the Brunswick plant were not dangerous.

"The diesel generator is a backup power source, which is a totally separate building from the reactor building," he said.

Pridden said the Brunswick plant's diesel generator building had failed to meet seismic requirements that determine whether the building is capable of withstanding a severe earthquake.

He also said the walls were not constructed properly when the structure was built.

In addition, Clark said the plant was plagued by a backlog of maintenance problems.

"There is a good deal of corrosion, presumably because of its proximity to the ocean," Clark said. "The material condition of the plant, while acceptable, needs improvement."

Clark added that the plant would remain on the watch list for an additional six months, and that at the end of six months, the plant would be reassessed by the NRC.

Although Clark said the circumstances causing the plant to be placed on close watch were not dangerous, he said it was atypical for a power plant to be put on the watch list.

"Of the 110 commercial nuclear power plants licensed to operate, there are only a total of seven reactors at four sites on the watch list," he said.

Pridden said that, of CP&L's nuclear power plants, the Brunswick plant was the only one ever to have been placed on the NRC's watch list.

He said, "Currently we are conducting lots of investigations and analyses to see if there are any other problems."

Police seek link between shootings at CIA, Pakistani's assassination

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Police are investigating a possible connection between the Pakistani sought in the shooting deaths of two CIA employees and the 1984 assassination of a Pakistani politician with the same last name, officials said Wednesday.

Investigators have also questioned the owners of the courier service where the suspect, Mir Aimal Kansi, worked until the day before the shooting. The service is owned by the son of Victor Marchetti, a former high-level CIA official.

Meanwhile, investigators were sifting through papers with names and phone numbers on them found in a suitcase confiscated by police at the apartment Kansi shared with a roommate in Reston, Va., a suburb west of the capital.

Fairfax County police spokesman Robert Wall said investigators were looking to see if Kansi was connected in any way to Malik Gul Hasan Kansi, a politician killed by three gunmen in the provincial capital of Quetta in June 1984. He said police did not have information beyond the fact that both men had the same last name.

It was not immediately clear what led authorities to focus on the assassination. Kansi did not mention the slain politician's name on an application for asylum that he filed with the Immigration and Naturalization Service on Feb. 3, 1992, said an INS official.

A national and international search was under way for Kansi, who was last

seen on Jan. 25, the day he is accused of opening fire into cars waiting at a stoplight to turn into CIA headquarters near Washington. Two agency employees were killed and three other men were wounded—two of them also CIA workers.

The police and FBI were trying to determine whether Kansi had left the United States. They were also investigating in North Carolina, where they suggested Kansi might have bought a bulletproof vest that was found among his belongings, said Fairfax County prosecutor Robert Horan.

According to the warrant obtained by Fairfax County police for a search of Kansi's belongings, his roommate, Zahed Mir, said Kansi called him long distance on Jan. 30. Mir filed a missing persons report on Kansi with police on Jan. 28.

Mir said Kansi called to say "he had to leave in a hurry, that someone would be coming to the apartment to get his possessions, and that he would not be back," according to the affidavit.

Marchetti, who shares office space with his son Chris in Herndon, Va., said Kansi had last worked on Jan. 24, the day before the shooting, and then took time off saying he had to tend to a sick relative in North Carolina.

He said some drivers working for Excel Courier Service had security clearance to enter the CIA headquarters compound for deliveries. He said Kansi, who came to work for the service about six months ago, was not among those with clearance.

Marchetti, who resigned from the agency in the 1970s to protest its involvement in covert activity, has been a staunch critic since then and said he did not know whether Kansi knew any of his victims.

Marchetti said he and his son did not hear from Kansi and did not know what had happened until they were questioned by the FBI and local police. He described Kansi as polite and quiet, saying he would sometimes bring muffins and carrot bread for the secretaries in the office.

Mir agreed to a police search of his apartment on Feb. 8, at which time police found an AK-47 assault rifle under a couch, the affidavit said. Ballistics experts matched the rifle with the one used in the CIA shootings.

Police found two handguns and more than 600 rounds of ammunition in a suitcase in Kansi's apartment, according to a copy of the search warrant inventory released Wednesday. The original search warrant said police hoped to find diaries, but the inventory showed they found papers but no diaries.

INS experts also matched fingerprints found on shell casings at the scene with those in an asylum request filed by Kansi in Arlington, Va., on Feb. 3, 1992, said an INS official.

Kansi sought asylum on grounds that he feared persecution if he returned to his country—standard practice for such requests—and received a one-year work permit pending a review of his case, said the official.

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