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maintain sophisticated life support systems. Reactors, therefore, are often kept operational in unsafe conditions. Land based reactors would be shut down in similar circumstances.

The growth in the number of naval nuclear reactors has produced a major environmental threat. At the same time, it has also been the precondition for the escalation of the naval arms race. Reactors have made it possible for five countries to operate mobile silos in the form of ballistic missile submarines. Development of the nuclear-powered attack submarine has allowed nuclear navies to spread to every corner of the planet.

A ban on naval nuclear propulsion would serve two objectives. It would eliminate the multiple environmental threats posed by reactors at sea. And it would choke off the naval arms race, which is perhaps the most unpredictable and deadly dimension of the super-powers' military confrontation.

A Pattern of Accidents

The risk of nuclear accidents increases when reactors and nuclear weapons are aboard the same vessels and where maritime forces operate on the verge of a military confrontation. Every day the nuclear navies wage an invisible war on the high seas, signalling aggressive intentions to the other side, searching for weaknesses, and demonstrating a readiness to fight. "We rub up against the Soviets every single day," according to former U.S. Secretary of Navy John Lehman.

Sinkings, collisions, radioactive discharge, and other major accidents, are a permanent feature of the naval arms race. In a forthcoming study, William Arkin, Director of the National Security Program at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington and Joshua Handler, Greenpeace Researcher, document

hundreds of such accidents at sea.

Risk of a major accident is compounded by a shroud of secrecy. In the United States, more than any other branch of the armed forces, the navy exercises great autonomy from civilian authority in its own country and abroad. For example, U.S. warships will neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons on board. Thus during 1987 when nuclear-armed warships visited Canadian harbors 64 times, there was never an official acknowledgment of the presence of nuclear weapons. Environmental assessment of potential risks was ruled out in advance.

COUNTRIES owning nuclear navies face problems with storage of spent fuel and disposal of old radioactive reactors and even radioactive hulls. Currently twelve nuclear submarines are awaiting disposal in Bremerton, Washington alone. In his "Survey of Radioactivity in Sediments in the Vicinity of Naval Establishments in the U.K." Dr. Paul Johnston of the University of London, recorded levels of radioactivity around the naval bases of Faslane and Holy Loch, Scotland four to nine times higher than previously published official figures. "Although the high readings we have found are still officially termed 'acceptable,' any increase of radioactivity involves some risk to health, and high levels of leukemia deaths have been found around

Holy Loch and the refit yards around Rosyth and Devonport," said Colin Hines of Greenpeace.

Nuclear Allergy

Nuclear allergy — opposition to nuclear armed and nuclear powered warships visits — is spreading rapidly. Beginning in New Zealand, cities in Australia, Japan, the South Pacific, Western Europe, and now the Soviet Union, are mobilizing to block nuclear ships' entry into populated harbors. Recently Vancouver City Council sent a resolution to the federal government asking it to enforce the city's status as a nuclear weapons free zone and to keep nuclear warships out of its harbor.

Internationally, the time is right to begin negotiations aimed at banning naval nuclear weapons and nuclear propulsion. Having cancelled its planned nuclear submarine program, Canada could add weight to this process. Prime Minister Mulroney has an opportunity to turn a fiscal, political, military, and environmental liability into an international initiative. ■

David Kraft is Disarmament Coordinator of Greenpeace.



Louise Rogers of Hamilton asks readers to suggest ways of aiding the transition for military personnel in the bases being closed by the new budget. We'll gladly publish your ideas.

The Canadian Council for International Cooperation is developing a Directory of Canadian Women with expertise in Global Survival Policy issues. Contact Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg at CCIC, 1 Nicholas St., 3rd Floor, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 7B7. 613/ 236-4547.