

October shortly after it took off from the airport at Dakar, Senegal. Three of the four crew members aboard were killed in the crash. Some 3000 gallons of the pesticide malathion were released in the air over the sea by the crew to lighten the plane in an attempt to return to the airport.

Concern about the effects of pesticide in the waters off the populous Cap-Vert peninsula prompted Senegal's Ministry of Health to close beaches in the vicinity and issue media warnings against fishing in the area or eating seafood from there. U.S. entomologists in Senegal at the time surveyed the site of the crash and reported no signs of pesticide pollution. AID officials say no complaints of ill effects have been recorded. ■

JOHN WALSH

Campaign Promises Delay Waste Program

Election politics have upset the government's plans to find a permanent burial place for high-level nuclear wastes. Perhaps the greatest disruption has been in the state of Washington. Prompted by this fall's campaigns, the Department of Energy (DOE) has promised to put off for at least a year all geological research on candidate sites, forcing delays in the entire program.

Energy Secretary John Herrington made this promise in a letter to Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) in mid-October. Gorton, who chairs the Senate commerce subcommittee on science, was challenged in a close race by Brock Adams, the former Democratic secretary of transportation. The candidates seemed to strive to outdo one another in promises to keep a nuclear waste site out of Washington.

The furor began with Herrington's decision in May to make Washington one of three final candidates for the waste facility. Since then, opponents of the program have discovered papers showing that DOE rearranged the ranking of sites recommended by a technical review so that Washington came out not fifth, but third in desirability. Adams called for Herrington's resignation and Gorton's defeat. Gorton has replied by saying that if Democrats take over the Senate, the chairmanship of a key committee could pass from a Northwesterner to a Southerner, who would be happy to have nuclear waste go to Washington rather than his own state of Mississippi, which also is on the list of candidate waste sites.

Like many others this year, the Washington campaign had a strong parochial flavor. ■ ELIOT MARSHALL

Briefing:

Academy Members Skeptical on SDI

Members of the National Academy of Sciences in disciplines relevant to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) oppose the program, at least in its present form, by a wide margin, and they are highly skeptical that it could ever result in survivable and cost-effective defense of population centers, according to a poll conducted by Cornell University's Institute for Social and Economic research.

The survey, in which 451 of 634 eligible Academy members in the physical, mathematical, and engineering sciences took part, found that only 9.8% of the respondents support or strongly support the program, while 25% said they oppose it and a further 54.4% said they are strongly opposed.

Asked whether an SDI system is likely to be survivable and cost effective at the margin—the Administration's chief criteria—within 25 years, 11.6% rated the chances even or better, 25.5% said the prospects are poor, and 55.2% felt the odds are extremely poor. (Some 60.8% of the respondents claimed to be familiar or very familiar with the technological issues relevant to SDI, while 31.5% said they were slightly familiar and 7.6% said they were not familiar.)

Perhaps not surprisingly in view of the other findings, 84.5% said they believe that scientific review has not played a sufficiently important role in structuring the SDI program, and about 60% felt the program should receive less than \$1.5 billion a year, less than half the current level of funding. ■ C.N.

Chipmakers Protest

American semiconductor makers recently fired a warning shot, threatening to resume a legal battle against Japanese chip imports if action they desire does not take place by 15 November. George Scalise, chairman of the public policy committee of the Semiconductor Industry Association, wrote to the U.S. Trade Representative that Japanese companies have "completely ignored" the trade agreement reached 3 months ago. He accused them of committing "outright violations" by selling chips at less than fair market prices in Japan and other countries.

If the issue cannot be resolved by 15 November, Scalise wrote, he will urge the U.S. government to take new action against Japanese imports. Trade officials from both countries are meeting to try to iron out these differences. ■ E.M.

AAU's Poem to Itself

America's major research universities, represented in Washington by the Association of American Universities, took steps at a recent meeting to define themselves for all interested parties—namely, members of Congress, the Administration, and the press. The task was accomplished by Washington University chancellor William Danforth who wrote that the universities are:

rich, but needy;
powerful, but loved;
able to pursue institutional
self-interest, but in a spirit
of altruism;
elite, but of the people;
effective, but not professional;
pure, but politically astute and
adept;
economically successful, but
incorruptible.

The AAU has asked that the poem be posted in "appropriate places." ■ B.J.C.

Blueprint for R&D

U.S. universities plan to spend a total of \$7.5 billion to build and renovate research facilities in the next 5 years, including \$1.7 billion on projects now in progress. A survey of 165 doctorate-granting institutions done for the National Science Foundation indicates that the 50 universities with the highest R&D expenditures average three times as much space designated for research as institutions with smaller R&D budgets. According to the survey, the universities expect the federal government to fund only 6% of the construction planned through 1991. State governments are counted on to provide two-fifths of the total. ■ J.W.

Comings and Goings

James D. Ebert will become director of the Chesapeake Bay Institute at Johns Hopkins University next year, following his retirement as president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Ebert will be returning to his alma mater; he earned a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins in 1950 and held faculty positions there in biology and embryology from 1956 to 1978.

Meanwhile, Johns Hopkins University president Steven Muller has been elected chairman of the Association of American Universities, the organization that represents the presidents and chancellors of 54 American and two Canadian universities.