

Chernobyl Cleanup Expert Slams Japan and IAEA

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VIENNA — Greed in the nuclear industry and corporate influence over the UN watchdog for nuclear power may doom Japan to a spreading nuclear disaster, one of the men brought in to clean up Chernobyl said Tuesday.

Slamming the Japanese response at Fukushima, Russian nuclear accident specialist Iouli Andreyev accused corporations and the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency of willfully ignoring lessons from the world's worst nuclear accident 25 years ago to protect the industry's expansion.

"After Chernobyl, all the force of the nuclear industry was directed to hide this event, for not creating damage to their reputation," Andreyev said in an interview. "The Chernobyl experience was not studied properly because who has money for studying? Only industry. But industry doesn't like it."

Andreyev, former director of the Soviet Spetsatom cleanup agency, now teaches and advises on nuclear safety in Vienna. Austria's environment ministry has used him as an adviser.

Andreyev said a fire that released radiation on Tuesday involving spent fuel rods stored close to reactors at Fukushima looked like an example of putting profit before safety:

"The Japanese were very greedy, and they used every square inch of the space. But when you have a dense placing of spent fuel in the basin, you have a high possibility of fire if the water is removed from the basin," Andreyev said.

The IAEA should share blame for standards, he said, arguing it was too close to corporations building and running plants. And he dismissed an emergency incident team set up by the Vienna-based agency as "only a think tank not a working force."

"This is only a fake organization because every organization which depends on the nuclear industry — and the IAEA depends on the nuclear industry — cannot perform properly," he said. "It always will try to hide the reality."

"The IAEA — is not interested in the concentration of attention on a possible accident in the nuclear industry. They are totally not interested in all the emergency organizations."

The IAEA had no immediate comment on Andreyev's criticism.

Andreyev said he understood all too well what the Japanese authorities in Fukushima were going through, and that creative solutions would be needed to contain the leaks.

"It is a situation of quiet panic. I know this situation," he said. "Discipline is the main thing in the industry, but the emergency service requires creativity, requires some kind of even fantasy and improvisation."

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