

# NASA plans protested

BY DEBI HOFF  
Staff Reporter

If NASA's plan works, on Oct. 13, an exploration spacecraft carrying 72 pounds of plutonium will blast into space heading for Saturn. But one activist, who says the risk is too great, hopes the plan won't work.

Bill Sulzman, co-founder of Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, has been on a nationwide campaign to get the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to rethink the launch of the nuclear-powered Cassini spacecraft.

Sulzman, of Colorado Springs, Colo., will bring his arguments to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Wednesday night. UNL Nebraskans for Peace is sponsoring Sulzman's speech, which will start at 7 p.m. in the Nebraska Union.

"Enough last-minute public pressure may build up in order to delay the launch until it is modified for the use of solar energy," Sulzman said. "The planet isn't going anywhere."

Sulzman said he's worried that engineers and officials are trying to rush the launch.

Cassini's departure will be delayed a week because engineers found that an air-conditioner line had been turned up too high, and the pressure from the air had lifted some insulation, NASA said.

"It is an unnecessarily dangerous launch of plutonium into space, and there is already concern with the security of the rocket," Sulzman

said. "Due to this delay, there will be a real rush to get the launch under way, further increasing the chances of human error."

Don Savage, public affairs officer at NASA headquarters, disagrees with Sulzman, saying Cassini is the most thoroughly reviewed launch ever implemented by NASA, and that the necessary repairs have been made.

"The Cassini mission has been under review for the past six years by NASA and the Department of Energy," Savage said.

Cassini is scheduled to circle Venus twice, to pick up speed. It then will be on a path toward Earth, traveling at 42,300 mph, and should bounce off Earth's atmosphere and head for Saturn. While circling the Earth, it will come within seconds of an inadvertent re-entry into Earth's atmosphere.

Savage said the chances of re-entry are one in a million. " (Circling the Earth) is a maneuver that is very well understood and very precise," Savage said.

Through this mission, NASA hopes to gather information about Saturn's rings and moons, and obtain pictures that will be taken with the Hubble telescope.

Sulzman said although he was in favor of space exploration, the chances of an accident are too great to implement this mission.

"As technology becomes more complicated, more problems are likely to arise," Sulzman said.

NASA has increased the chance of a Cassini disaster from 1 in 1500 to 1 in 345. And NASA's Jet

Propulsion Laboratory gives Cassini's rocket engines a 1 in 20 chance of failure.

Sulzman said he did not think that these calculations are dependable.

"They're basically doing computer projections. Nobody knows what the outcome is going to be," Sulzman said. "But if you put garbage in, you'll get garbage out."

Many researchers agree that even the smallest leak of plutonium could have extreme effects on both humans and wildlife.

But Savage said the plutonium is stored in canisters that are extremely secure, and even if there were an accident, NASA is not expecting any release of plutonium; besides, such a plutonium leak could be retrieved.

The dangers of a plutonium spill or leak depend on how far humans are from the substance, and how long they are exposed, said Mary Bisbee, a radiation safety specialist with UNL's Division of Environmental Health and Safety.

Direct contact with plutonium can cause radiation sickness, burns and cancer, if the person is exposed for a long time, she said.

In the worst case scenario, a report conducted by NASA estimated the cleanup costs from a leak at \$247 million per square mile.

"The costs of cleanup alone are incomprehensible," Sulzman said. "And often times things don't always work as the engineers says they will."

# Projects To Go

## Communities must acknowledge gang problems, even in Lincoln

BY MATTHEW WAITE  
Senior Reporter

Denying that gangs exist or assigning them politically correct names will not help curb their criminal behavior, a gang expert told law enforcement officers and school officials Tuesday.

Ken Trump, a consultant for schools on youth crime and gang issues, told a regional police conference in Lincoln that he has seen gangs called "unauthorized social groups" and "anti-social youth networking." No matter the name, communities need to honestly address gangs and their activities, he said.

"The gang problem is going to continue," Trump said.

Trump was one of two featured presentations at "Community Policing: Projects to Go," a three-day conference sponsored by the Lincoln Police Department and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Lincoln police Capt. Joy Citta said 185 police officers, school officials and liquor industry members from four states were attending the conference.

Trump's 3½-hour presentation, "Juvenile Crime, Gangs and School Security," was filled with slides of horror stories from across the nation. He showed the more than 80 people in the morning session slide after slide of weapons confiscated in schools and newspaper articles with gory headlines of school violence.

The program was skewed toward larger cities with more gang problems than Lincoln; nevertheless, Trump warned, teachers and police officers need to watch for gang symbols on notebooks and other belongings.

There are two major categories of national gangs, Trump said: the Los Angeles and the Chicago gangs. The Bloods and the Crips are from Los Angeles. Chicago area gangs are the

Folk and the People, which include major subgroups, or sets, known as the Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings and Vice Lords, along with dozens of other lesser known sets.

Lincoln police Chief Tom Casady said police now have 480 names in their gang-member database. The database is a list of names that have been tied to gangs. If a name has no activity reported in one year, it is removed from the file.

Casady said there are "innumerable" sets in Lincoln with all kinds of names. He said youths have claimed all of the major gangs Trump outlined.

Compared with other cities, Lincoln's gang activity is disorganized, Casady said, but there have been all sorts of gang-related crimes. He said, however, that he thought gang activity in Lincoln had leveled off.

"There are fewer visible signs of the attraction to gang activity," he said. "My sense is that real blatant gang activity is not in favor. My sense is that it's more low key."

Recent blatant gang activity in Lincoln has been sometimes comical. Last week, Lincoln police reported gang graffiti that spelled Crips wrong twice: Cirps and Crips.

Trump warned his audience not to just pass off gang activity as the actions of "wannabes."

"If you have a wanna-be gang member break into a gun shop and steal guns and go out with their wanna-be gang member friends and shoot someone, you have a wanna-be homicide," he said.

Trump said, however, that communities needed to constantly review how well their programs are working.

"We have to be careful, regardless of the programs ... to make sure the relationships are the focus, not the programs and the buzzwords," he said. "What's more dangerous, the system or the clients?"

## Lincoln council combats issues of alcohol abuse

BY MATTHEW WAITE  
Senior Reporter

Lincoln is a national model for bar owners, police, city officials and alcohol counselors working together to make the city more hospitable, a hospitality expert said Tuesday.

Jim Peters, speaking to more than 80 police officers and liquor industry officials at a community policing conference, said the collaboration of one-time rivals to work out problems surrounding the serving of alcohol has other cities following Lincoln's lead.

The Responsible Hospitality Council formed in 1993 and is made up of officials from the city, the bars, liquor distributors, counselors and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The group meets monthly to discuss how to minimize the risks involved with alcohol.

"We've learned to trust each other," said Rand Weise from the Lincoln Package Beverage Association. "And argue respectfully sometimes."

Peters is in Lincoln this week to speak at "Community Policing: Projects To Go," a three-day conference sponsored by the Lincoln Police Department and the U.S. Attorney's office. A group of 185 police officers, school administrators and liquor industry officials from four states attended the conference Tuesday.

Peters said in a community, there are three barriers to responsibility:

- People don't know what irresponsible behavior is.

- People know, but they don't know how to respond to irresponsible behavior.

- People know, but they don't care.

With a system such as Lincoln's Responsible Hospitality Council, officials can combat those barriers and curb problems such as binge drinking, drunken driving and liquor license violations.

According to members of the council, the Cornhusker Detoxification Center admits 1,500 people annually. Half of those people come from bars or restaurants.

To try to combat alcohol abuse, the council convinced bar owners to ban free shots on birthdays.

Linda Major, alcohol and drug education coordinator for the University Health Center's alcohol program coordinator, said the ban has not stopped bar crawls, and the council is looking at how to combat the social powers that push students to drink heavily on birthdays.


Peters said hospitality and the serving of alcohol was a lubricant for social and business interactions. He said unruly drunks hurt business.

"We all benefit," he said. "All businesses benefit from a well-run hospitality industry."


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