

Media Advisory

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Conservation Groups Respond to Clark v. U.S. Maritime, et.al. Demand Immediate Removal of Ghost Fleet Ships but No Export

-- Hearing Scheduled for Wednesday January 19, 2004 --

Who: CASE #: 4:04-CV-49: Clark v. U.S. Maritime Administration, *et al.*

What: Hearing in US District Court

When: Wednesday, January 19, 2004, 3:30pm

Where: Courtroom of Judge Walter D. Kelley, Jr.
Eastern District of Virginia (Newport News Division)
101 25th Street
Newport News, VA 23607

Background:

Tomorrow at 3:30pm, a US district court judge will hear argument concerning the government's motion to dismiss a case challenging the continued storage on the James River of a fleet of defunct military vessels containing tons of toxic and hazardous materials. Ms. Lynn Clark filed suit demanding that these vessels be removed from the James River as soon as possible, on the ground that they pose an environmental risk.

Conservation groups agree with Ms. Clark that the Ghost Fleet represents a ticking environmental time bomb that needs to be defused at once. However, the conservation groups disagree with the United States that it is appropriate to export these vessels for disposal in foreign countries, a plan proposed by the US Maritime Administration, which is responsible for the vessels.

The export of toxic vessels is both illegal and immoral. The toxic burden of the United States should not be passed onto other countries. In the past these vessels were dumped on Asian shores where impoverished laborers making less than a dollar a day were asked to handle the asbestos, PCBs, and explosive hydrocarbon residues without adequate protection. We cannot honorably go back to those days. The United States has the capacity and the obligation to recycle these vessels responsibly at home in an environmentally sound manner and not to pass the toxic burden to others. Nor should the United States outsource valuable jobs associated with dismantling these vessels.

An earlier lawsuit to prevent export of obsolete naval vessels, filed by Earthjustice on behalf of the Sierra Club and the Basel Action Network, is currently pending.

For more information on the concerns of environmental groups with respect to the Clark lawsuit please call for interviews.