

WORLD NEWS

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BRAZILIANS' BURIAL PROTESTED



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Neighbors of cemetery in central Brazilian city of Goiania protest burial of two victims of accidental release last month of radioactive cesi-

um. Demonstrators said use of lead-lined coffins, in concrete graves, was inadequate and property values were imperiled. Story, Page A26.

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CESUM -137



PHOTOS BY AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

On Oct. 3, Maria Gabriela Ferreira boarded flight from Goiania to Rio for treatment. Her body is returned, at right.

Burial of Radiation Victims Protested

By Richard House
Special to The Washington Post

SAO PAULO, Brazil, Oct. 26—The first two victims of the recent release of radioactive material in Brazil were buried today in Goiania, amid angry protests from local residents who regard the bodies as nuclear waste that will contaminate their neighborhood.

Two lead-lined caskets weighing 1,200 pounds each were lowered by crane into graves, specially prepared with concrete, in the paupers' section of a cemetery. Goiania, a city of 1 million in central Brazil, is where the accident took place a month ago.

The bodies of 6-year-old Leide das Neves Ferreira and her aunt, Maria Gabriela Ferreira, 37, had been brought by military plane from Rio de Janeiro, where they died Friday in a naval hospital. The 10 most contaminated of the 243 victims have been treated in that naval facility. Doctors said the two died of multiple hemorrhages caused by radiation. A third patient was on the critical list.

In the Goiania cemetery, leaders of a crowd of about 1,000 people threw rocks and stone crosses at the truck carrying the caskets and clashed with police after unsuccessfully attempting to prevent the burial—which they said will depress real estate values and prevent visits to other graves.

The burial reflected broad concerns in Goiania, where the 243 residents were exposed to the radiation



BY DAVE COOK—THE WASHINGTON POST

after a scrap worker found an abandoned cancer treatment device and broke it open to reveal the medical isotope cesium. His wife, Ferreira, handled the glowing matter and the niece ate some of it.

The affair also confirmed that despite an ambitious nuclear energy program, Brazil has no place to store radioactive waste. Protests in the Amazon state of Para have prevented an agreement for the storage of an estimated 1,000 drums filled with radioactive waste being stored at a remote Army base—where deep shafts have been built as part of the military's nuclear program.

Instead, the waste is being temporarily stored at an open site about 10 miles outside Goiania. Henrique Santillo, governor of Goias State, is

spending his weekends with his family at a vacation home a few hundred yards away in an attempt to calm the population of Goiania.

Although the cleanup of 14 residential areas where the cesium was spread will take months, officials from the federally controlled Nuclear Energy Commission say the city is safe. But they have said only two-thirds of the radioactive material has been found.

Nuclear scientists critical of the commission's performance also say that screening has only involved the use of Geiger counters to establish those who had direct contact with the cesium. No blood tests have yet been carried out to detect those who received lesser doses that in the future could cause cancer.

President Jose Sarney visited Goiania and described the episode as "irresponsible and lamentable" but said Brazil's nuclear energy program would not be affected.

Scientists here have said the commission should have checked up on the Goiania device and demanded its safe storage after a privately owned clinic closed down two years ago. Instead the device was abandoned. Reports said its officers had inspected the device just once in 11 years, instead of at five-year intervals required by legislation.

But military chiefs have defended the commission—which is subordinate to the president's office and indirectly to the armed forces—saying the blame lies with those who handled the device.

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