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Fukushima: Japan's Nuclear Accident Response Director Warns that Tepco's Actions Might Cause Reactor Buildings to Collapse

By Washington's Blog
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Tepco's ill-considered efforts to change soil permeability and water flow have caused *severe* problems at the site ... including highly radioactive groundwater bubbling up to the surface.

NHK notes:

> The vice governor of Fukushima Prefecture has asked the government to take the lead in handling the matter and stop the leakage. Masao Uchibori told an official from the Nuclear Regulation Authority that some of Tepco's measures have increased the risk of further leaks.

The Wall Street Journal's Michael Arnold says:

> Obviously this is a massive public health issue ... if it gets into the ocean obviously this could be spread throughout the Pacific, could also get into the food supply.

Background here and here.

But there is another – stunning – threat.

Specifically, BBC points out:

> Engineers are now facing a new emergency. The Fukushima plant sits smack in the middle of an underground aquifer. Deep beneath the ground, the site is rapidly being overwhelmed by water.

What happens when you pour hundreds of thousands of tons of water (400 metric tons each *day* times 2.5 years times 365 days in a year equals 365,000 metric tons of water) onto soil which sits above a massive aquifer?

We noted last year:

> The spent fuel pool at Fukushima Unit 4 is the top short-term threat to humanity, and is a national security issue for America.

> As such, it is disturbing news that the ground beneath unit 4 is sinking.
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> Specifically, Unit 4 sunk 36 inches right after the earthquake, and has sunk another 30 inches since then.
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> Moreover, Unit 4 is sinking unevenly, and the building may begin tilting.

The Wall Street Journal reports today:

> As [Tepco] prepares this week to start work on a new set of measures that would ring off and cap the area where the most highly contaminated water has been found, some experts and regulators are saying that the battle to completely contain radioactivity to the site of one of the world's worst nuclear accidents may be a losing one.
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> It's preparing to extend the underground hardened-earth barrier in a ring around the most heavily contaminated section of coastline, in hopes of heading groundwater off before it can flood in. Tepco is also proposing to cap that ringed section with gravel and asphalt, so nothing gets out. The operator is hoping to get an initial ring of hardened ground done by October.
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> But there's a risk to changing the flow of groundwater in the ways that Tepco is considering, said Tatsuya Shinkawa, nuclear accident response director of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, at a news conference last month. The water could pool dangerously underground, softening the earth and potentially toppling the reactor buildings, he said.

No wonder even top Japanese government officials are calling for Tepco to be fired ...
