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Timeline of the investigation

STAFF REPORTS • JULY 18, 2008

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Here is the timeline of events surrounding claims of research misconduct by Rusi Taleyarkhan, a Purdue researcher.

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2002 - Rusi Taleyarkhan, working at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, publishes research findings that confirm bubble fusion, a method for producing massive amounts of energy through environmentally clean and cheap methods.

August 2003 - Taleyarkhan becomes a faculty member at Purdue. Questions about his research practices are raised, but did not reach upper administrators at the time.

May 2005 - A paper, "Confirmatory Experiments for Nuclear Emissions During Acoustic Cavitation," is published in the journal Nuclear Engineering and Design, claiming independent verification of Taleyarkhan's findings.

A student listed as co-author on the May 2005 paper and another paper released later in the year goes to the head of Purdue's Nuclear Engineering Department and said he had nothing to do with either paper. He alleges Taleyarkhan has added his name to the papers.

October 2005 - A paper titled "Bubble Dynamics and Tritium Emission During Bubble Fusion Experiments" is presented at the 11th International Topical Meeting on Nuclear Reactor Thermal-Hydraulics claiming independent verification.

2005 - Lefteri Tsoukalas, head of Purdue's Nuclear Engineering Department, raises concerns to Purdue officials over Taleyarkhan's research, the papers claiming independent confirmation and his team's inability to replicate the experiment.

2006 - Nature publishes articles questioning the research claims and researchers from other universities join in.

February 2006 - A fact-finding committee formed by the School of Engineering determined that a student listed as co-author of two papers claiming independent confirmation of Taleyarkhan's findings had not participated in the research or data analysis. The other co-author on the papers will not state who had written the final draft of the papers. The report is given to Peter Dunn, associate vice president for research.

March 2006 - Purdue Provost Sally Mason announces an investigation.

April 2006 - The university forms a preliminary examination committee to discover and examine the facts surrounding concerns in articles written on bubble fusion. The committee will reference articles, conduct interviews and review available material.

A few days before the committee releases a report, Kenneth Suslick, a researcher at the University of Illinois, submits allegations to Dunn that claim fabrication of results by Taleyarkhan. Suslick later claims his allegations were

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ignored by Purdue.

The committee eventually delivered a report recommending further interviews and a detailed examination of data notebooks, after only interviewing two professors and limited documents.

July 2006 - An inquiry committee is formed by Purdue and charged with determining if it is more likely than not that someone committed research misconduct. The university says that if that finding is made, an investigation committee would be formed.

December 2006 - Purdue's inquiry committee exonerates Taleyarkhan of any research misconduct, though it finds he played a significant role in writing papers that were supposed to be independent of him and abused his position as a senior scientist.

April 2007 - A congressional subcommittee requests all documentation on the prior inquiries from Purdue.

A new inquiry committee is formed by Purdue to look into claims made against Taleyarkhan and his research. The congressional committee chastises Purdue for using the same people on the committee as the 2006 inquiry and requests others be included.

May 2007 - The congressional committee releases its memo to Purdue president Martin Jischke criticizing prior inquiries.

September 2007 - Purdue starts a process to again investigate research misconduct allegations against Taleyarkhan.

March 2008 - Taleyarkhan files a civil lawsuit against two of his detractors, Purdue professors Lefteri Tsoukalas and Tatjana Jevremovic, for defamation, civil harassment and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

April 2008 - Purdue submits its findings of its latest investigation to the Office of Naval Research. University officials say they would not comment on the report until the Office of Naval Research responded to the findings.

July 17, 2008 - The Office of Naval Research accepts Purdue's findings. Purdue's investigation concludes that two allegations against Taleyarkhan constituted research misconduct. Under the university's policy on integrity in research, Taleyarkhan gets 30 days to appeal the findings.

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