



# Cape Fear Firebird

*The Light of Save the Cape*

July 1, 2011

*What nature doesn't do to us will be done by our fellow man.*  
-The Kingston Trio

## ***Tick, Tick, Tick***

On the 29th of June last year, Congressman Mike McIntyre issued a statement of opposition to the proposed North Carolina International Terminal. The reasons were many, but the first on his list was this: "I am concerned that the location of the proposed port is between two facilities that pose a tempting target of terrorist attack or would be at catastrophic risk in the case of an accident." Indeed: the Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point, the largest facility for the transshipment of ammunition in the world, and the Brunswick Nuclear Plant embrace the terminal site.

A few weeks later, officials at the Voltri container terminal at Genoa in Italy discovered very high radiation from a container that had recently arrived from the United Arab Emirates. The source was determined to be Cobalt-60, a man-made material.

Officials have been afraid to open the container for fear that would trigger a nuclear device or a dirty bomb. They segregated it and surrounded it with containers filled with water and stone. It is still there.

Cobalt-60 has a half-life of 5.7 years. Perhaps the container will be safe to inspect in a hundred years or so.



In 2005, the Congressional Research Service reported that a simple nuclear device using only enriched uranium would fit inside an international shipping container. Such a device would produce blast damage within a radius of one to two miles, and fire and radiation beyond that.

The Service expressed concern that a very low percentage of containers are inspected, three to six percent. Perhaps as a result, in 2007 Congress mandated that all containers coming to the US would be X-rayed at the foreign port of loading by 2014. That plan has been criticized because of the expense to the foreign ports and the disruption to the supply chain. Just recently, Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security, said to the press that 100% scanning was "probably not the best way to go," and indicated that Congress was considering a different approach involving some scanning but depending on risk analysis and other methods not involving physical checks.