NY Man Wanted In Bhopal Gas Leak 'Haunted'

BRIDGEHAMPTON, N.Y. (AP) — The former head of the chemical company responsible for the gas leak that killed 10,000 people in India 25 years ago has been "haunted" for years by the world's worst industrial disaster, his wife said Saturday.

An Indian court issued a warrant Friday for Warren Anderson, the former head of Union Carbide Corp., for the leak of 40 tons of poisonous gas that killed 10,000 people in Bhopal. Anderson was arrested just after the disaster in the central Indian city but quickly left the country.

U.S. authorities have not moved to extradite him and he has maintained homes in Florida, Connecticut and in Long Island's Hamptons.

His wife, Lillian, answered the door Saturday at the couple's modest yellow farmhouse with a white picket fence, and silver Cadillac parked in the driveway. Her husband is 89 and in poor health, she said.

"We covered everything way back when," she said. "He's been haunted for many years" by the accident.

Lillian Anderson wasn't aware of the new arrest warrant and said, "It's probably some political thing." She said her husband wasn't at home.

"When you get to be 87 or 85 years old you just don't remember anything. You try to put bad things out of your mind," she said.

Anderson was the chief executive of Union Carbide, now owned by Midland, Mich.-based Dow Chemical Co., when the deadly gas cloud leaked from its Bhopal factory on Dec. 3, 1984.

More than 555,000 people who survived the initial disaster are thought to have suffered aftereffects, though the exact number of victims has never been determined. Many have died over the years from gas-related illnesses, like lung cancer, kidney failure and liver disease.

On Friday, in response to a recent appeal by a victims' group, Prakash Mohan Tiwari ordered the arrest of Anderson. Tiwari, Bhopal's chief judicial magistrate, also ordered the federal government to press Washington for the American's extradition.

India's government as of Saturday had not acted on the court's request to seek his extradition.

Foreign governments typically notify the State Department through their U.S. embassies when extradition is requested of an American citizen and the request is reviewed by the Justice Department.

A message left at the Indian Embassy in Washington was not immediately returned Saturday. State Department spokeswoman Megan Mattson said Saturday she is not aware of an extradition or arrest request from India or the embassy.

Messages left for Union Carbide representatives weren't immediately returned Saturday.

In 1989, Union Carbide paid $470 million in compensation to the Indian government and said officials were responsible for the cleanup. Victims accuse New Delhi of delaying distribution of the funds.

Lillian Anderson said her husband has been unfairly targeted.

"Every time somebody wanted to sue the company there would be some kind of a thing that happened and they would be chasing after Warren, following him to the dump with our trash," she said.

"This is 25 years of unfair treatment, before CEOs were paid what they're paid today."

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