The negligence of the U.S. government in this case could well become an international incident.

The ships, mixed up with giant U.S. conglomerates such as Philip Morris and Maersk, were so easily able to circumvent U.S. laws and called specifically upon the EPA to at least require the ships to be tested for PCBs prior to export. But to the great surprise of the environmental watchdog organization, that had worked with the EPA in numerous instances in the past, the Obama administration refused to act. This is really shocking. All through the Bush Administration the EPA took action every time we warned them of a pending TSCA violation and their record of enforcement was strong. Now we have elected an environmental president and his administration for the first time in ten years is willing to ignore the law and dump toxic waste onboard U.S. flagged ships on developing countries,” said Jim Puckett, Executive Director of Basel Action Network (BAN).

Today, sadly, little has changed to improve the conditions of the workers in Bangladesh and India since the Baltimore Sun articles and subsequent export moratorium 11 years ago. Already this year 9 persons have died outright from occupational accidents in Bangladesh. Just last month 6 workers were cooked inside a ship after it caught fire in an Indian breaking yard due to shipbreaker owner negligence. Many more suffer the longer term impacts of asbestos and toxic fumes from cutting torches and the local environment is completely contaminated by toxic chemicals and fuel residues. However it is far more profitable for all concerned to send ships to South Asia than to properly recycle them here in the U.S.

Meanwhile we will be warning Bangladesh to bar the entry of these renegade vessels.” Under the Basel Convention, it is illegal for Bangladesh to import toxic waste from the United States. The negligence of the U.S. government in this case could well become an international incident.