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Nuclear winter goes beyond darkness

NZ Press Association
SYDNEY. — Australia and New Zealand would be among the countries least affected by a major Northern Hemisphere nuclear war, according to an Australian atmospheric scientist.

However, Dr Barrie Pittock, in a book due for distribution in New Zealand next month, said both countries had to consider planning how best to survive such a conflict.

Dr Pittock, who works in Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, said the strategy could involve less reliance on trade with the Northern Hemisphere.

In addition, both Australia and New Zealand could avoid "complicity in the contending nuclear alliances, since complicity invites nuclear attack".

"Australia and New Zealand would remain physically relatively unscathed (in a nuclear war), always assuming our cities are not targeted," he said.

"Our economies, however, would be seriously affected, both by the rather mild nuclear winter effect

and more especially by the loss of trade with the Northern Hemisphere.

"If we were to become more self-sufficient as regards liquid fuels, lubricants, fertilisers, chemicals, medicines, machine parts and electronic components we would be able to maintain a more tolerable existence."

In the book, *Beyond Darkness: Nuclear Winter in Australia and New Zealand*, Dr Pittock also presents a picture of the aftermath of a nuclear war.

The scenario presumes that Australia and New Zealand are not directly attacked, apart from the three main United States-Australian bases at North West Cape, Pine Gap and Nurrungar.

A high-altitude nuclear device detonated over Australia to generate an electromagnetic pulse to knock out communication links at the bases would also severely disrupt general communications and commerce.

As a result, chaos and civil conflict could develop in Australia.

If the war happened in the

northern spring and summer, wisps of smoke would begin to drift overhead from the north some time in the following three weeks. After three months, the smoke would be thick enough to prolong dawn and dusk.

The sunlight would be colder at midday and the air would become still and cold in mid-afternoon.

"Even the North Island of New Zealand would experience heavy frosts on still nights," Dr Pittock said.

"Occasionally, light falls of snow might occur even as far north as Wellington, Brisbane and Geraldton (in West Australia)."

The conditions would affect crops and livestock, and shortages would develop in fuel.

There would also be problems in dealing with refugees.

"Uncontrolled migrations similar to that of the Vietnamese boat people might be common from all of South and South-east Asia, with many people landing in northern Australia, albeit with much suffering and many casualties."