Factual Errors in the Wall Street Journal 5/24 op ed by Willie Soon and Paul Driessen

In additions to erroneous claims about EPA's intentions and the piece contains several simple facts that are incorrect.

1. Claims our bodies have evolved with proteins and antioxidants that protect us from mercury.

   Fact: National Academy of Sciences, panel in 2000 stated that "Methylmercury is highly toxic. Exposure to methylmercury can result in adverse effects in several organ systems throughout the life span of humans and animals."

2. Claims that coal-fired power plants emit 41 – 48 tons of mercury while US forest fires emit at least 44 tons and cremation of humans emits 26 tons.

   Fact: According to EPA's most recent (2005) National Emissions Inventory, coal-fired power plants emit 52.3 tons of mercury.

   Human crematoria emit 0.33 tons.

   Forest fires are not an original source of mercury emissions. Rather forest fires re-emit mercury that had been deposited on the forest from industrial and natural sources.

3. Claims that the Seychelles study found no measurable cognitive or behavioral effects.

   Fact: Researchers from the ongoing Seychelles study published a report last year in which they determined that there were effects seen in that population.

4. Criticizes EPA's reference dose because it is higher than the WHO and ATSDR's health risk levels.

   Fact: In 2000 the NAS reviewed the science and the various health risk levels and found that the level of EPA's reference dose was a scientifically appropriate level for the protection of public health. The panel advised other agencies to "harmonize" their levels.

5. Criticized EPA's use of the Faroe Island study as the basis of our reference dose.

   Response: The NAS recommended the Faroe Island study as the critical study. EPA's reference dose is in fact based on that study as well as the study conducted in the Seychelles and another study in New Zealand. All of them were deemed well-designed and worthy of consideration in developing a reference dose by the NAS.