

## Briefing Statement

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BUREAU: National Park Service  
ISSUE: Buddhist Stupa Draws Public Concern  
PARK: Petroglyph National Monument  
DATE: 10/12/10

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### Key Points:

- National Monument (by fee simple land acquisition) from Dr. Harold Cohen and his wife Ariane Emery. The property contained a Buddhist Stupa, consecrated in 1989, and used by Buddhists. NPS purchased the property in February 1996. In the offer to sell the owner was given the opportunity to remove the stupa within 90 days after the purchase by the U.S.A. If, after 90 days, certain items of personal property were not removed, they became the property of the government.
- The stupa at PETR stands about nine feet high and takes in a circumference of about 10 square feet. The concrete depth of the stupa is unknown. This stupa is said to contain a relic of the great Tibetan Guru Padmasambhava.
- A stupa is a Buddhist shrine based on an ancient form of architecture, evolved in both form and meaning with the coming of the Buddha. Traditionally built as monuments to kings and heroes they contain their remains. There are many stupas in the United States. From 1983 to 1996, six Tibetan-style stupas were built in a line roughly following the Rio Grande from Albuquerque, New Mexico, north to Crestone, Colorado. Land purchased in February 1996.
- On February 27, 2010, Ms. Emery visited the park to share information about the Buddhist inscription above the escarpment in the vicinity of the Visitor Center. She and her late husband owned the stupa, which was consecrated in 1989.
- Construction of an amphitheater is planned near the site of the Stupa and soil from another construction project is being stockpiled nearby. The National Park Service has no plans for the stupa. No Federal funds have been used to maintain the stupa.
- On their web site ([albuquerquestupa.yolasite.com](http://albuquerquestupa.yolasite.com)), local Buddhists are calling for contact with NPS and the Congressional Delegation to "Help Us Save Stupa in Albuquerque."
- The stupa is occasionally visited. Visitors sometimes circumambulate, make offerings and perform basic upkeep of the stupa.

### Background:

- After a visit, in June 2010, by the former owner of the stupa, Elephant Journal ([www.elephantjournal.com](http://www.elephantjournal.com)) picked up the story stating that the "Federal Government has announced its intentions to bulldoze a small Tibetan Stupa near the City of Albuquerque after the National Park Service seized the land using the power of eminent domain to build an outdoor amphitheater."
- NPS responded to those who e:mailed the park and to the former owner that the National Park Service had no plans for the stupa. NPS also informed the Congressional Delegation.

- The land was acquired on February 23, 1996 by fee simple acquisition, not eminent domain.

**Current Status:**

- The former owner feared that the stupa was going to be "bulldozed" and continues to generate media interest in the issue.
- NPS has posted on the PETR website that there are no plans for the stupa.
- The Albuquerque Journal ran a story in the Sunday, June 13, 2010 edition. The park expects some increased visitation as a result. The issue was quieted after the Journal story.
- In mid-July 2010, a small group of Buddhists visited the stupa to conduct minimal maintenance.
- On August 31, 2010, Frank Buono, a member of PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility) called Superintendent Sánchez to inquire if the stupa had been taken down by NPS. He inquired about the history of the stupa. He was referred to Diane Souder, PETR Public Information Officer, who has been with PETR since its establishment. She attempted, at least eight calls (documented) to reach Mr. Buono. She was not successful because he did not answer his telephone nor did he have an answering machine.
- On October 1, 2010, Jeff Ruch, Executive Director, PEER, (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility) wrote a letter to the IMR Regional Director saying that the stupa does not serve any secular purpose. He asked that the NPS uphold the Constitution and act on the stupa.

**Position of Interested Parties:**

- Local and national Buddhists, as well as those concerned with what authority the stupa is allowed to remain.

**Contacts:**

**Superintendent Joseph P. Sánchez, (505) 899-0205**

## Briefing Statement

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BUREAU: National Park Service  
ISSUE: Buddhist Stupa Draws Public Concern  
PARK: Petroglyph National Monument  
DATE: 6/10/10

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### Key Points:

- In 1996, National Park Service purchased 2.21 acres in the Atrisco Unit of Petroglyph National Monument (by fee simple land acquisition) from Dr. Harold Cohen and his wife Ariane Emery. The property contained a Buddhist Stupa, consecrated in 1989, and used by Buddhists. All buildings on site, including a house, were taken down with the exception of the Stupa.
- Construction of an amphitheater is planned near the site of the Stupa and soil from another construction project is being stockpiled nearby. When Ms. Emery saw this, she assumed that the park had plans to remove the Stupa and created a web site to alert people to the possible removal. Other media has picked up the story and the Elephant Journal ([www.elephantjournal.com](http://www.elephantjournal.com)) states that the "Federal Government has announced its intentions to bulldoze a small Tibetan Stupa near the City of Albuquerque after the National Park Service seized the land using the power of eminent domain to build an outdoor ampitheater."
- The land was acquired on February 23, 1996 by fee simple acquisition, not eminent domain.
- The park has no plans to remove the Stupa. No Federal funds have been used to maintain the Stupa.
- On their web site ([albuquerquestupa.yolasite.com](http://albuquerquestupa.yolasite.com)), local Buddhists are calling for contact with NPS and the Congressional Delegation to "Help Us Save Stupa in Albuquerque."
- The Stupa is occasionally visited. Visitors sometimes visit the Stupa, make offerings and perform basic upkeep of the Stupa.

### Background:

- As part of the offer to sell, Dr. Cohen and his wife were given the opportunity to remove the Stupa within 90 days after the purchase of the land by the Federal Government.
- The 9 foot tall Nyingmapa bodhisattva-style Stupa constructed of concrete, stucco, wood and copper contains sacred Buddhist relics from Nepal, some of which are below ground level. The Stupa is specifically listed as a site that may be visited Buddhists.
- NPS responded to the media, to those who e-mailed the park and to the former owner, Ms. Emery, that the park "has no plans for the Stupa." Numerous web sites erroneously the Stupa report that the NPS has backed down from its plans to destroy
- NPS also informed the Congressional Delegation that it has no plans for the stupa.

### Current Status:

- The Ms. Emery feared that the Stupa was going to be “bulldozed” and continues to generate media interest in the issue.
- NPS has posted on the PETR website that there are no plans for the Stupa.
- The Albuquerque Journal plans to run a story in the Sunday June 13, 2010 edition. The park expects some increased visitation as a result.
- The park is seeking an opinion from the Albuquerque Solicitors Office on what authorities it has regarding the Stupa.

**Position of Interested Parties:**

- Local and national Buddhists want the Stupa to remain. No other position has been voiced thus far **by other local political leaders or park stakeholders.**

**Contacts:**

**Superintendent Joseph P. Sánchez, (505)899-0205**