

Radiation Plume Over Europe

By Bob Mayberry

The cloud of radioactive materials that floated over Europe on the 22 and 23 of June this year seems to be part of a pattern of radioactive releases from Eastern Europe that worries European scientists.

News reports followed a familiar scenario. On June 10th, a monitoring station in northern Norway detected low levels of radioactive iodine in the air. On June 23 and 24, Sweden and Finland reported “higher than usual” levels of fission products, including cesium-134, cesium-137 and ruthenium-103.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) requested more information from its member states, but the source of the radiation plume has still not been determined. The map of the plume’s movement across northern Europe led scientists to speculate that the cloud might have originated in Russia.

The Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation, Russia’s agency responsible for overseeing the development of nuclear reactors, reported no excess radiation levels or incidents at any of its facilities.

This isn’t the first time Russia denied any connection to radiological releases occurring within its bor-

ders. In 2017, a radioactive plume was traced to a nuclear accident at Russia’s Mayak nuclear weapons complex for plutonium production and uranium fuel rod reprocessing.

Though Russia confirmed that a cloud of radiation had been detected over the Ural Mountains, they never acknowledged responsibility for the cloud or admitted a radiation accident had occurred. In 2019, an unexplained explosion took place on Russia’s northern coast at a Navy test range. Scientists speculated it was a reactor or nuclear weapons accident, but Russia neither confirmed nor denied this. The explosions and fire killed five high-level engineers. Some of the emergency responders that treated the injured workers were sent to Moscow to be treated for radiation sickness.

There’s a history of accidents at the Mayak facility, including the huge release of Sept. 29, 1957 known as the Kyshtym disaster.

Political analysts speculate that perhaps Russia has not acknowledged responsibility for this year’s radioactive plume because the source of the accident might be the weapons-grade plutonium facility at Mayak.

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Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance Lawsuit Vs Tennessee Weapons Complex

By Bob Mayberry

On July 17th, 2020, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) released its “Final Supplemental Analysis” of earthquake risk at the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The report concludes that the risks from a major earthquake “would not be significantly different” from results presented in previous reports. Based on that conclusion, the NNSA will continue construction of the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) bomb plant at Oak Ridge. The UPF is part of NNSA’s Enriched Uranium Operations; in addition to the new facility, several buildings which have already been deemed “out of compliance” with current seismic and environmental standards will be used for highly enriched uranium weapons production operations until at least 2040.

The Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA) called the latest earthquake risk analysis “inadequate,” claiming it fails to meet federal standards for environmental studies. OREPA has been joined by Nuclear Watch New Mexico, the National Resources Defense Council and several individual plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the NNSA dating back to July of 2017, aimed at stopping construction at Y-12 until adequate environmental studies are completed. In September of 2019, a federal court ruled that the NNSA had “acted arbitrarily and capriciously ... in their failure to properly evaluate the environmental impacts resulting from the US Geological Survey’s increased seismic hazard forecast for East Tennessee.” The judge vacated two previous Supplement Analyses and one Record of Decision, a significant victory for OREPA and its co-plaintiffs. The judge ordered the NNSA to prepare a new environmental analysis using the latest US Geological Survey earthquake data. But just three days later, Lisa Gordon-Hagerty, the NNSA administrator, authorized continued construction of the UPF and use of storage facilities without addressing any of the deficiencies or dangers identified in the judge’s ruling, although the NNSA did promise to conduct a new earthquake risk analysis.

That analysis was made public on April 10 this year. The analysis shows that the consequences of a worst-case earthquake disaster scenario are ten times greater than was previously reported. The difference lies chiefly in the continued use of out-of-compliance buildings on the Y-12 site.

On April 15, OREPA filed a Motion for Enforcement with the court asking the judge to compel NNSA to suspend construction activities at Y-12 while it prepares the legally required environmental studies for its enriched uranium program at Y-12.

On May 5 the NNSA announced that it would not renew its contract with Consolidated Nuclear Services when it expires in 2021. CNS, hired to manage op-

erations at Y-12 and the Pantex facility in Amarillo, Texas, was cited for failing to address long-standing criticality safety deficiencies that could injure workers and release radioactive material within the Oak Ridge facility. NNSA has announced, however, that the contract change will not affect construction of the UPF; Bechtel will continue that work uninterrupted.

It’s unlikely that NNSA’s July 17th earthquake risk analysis will be the final word in this on-going legal battle. With NNSA now publicly admitting that safety violations have occurred at Oak Ridge, OREPA and its fellow plaintiffs will be evaluating new legal action to stop the construction.



In February 2019, Members of the European Parliament and others from the Green Parties in Italy, the UK and Belgium boldly scaled a 7-foot fence around the Kleine Brogel air base in Belgium, and carried their banner directly onto the runway used by Belgian pilots in rehearsals for using the US nuclear weapons stored there.

“Your support and, if you can spare it, your money.”

Nukewatch was honored by CounterPunch magazine last December as one of 20 US “activist groups that are making a big difference.” We were applauded for our Truckwatch tracking nuclear weapons transports in the ‘80s, our Trainwatch campaign that blew the whistle on military radioactive waste shipments in the ‘90s, our mapping of the land-based nuclear missile system (Nuclear Heartland, Revised), and our “long history of successful grassroots organizing across the nation.”

CounterPunch said Nukewatch “deserves your support and, if you can spare it, your money.”

We couldn’t have said it better. Please send a donation using the enclosed envelope. Thanks.

Germany Debates “Sharing” US H-Bombs

Continued from page 4

Renke Brahms, spoke to a large protest gathering there in 2018; Lutheran Bishop Margo Kassmann addressed the annual church peace rally there in July 2019; and this August 6, Catholic Bishop Peter Kohlgraf, who heads the German faction of Pax Christi, promoted nuclear disarmament in the nearby city of Mainz.

More fuel kindled the high-profile nuclear discussion with the June 20 publication of an Open Letter to the German fighter pilots at Büchel, signed by 127 individuals and 18 organizations, calling on them to “terminate direct involvement” in their nuclear war training, and reminding them that “illegal orders may neither be given nor obeyed.”

The “Appeal to the Tornado pilots of Tactical Air Force Wing 33 at the Büchel nuclear bomb site to refuse to participate in nuclear sharing” covered over half a page of the regional *Rhein-Zeitung* newspaper, based in Koblenz.

The Appeal had earlier been sent to commander of the pilots’ Tactical Air Force Wing 33 at Büchel air base, Colonel Thomas Schneider, and is based on binding international treaties that forbid military planning of mass destruction.

The Appeal urged the pilots to refuse unlawful orders and stand down: “[T]he use of nuclear weapons is illegal under international law and the constitution. This also makes the holding of nuclear bombs and all supporting preparations for their possible deployment illegal. Illegal orders may neither be given nor obeyed. We appeal to you to declare to your superiors that you no longer wish to participate in supporting nuclear sharing for reasons of conscience.”

Roland Hipp, a co-director of Greenpeace Germany, in “How Germany makes itself the target of a nuclear attack” published in *Welt* June 26, noted that going non-nuclear is the rule not the exception in NATO. “There are already [25 of the 30] countries within NATO that have no US nuclear weapons and do not join in nuclear participation,” Hipp wrote.

In July, the debate partly focused on the colossal financial expense of replacing the German Tornado jet fighters with new H-bomb carriers in a time of multiple global crises.

Dr. Angelika Claussen, a psychiatrist a vice president of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, wrote in a July 6 posting that “[A] significant military build-up in times of the coronavirus pandemic is perceived as a scandal by the German public ... Buying 45 nuclear F-18 bombers means spending [about] 7.5 billion Euros. For this amount of money one could pay 25,000 doctors and 60,000 nurses a year, 100,000 intensive care beds and 30,000 ventilators.”

Dr. Claussen’s figures were substantiated by a July 29 report by Otfried Nassauer and Ulrich Scholz, military analysts with the Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security. The study found the cost of 45 F-18 fighter jets from the US weapons giant Boeing Corp. could be “at a minimum” between 7.67 and 8.77 billion Euros, or between \$9 and \$10.4 billion—about \$222 million each.

Germany’s potential \$10 billion payout to Boeing for F-18s is a cherry that the war profiteer dearly wants to pick. Germany’s Defense Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer has said her government also intends to buy 93 Eurofighters, made by the France-based multinational behemoth Airbus, at the comparably bargain rate of \$9.85 billion—\$111 million each—all to replace the Tornados by 2030.

In August, SPD leader Mützenich promised to make the “sharing” of US nuclear weapons a 2021 election issue, telling the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, “I am firmly convinced that if we ask this question for the election program, the answer is relatively obvious.... [W]e will continue this issue next year.”