

## A Strategy of Concealment

# Pro-Nuclear Agencies Write & Control Accident Narratives

Excerpted from the article by Kolin Kobayashi published by Beyond Nuclear International.

This year marks the 13th year since the Fukushima disaster began, yet the path to its conclusion is by no means clear. The declaration of a state of emergency still cannot be lifted because of the various dangers and difficulties that have arisen. Despite this, Prime Minister Kishida's government is doing more than ever to promote nuclear power as a basic energy source. This approach is similar to that of the French administration, which is also trying to promote nuclear energy as a dual-use nuclear weapon.

The international nuclear lobby, which represents only a minority, has the influence and money to dominate the [view of nuclear power among the] world's population, and has now united the world's minority nuclear community into one big galaxy. Many of the citizens who have experienced the world's three most serious civil nuclear accidents have clearly realized that nuclear energy is too dangerous. These citizens are so divided and conflicted that they feel like a helpless minority.

### Current Situation in Fukushima

Let's start with the total amount of radiation that the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power plant still contains today. The spent fuel at the site contains 85 times more cesium-137 than Chernobyl and 50,000 to 100,000 times more than the Hiroshima bomb. The fuel is still stored in pools on the top floor of the reactor buildings (30 meters above ground), with the exception of Unit 3.



**Fukushima Unit 3 has been dismantled but the other destroyed units are still in danger of collapse. (Photo: IAEA Imagebank)**

Now, although 13 years have passed, the precise program for decommissioning is unclear. While the approximate overall radiation levels are known, the buildings and reactors themselves, where the decommissioning and dismantling work will take place, are highly radioactive and cannot be easily approached by workers. The true extent of the accident is not known, nor is the exact state of dispersed and molten nuclear fuel rods in the reactor core. In Unit 1, for example, it is clear from the images taken by a robot that many parts of the circular concrete foundation supporting the core have been damaged. There is a significant risk of collapse in the event of a strong earthquake, and if the 440-tonne unit collapses, it could hit the waste storage pool. If this pool is damaged another major disaster could occur.

### Release of Contaminated Water

The amount of contaminated water is increasing all the time, as water continues to flow to cool the corium. Currently, around 90 tonnes of contaminated water are being added to the tanks every day. There are currently more than 1,000 tanks, and Tepco [Tokyo Electric Power] says they will be full by February next year.

Tepco had promised not to release water without the consent of local communities and fishermen, but this promise was broken. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) dispatched a team of experts to investigate whether the radioactivity levels

of the contaminated water treated by Tepco met the international safety standards set by the IAEA, and its final report was submitted to the government on July 4. On the basis of this report, the Japanese government decided to release the wastewater and began discharging into the Pacific Ocean on August 24, releasing 7,800 tons in 17 days.

However, the IAEA does not have the scientific authority to make reference to the ecological impacts of this discharge, nor has it carried out any such long-term assessments. It is more of a political decision than a scientific one.

Tepco and the Japanese government have said that releasing contaminated water is essential for decommissioning work, but there are still places to build storage facilities. There are also methods other than releasing the waste in the ocean, such as solidifying it in mortar and storing it on the surface.

The [government and Tepco] claimed to have considered five solutions: geological injection, hydrogen release, underground burial, evaporation, and ocean release. In the end, they chose the cheapest method.

### What is the International Nuclear Lobby?

Today, the nuclear industry is globally interwoven. The raw material needed — uranium — as well as nuclear technology and radiation protection standards, cannot be managed by a single country.

First of all, nuclear energy is the dark side of the atomic bomb. Reactors designed to produce electricity were originally machines built to produce plutonium for atomic bombs. So it was only natural that French president Emmanuel Macron should advocate the complementary nature of civil nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons. “Without civilian nuclear energy there is no military use of this technology — and without military use there is no civilian nuclear energy,” Macron said in 2020.

The realpolitik of the atomic bomb led to the creation of the IAEA in 1957. The five nuclear-weapon states on the UN Security Council promoted nuclear energy and encouraged its development in order to monopolize nuclear weapons, and they made the IAEA a supervisory agency. [The IAEA's stated purpose is, by law, “to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world,” not to protect public health and safety.]

The IAEA oversees nuclear power operations throughout the world. But this international organization is neither objective nor impartial, nor does it conform absolutely to scientific facts. It is a highly political institution.

Ordinary citizens trust international organizations simply because they hear about them in UN reports. But the IAEA is constantly working to promote nuclear power. The effects of radiation are trivialized or denied, as if they are not a problem, merely a manageable danger for nuclear reactors.

The effects of radiation are grossly underestimated. The data base on which the IAEA relies is that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors, collected by the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission. These data are totally incomplete. They do not take into account people who were exposed to radiation more than 2 kilometers from the hypocenters, people who entered the cities after the bombs were dropped, and people who were exposed to radiation from black rain in distant areas. In other words, low-dose radiation exposure is completely ignored.

The French nuclear leaders at the heart of this international lobby are engaged in a communication strategy that consists of minimizing, trivializing, or denying the effects of radiation, and insisting that it is possible to live with radiation in contaminated areas. In other words, a strategy of concealment.

The famous Ethos project, which ran in Belarus from 1996 to 2001, ten years after the Chernobyl accident, seemed to be helping the population, but in fact it was consolidating the theory of acceptance of radiation. Jacques Lochard, former director of [France's national reactor evaluation agency] CEPN, who carried out this project, showed up in Fukushima in November 2011 and implemented the same strategy in a different form.

Lochard is the perfect example of the revolving door between nuclear industry and the agencies that regulate radiation protection. These [conflicts of interest] are totally unknown to ordinary citizens.

The CEPN is an association with only four members: [the CEA - Atomic Energy and Alternative Energies Commission, EDF - Electricity of France, Areva/Orano, and the IRSN - Institute for Radiological Protection]. In other words, CEPN is the embodiment of the French nuclear lobby and manages the lobby's communication on radiation protection.

The Chernobyl Ethos project and the CORE and SAGE projects that followed it were organized and carried out by Lochard — now retired but appointed as a visiting professor at the Institute of Atomic Bomb Disease at Nagasaki University — and his right-hand man, Thierry Schneider. They have become respectable points of reference for the European Commission as a means of dealing with a nuclear accident.

The methods initiated by this minority of promoters will be imposed, with authority and money, on those who are victims of a future serious nuclear accident in Europe. According to this philosophy, there is no need to evacuate. We can live happily with radiation, even in contaminated areas.

In this way, the French nuclear lobby, in cooperation with the International Commission on Radiological Protection, the IAEA-UNSCEAR (UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation) and others, can assure us that we can overcome a serious nuclear accident, by simply adapting to radiation exposure. The phrase “let's hope people have the strength to bounce back” is repeated. The word “resilience” has become a key word in this milieu.

But in Belarus and Ukraine, 37 years after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, 60% to 80% of children are still ill from the radiation resulting from Chernobyl. In Fukushima too, there are 300 or more cases of thyroid cancer. The Japanese authorities still insist that in the case of Fukushima, the causal relationship between cancer and radiation is not yet known. It can therefore be said that at Chernobyl, as at Fukushima, the reality of the effects of radiation caused by the accidents is still not officially recognized.

President Macron has insisted that a total of 15 [new] nuclear reactors will be built by 2050. Japan has also declared that it will continue to develop nuclear reactors in collaboration with France.

However, if we continue to develop nuclear reactors, radioactive waste will continue to accumulate. At present, the storage pools at every reactor site — whether in Japan or France — are approaching the limit of their capacity. Yet no reliable method for the final disposal of high-level nuclear waste has yet been established.

In this way, the lessons of Chernobyl and Fukushima are not being applied at all, but rather, the actual health hazards are being covered up. Any so-called cleanup projects are being carried out for the sake of immediate interests only. In the end, they are forcing the victims to endure radiation exposure and, ultimately, abandoning them. This is because of the cover-up strategy of the international nuclear lobby.

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