

# Weakening NRC Would be a Bad Move

By David Kraft

An article in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* by Dr. Allison Macfarlane, former chairwoman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), should ring alarm bells for officials — especially those promoting another round of nuclear building.

Macfarlane, no anti-nuclear ideologue, expressed shock that the heavily pro-nuclear Biden administration recently withdrew the re-nomination of NRC Commissioner Jeff Baran. His opponents in the nuclear industry and their political allies accused Baran of the heinous offense of — being too concerned about nuclear safety. That Sens. Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema agree should send shivers down the spine of any state governor.

Simultaneous with this political capitulation, news accounts described efforts by certain members of Congress to reform the NRC, giving it a new mission — “fundamentally changing the NRC, in leadership and policy,” according to Politico. The goal is to “streamline regulations at the NRC and potentially adjust the agency’s mission statement” to speed up the development and propagation of new, experimental small modular nuclear reactors.

The universe sometimes has a very perverse sense of humor. On the same day the news of the proposed Congressional “reform” broke, the nose landing gear of a Delta Air Lines jet collapsed on takeoff. What’s the connection?

## Weak oversight leads to disasters

The Delta incident is the exclamation point to a litany of disasters that demonstrates the results of weakening regulatory oversight of critical industries, industries where huge numbers of lives might be at stake. What happens when watchdogs become lap dogs for the industries they’re supposed to regulate?

- Two crashed Boeing 737-MAX airliners, result of industry self-regulation; death toll: 346.
- The East Palestine Norfolk Southern train derailment, contaminating an entire community that is still feeling the health effects of the disaster and receiving little compensation, the result of lobbyists and gifting politicians preventing implementation of safety recommendations.
- The in-flight blowout of an emergency exit door on a Boeing 737 airliner — no injuries but revelations that 1,800 reports of shoddy manufacture and maintenance went unheeded by federal regulators.

And now members of Congress are attempting to deregulate the NRC so that it would be easier to construct new reactors with unproven experimental designs. What could possibly go wrong?

Allowing the nuclear industry and its political allies to continually erode the regulatory framework turns the NRC into trade show promoters, not regulators. With a next-generation of reactors being ramrodded down the throats of Americans, [we] cannot afford any relaxation of nuclear regulation.

— *David Kraft is director of Nuclear Energy Information Service, a 42-year-old nuclear power watchdog and safe energy advocacy organization. This piece is excerpted from an op-ed in the Chicago Sun Times, March 19, 2024.*



Anti-nuclear rally. Photo: Clamshell Alliance.



Hinamoeura Morgant-Cross, pictured in front of the United Nations, is a young French Polynesian whose realization that her own leukemia was a legacy of the French atomic tests in the South Pacific led her into activism. She works to pressure the French government to acknowledge responsibility and provide medical and financial support.

Morgant-Cross was elected to the Polynesian Assembly of Representatives in May 2023 and shepherded a unanimous Assembly vote supporting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

# Nuclear Justice in Maohi Nui

By Hinamoeura Morgant-Cross

*Part I of “Nuclear Justice in Maohi Nui” can be found at [nukewatchinfo.org/nuclear-justice-in-maohi-nui](http://nukewatchinfo.org/nuclear-justice-in-maohi-nui) and in the Spring 2024 Quarterly.*

My grandparents and parents were anti-nuclear activists, but it wasn’t a topic of family discussion during my childhood. There are several reasons for this. One was that they didn’t think they knew enough. There was also a clash in beliefs about the consequences of France’s nuclear testing in Maohi Nui, also known as its colonized name French Polynesia. There was the knowledge that the nuclear bomb had health consequences versus the powerful rhetoric of the French government, which emphatically stated that French nuclear tests were “clean.” You could sense that the elders didn’t want to talk about it because of the trauma it caused them. And finally, there was a fear of speaking out: a fear of reprisals if you talked about nuclear power and opposed the French government. Indeed, our population still bears the scars of the arrest and exile of Mr. Pouvana’a a O’opa, who advocated for independence from France. He was targeted by the French colonial justice system for “terrorist acts,” which were fabricated by agents of the French state.

French nuclear weapons testing continued until 1996 when I was seven years old. Between 1966 and 1996, France detonated 193 nuclear bombs on our islands in the South Pacific. Maohi Nui belongs to France as a collectivity, a status that compromises our sovereignty on nuclear and other issues.

As a collectivity, Maohi Nui has been forced to accept France’s policies regarding the effects of testing. In 1977, under the guise of giving Maohi Nui greater autonomy, France handed over responsibility for health, leaving the territory to bear the heavy financial burden of all the radiation-induced diseases. After repeating for decades that nuclear bombs were clean, it wasn’t until 2006 that France was forced to recognize that there had been radioactive contamination.

Since 2011, there has been a French compensation program for health affects related to the testing, but it’s very complex and not at all impartial. People have to assemble a multitude of medical documents.

Some of these documents are inaccessible, under control of the French army since the time when the army managed medical care. The application procedure is biased because it’s the French who decide who is compensated, the same people who talk about “clean” nuclear testing. Many Polynesians are treated in Paris, 10,000 miles from their island, after a 24-hour plane journey. Those treated abroad are the luckiest, because Polynesia can pay for their travel.

With a medical system thirty years behind the U.S., Maohi Nui just can’t manage the health care for those suffering as a result of the radioactive contamination. There are some people that decide not to have kids because they don’t want them to end up with leukemia.

My own diagnosis of leukemia led me into activism. Despite oppression and misinformation, the grassroots anti-nuclear movement in Maohi Nui has gained some strength among the population. It started with the anti-nuclear association Moruroa e Tatou, founded in 2001. Other organizations are Association 193, which helps people put together compensation files, and the pro-independence movement, led by Mr. Oscar Temaru. In October 2018, Mr. Temaru filed a complaint against the French Republic before the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity for the 193 nuclear bombs detonated on Polynesian territory. However, the ICC is only concerned with crimes committed after 2002 and, above all, complaints must be brought by a State, while French Polynesia is a collectivity. The complaint was therefore inadmissible.

The national and international anti-nuclear movement have led to some advances. I presented a motion in support of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to the Polynesian Assembly of Representatives, which voted unanimously in favor of the resolution in September 2023. On a local level, the fight consists of properly educating the population about our nuclear history, which has been concealed by France and played down for too long. Internationally, the movement is denouncing the environmental and health consequences of France’s 193 nuclear weapons tests, in the hope that France will pay this debt and also with the wish to benefit from cooperation and aid from other states.

# We Need a ‘No Nukes’ Comeback

By Arnie Alpert, for the Clamshell Alliance

Paul Gunter, a co-director of Beyond Nuclear, says, “Nukes are just too expensive, take too long to build, and feature too many pathways to catastrophic accidents.” Their continued use — along with building costly new reactors — make climate change worse and the world less safe. In a statement on our new website, we assert: “A tsunami of nuclear power propaganda is sweeping the globe.” This propaganda is backed by a multi-billion-dollar nuclear promotion campaign funded by taxpayers via the Biden administration’s Department of Energy, and the UN International Atomic Energy Commission. Billions of dollars in nuclear subsidies were loaded into Biden’s infrastructure bill, with billions more in the Inflation Reduction Act. Meanwhile, the Atomic Energy

Advancement Act — which passed in the House in March 2024 and the Senate in June — further subsidizes the nuclear industry by extending the \$16.6 billion cap on liability from reactor accidents for the next 40 years.

The \$300-billion Fukushima reactor disaster response proves this to be comically inadequate. “Nukes just cannot compete with zero fuel cost solar and wind, and that means the era of base load plants running on fossil and nuclear fuel is ending,” said Roy Morrison, a former Clamshell staff member who has worked as a commercial solar energy developer. “Solar arrays combined with energy storage from home rooftops already are acting as virtual power plants to meet utility demands for peak power.” Masayoshi Iyoda wrote for Al Jazeera on April 3, 2024: “The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report pointed out that nuclear energy’s potential and cost-effectiveness of emission reduction by 2030 was much smaller than that of solar and wind energy.” — *Excerpted from article previously published by ScheerPost. The Clamshell Alliance is an anti-nuclear organization founded in 1976.*