

# Nuclear Shorts

## Harvard Study Confirms Reactor Radionuclides in Soil and House Dust Near Pilgrim Reactor

A recently published study by the Harvard School of Public Health and Dr. Marco Kaltofen looked at samples of soil and house dust from within 8.1 miles of the Pilgrim nuclear reactor, now closed, on Cape Cod Bay in Mass. The study found radionuclides only produced by reactor operations — such as cesium-137. At 0.6 miles from the reactor, cesium-137 and lead-210 were at 20 times the so-called ‘background’ levels. These findings are not surprising after decades of reactor operations and the spread of contamination from decommissioning, yet this may prompt a larger study. In 1996, the Mass. Dept. of Health documented rates of adult leukemia were four times higher in people living or working closer to Pilgrim. The study is available from Environmental Engineering Science at the following link: <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/15579018251371131>. — Southeastern Mass. Health Study, *Archives of Environmental Health*, Vol. 51, July-August 1996

## Mystery Test of Submarine-Launched Missile Raises Questions

In September, the Caribbean Astronomy Society detected an unattributed “military test” when either a U.S. or U.K. nuclear-powered submarine fired a 130,000-pound Trident missile from near Puerto Rico. The missile, a Trident II D5, is an intercontinental-range ballistic missile with a yield of 7 to 95 kilotons. Regularly, the U.S. military publicly announces its missile tests in advance. In January, Lockheed Martin won a \$383 million contract for the Trident II D5 Life Extension program to “modernize” the Trident arsenal, providing missiles for the Navy’s new *Columbia*-class submarines and the U.K.’s *Dreadnought*-class submarines. Each of the Trident II D5 missiles currently built by Lockheed Martin costs about \$30.9 million and each missile can carry up to 12 independently targeted warheads. The Trident II D5 is described by the U.S. Navy as “the planet’s most lethal, accurate, and reliable sea-based strategic deterrent.” Fourteen *Ohio*-class submarines in the U.S. Navy and four *Vanguard*-class British submarines each carry 20 and 16 of these missiles per sub respectively. — Interesting Engineering, Sept. 22, 2025; Hans Kristensen & Matt Korda, “United States nuclear forces, 2019,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April 29, 2019

## German Government to Weaken Criticism of Nuclear Power

At a Ministerial Council meeting in France last August, French and German delegates declared support for the “equal treatment” of both nuclear power and renewable electricity sources within the European Union (EU). The news came as a shock to environment and policy observers, because Germany has strenuously opposed nuclear power for years. The reversal was noticed in May when German Chancellor Merz and French President Macron agreed to “end discrimination” against nuclear power at the EU level, and in June when German Energy Minister Katherina Reiche attended a meeting of pro-nuclear states. Ms. Reiche, a former gas industry lobbyist, said she intends to slow the pace and reduce promotion of renewable energy expansion. Even Germany’s anti-nuclear Environment Minister Carsten Schneider has been silent on the turnaround.

EU negotiations on its multi-annual financial “framework” (for the years 2028 to 2034) are ongoing, but in June a first draft was issued which, for the first time, allows the funding of research on mini reactors, and permits the construction of new nuclear reactors to be directly eligible for funding. Such funding would reverse the EU’s current policy, and, in Germany, taxpayers’ money would flow to international nuclear power projects in spite of the country’s complete reactor phase-out. Without clear opposition from Germany, support for nuclear power will increase, and investments in wind and solar projects will become less attractive. — Broadcast, newsletter of Together Against Nuclear Energy, Germany, October 2025, <https://www.ausgestrahlt.de/>

## \$80 Billion U.S. Gov’t Deal with Westinghouse for Ten New Reactors

In October, the U.S. government signed on to an \$80 billion deal with Westinghouse Electric Company to construct ten new large nuclear reactors. The plan hopes to see all ten reactor projects break ground by 2030 featuring the Westinghouse AP1000 design. The deal is sweetened for the U.S. through the promise of a 20% stake in Westinghouse after the company doles out an initial \$17.5 billion to private shareholders. AI, Big Tech, and the military-industrial complex are all behind this administration’s push to bring the U.S. to the “forefront of the nuclear renaissance” — as Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick put it. — Trading View, Oct. 28, 2025

## Global Majority of Countries Now Signed onto UN Nuclear Ban Treaty

As of September 26, Kyrgyzstan has signed, and Ghana has ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), raising the number of states that have acceded, signed, or ratified the treaty to a global majority. Now, 99 out of 197 eligible states have taken legal action under the treaty. This is a key milestone for what is still a young treaty which was adopted by the UN just over 8 years ago and only entered into force 5 years ago. The TPNW outlaws nuclear weapons and all activities associated with them, including production, possession, testing, threats or use. As we know from the evidence from the United States’ nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 80 years ago, the effects of nuclear weapons are uniquely cruel and inhumane because of the indiscriminate, lasting, intergenerational harm they cause. The fact that a global majority of states now respect and heed the treaty sends a strong signal to the nuclear-armed states and their allies which support the use of nuclear weapons in their military strategies that they are the minority and increasingly regarded by the international community as irresponsible actors threatening global security. — ICAN Sept. 26, 2025. This article was originally published by ICAN, and has been shortened for space.



**Point Beach Reactor, on Lake Michigan, in Wisconsin. In September, the two reactors on site were awarded license extensions to run until 2050 and 2053. Photo: reddit**

## Wisconsin Reactors Approved to Run Until 80 Years Old

On September 29, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission announced the much-delayed approval of the license renewals for Point Beach nuclear reactors, units 1 and 2. They are located in Manitowoc County near Two Rivers, Wisc. on the shore of Lake Michigan. The license renewal included a generic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) without addressing current and future climate impacts at the Point Beach site in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act, as pointed out in a lawsuit filed by several non-profit organizations. A public pressure campaign by Physicians for Social Responsibility-Wisconsin and other groups, including Nukewatch, raised serious concerns with aging at the facility and the daily release of 915 million gallons of heated water into Lake Michigan. In 2013, the NRC designated Point Beach unit 2 as one of the most embrittled reactors in the country. Being one of the most likely to crack did not stop the renewal of the license. NextEra submitted an updated EIS in April 2025, and five months later Point Beach units 1 and 2 were licensed to operate through 2050 and 2053, respectively, when they will reach their 80th birthday. — Fox 11 TV, Sept. 29; Physicians for Social Responsibility-WI, Apr. 14, 2025

## Plans for Unlawful New Mexico Radioactive Waste Dump Terminated

Many are celebrating the termination of Holtec International’s proposal “to construct and operate the world’s largest high-level radioactive waste dump,” according to Beyond Nuclear, part of a coalition that led the fight against the so-called “consolidated interim storage facility (CISF).” For eight years, this grassroots coalition battled the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and took its complaints against CISFs to federal courts and the U.S. Supreme Court. Among the major victories won through the coalition’s hard work, decades of Holtec’s planned shipments of highly radioactive waste will no longer be moving across the country by barge, road, or rail. Beyond Nuclear’s Kevin Kamps said temporary dumps “automatically double transport risks, as irradiated fuel would have to be transferred from interim storage to a permanent disposal site someday.” Under the federal Nuclear Waste Policy Act, temporary storage dumps are only permitted after a permanent repository is operational. — New Mexico Political Report, Oct. 14; Beyond Nuclear press release, Oct. 13, 2025

## President Calls for Nuclear Weapons Tests, Energy Secretary Hits Breaks

After Russia said October 26 that it had tested a new nuclear-powered cruise missile and a large torpedo which are nuclear-capable weapons, Donald Trump confusedly announced that the United States would “immediately” begin nuclear weapons testing. This least-informed president in U.S. history mistook Russian weapons systems tests for nuclear warhead detonations — which the United States suspended thirty-three years ago, in 1992. Energy Secretary Chris Wright went on Fox News “Sunday Briefing” November 2 to correct his boss saying, “And so he hears announcements ... and I think he wants to communicate....” Then, because Trump knows nothing about nuclear weapons (he said the Defense Department tests nuclear weapons), Sec. Wright corrected the error, and explained, “I think the tests we’re talking about right now are system tests. These are not nuclear explosions. ... So you’re testing all the other parts of a nuclear weapon.” A restart of explosive, underground warhead blasts at the Nevada Test Site outside Las Vegas would require months or years of rehab, training, and preparation. Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, told *The Washington Post* the government was unable to restart testing right away and that it “would need at least 36 months to resume contained nuclear tests underground at the former test site in Nevada.” — *The Washington Post* Nov. 2, and Oct. 29, 2025

## First Nation Stalls Planned Canadian Radioactive Waste Dump Near Ottawa River

According to the *Journal de Montréal*, the 365 Anishinabeg residents of the Kebaowek First Nation reserve in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, have halted the multi-million-dollar Canadian radioactive waste dump sited on their homelands. The intended permanent abandonment site, which would hold up to one-million cubic meters of radioactive and other toxic wastes including plutonium, was conceived of by a consortium of multinational corporations hired by the federally-owned corporation Atomic Energy of Canada. The proposal would sandwich the waste in a mound of clay, sand, and an insufficient membrane close to the surface and near the Ottawa River, drinking water for many downstream. The mound is engineered to last 550 years, but Gordon Edwards of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility points out that 19 of the 29 radioactive substances destined for the dump have half-lives of more than 5,500 years. In February, Federal Courts ruled that the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission did not obtain free, prior, and informed consent of affected Indigenous communities — required by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples — before green-lighting construction. In March, Federal Courts found the dump threatens several at-risk species. The proposed dump is opposed by 130 Quebec municipalities. — Gordon Edwards, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, Sept. 22; *Journal de Montréal*, Sept. 19, 2025