Nuclear Shorts

White House Denies Access to "Safety Watchdog" Overseeing Nuclear Weapons Complex

The Department of Energy (DOE) is denying access to some information that the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, the nation's only independent safety agency covering nuclear weapons, says it needs to oversee operations at sites where the nuclear arsenal is built and maintained. The denials of access to records and meetings are "the most significant" in the history of the board.

The safety board says DOE has explicitly denied information about:

•Nuclear "criticality" safety, or the risk of an accidental, uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction that carries a high risk of death, "a challenging field in which DOE has experienced performance issues in the past and often struggles to maintain sufficient expertise."

•Risks involving electricity accidentally contacting high explosives in nuclear warhead manufacturing, an operation in Texas that includes 19 outstanding "opportunities to improve safety" as identified by the safety board.

•Progress on a safety analysis of a tritium facility in South Carolina, where seismic activity could lead to a dangerous fire.

•The list of DOE regulations being considered for elimination, and its action earlier this year relaxing radiation exposure limits.

"For over 30 years we have reported on DOE's inadequate oversight of (management and operation) contractors," a July Government Accountability Office report said. It noted that nuclear weapon and cleanup work under DOE's purview "have been on our High-Risk List for fraud and abuse for two decades." — *Seattle Times,* Aug. 13, 2026

New Helicopter for Safety Patrols Over Minuteman III Long-Range Missile Fields

The Air Force announced that its MH-139 or "Grey Wolf" helicopter passed capability tests in August, and would slowly replace the aging older helicopters in escorting, patrolling, and guarding the widely dispersed land-based Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) fields spread across parts of



U.S. Air Force MH-139 Grey Wolf. Photo by Boeing Corp.

Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and North Dakota.

In a press release, the Air Force said the new Boeing-made helicopter won the working status three years behind schedule. Air Force Col. Bryant Bevan, who commands the 582nd Helicopter Group, said in the release that his HG played a key role in the aircraft's first operational escort of a Minuteman III ICBM convoy in January.

"The advanced capabilities of the MH-139 Grey Wolf will directly empower our airborne forces with the enhanced speed, range, and survivability required to decisively defend and secure the Minuteman III weapons system," Bevan said. The Air Force's press release touted the superior capabilities of the Grey Wolf compared to its predecessor, including the ability to carry twice the number of troops. — Breaking Defense, Sept. 1, 2026

"Unauthorized" Rad Material Found at Former Navy Shipyard Superfund Site

The Navy reported in April the discovery of radiological material in an "unauthorized storage cabinet on the San Francisco Bay." On June 24, over 150 people rallied at San Francisco's City Hall to demand environmental justice, accountability, and community oversight to repair health damage and failures in the long-running cleanup of the Hunters Point Shipyard Superfund Site.

The shipyard was home to the Naval Radiological Defense Lab from 1946-1969 and was shut down in 1991. There is a long list of complaints about the remediation of the EPA-designated Superfund site — a 900-acre segment including "contaminated soil, dust, sediments, surface water and groundwater" with multiple pollutants including heavy metals, pesticides, petroleum fuels, and radionuclides.

The Navy pointed to a former subcontractor at the site and claimed no related public health or safety issues. However, the material discovered in the cabinet was not disclosed.

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice and Marie Harrison Community Foundation, who organized the rally in June, continue to fight for a more just cleanup. Bradley Angel, Executive Director of Greenaction, told SF Gate the community cannot rely on the Navy for the truth when violations are discovered, saying, "We don't trust them as far as we can throw them."

— SF Gate, June 5; greenaction.org, Aug. 12, 2026

NATO Missile Defense Base in Poland

The Netherlands took command of a NATO air defense mission in eastern Poland, where allies coordinate logistical support for Ukraine's war with Russia. About 300 Dutch troops, equipped with Patriot and other air defense systems recently replaced German forces, who had previously been carrying out the air defense mission in Jasionka, Poland (near the Ukraine border). "We protect supply lines to Ukraine, defend NATO's eastern flank, and develop our capabilities," a Dutch officer said. In January 2023, Germany's former Foreign Minister and former co-chair of the Green Party Annalena Baerbock, at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, said in English, "We are fighting a war against Russia and not against each other" and urged NATO allies to stay united on sending tanks to Ukraine.

— *Space Alert!*, Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, Spring/Summer 2026; and *Countercurrents*, January 2023

High and Dry: Nuke Reactors Shutting Down as Europe Heats Up

Record low river levels across Europe this August left too little water for cooling nuclear reactors. This caused reactor shutdowns, reduced electricity generation, and skepticism about the viability of a "nuclear renaissance" in the face of the warming climate.

"Climate change is making nuclear power more and more unpredictable," Per Högselius, a professor at Sweden's KTH Royal Institute of Technology, told Politico. France shutdown three reactors and reduced outputs at several others. Bulgaria lowered outputs at the country's only reactor and Hungary, which relies on nuclear alone for 40% their electricity, had to cut generation by 75%.

The Hungarian government sank two ships into the Danube to raise water levels near its Paks reactor site. In Romania, officials detonated explosives and sank four rock-filled barges to push water to the Cernavodă reactor site, which depends on the Danube for 20% of the country's power. Ultimately, both reactors at the site were shut down.

The drying Danube not only cools nuclear reactors, but is relied on for freight, irrigation, hydro power, and, most critically, drinking water across 19 countries. Hungary is considering a short-term strategic dam to collect water near its reactor, but with potentially hazardous consequences for wildlife and downriver communities.

In recent years, and again this June reactors across Europe have also been forced to shut down because of high river temperatures.

Climate change and extreme weather events promise to grow more drastic, forcing officials to confront the challenges of the push for 50% of Europe's electricity generation to be nuclear by 2050. The U.S. and UK plan to quadruple their nuclear output.

— MSN, Sept. 8; Politico, Sept. 1 and Aug. 21; *France Economic Daily*, June 26, 2026



Dennis DuVall (front) and Gerd Buentzly helped decorate the Büchel nuclear base's outer fence during a protest in Germany. Photo by Luthar Lange.

30th Anniversary of German Campaign Against U.S. Nuclear Weapons

In July, the disarmament group "Nonviolent Action to Abolish Nuclear Weapons," founded in 1996, celebrated 30 years of protest and resistance at a gathering near NATO's Büchel Air Base, where U.S. nuclear bombs are stationed. A funny thing happened during the group's demonstration July 24, after eighteen people decorated the base's perimeter fence with banners and sunflowers, the global symbol for nuclear disarmament. The moisture in the flowers triggered the fence's electronic alarm system and eight large police vans from town rushed out to disband the demonstration which had already ended. Among the participants were three U.S. citizens who previously took part in nonviolent "go-in" actions at the base and had subsequently served prison time in Germany for nonpayment of penalties.

U.S. Nuclear Exposure Survivors Receiving Compensation

As of September 18, the Department of Justice Civil Division has paid out almost $800 million to radiation-affected victims of nuclear weapons testing, uranium mining, or Manhattan Project waste facilities. Compensation has gone to 11,000 people that became eligible to receive benefits under the 2025 Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). This has been a success story for those who have waited decades for recognition of diseases or death at the hands of the nuclear industry. Other programs, such as the PACT Act for Atomic Veterans, have resulted in a majority of claims being denied, while the recently expanded RECA program has approved over 99% of claims. The deadline to apply is December 31, 2027.

Shortcomings of the 2025 RECA bill are addressed in a 2026 reauthorization act that was introduced by Republican Representative James Moylan of Guam Aug. 17. — U.S. Department of Justice, Sept. 18; Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium, Aug. 28, 2026; NBC News, Aug. 23, 2023

Please note Nukewatch's *new email address!* & correct your contact list: *disarm@nukewatchinfo.org*