

Nuclear waste to America

While in the German Nuclear Waste Commission is spoken of "national responsibility", the Federal Ministry of Research prepares the illegal export of 457 Castor containers with spent fuel element balls from the Research Centre Jülich and the interim storage Ahaus for reprocessing in the US.

Although transports to reprocessing are banned since mid-2005 according to the German Atomic Energy Act. Also the Repository Search Act, which was adopted by the Bundestag 2013, excludes the export of nuclear waste.

Loophole: Research Reactor

The federal government is now trying to exploit a loophole and re-baptized high-temperature reactors for commercial power generation into research reactors. For research reactors you don't use the heat, but the neutron for example for physical material investigations.

The containers shall be transported by ship to the US port Charleston, South Carolina, and then by train to the nuclear plant Savannah River Site (SRS), announced the US Department of Energy in June 2014.

The costs are estimated in the US to 1 billion US dollars, they are to be paid by German taxpayers' money.

The US Environmental Impact, co-financed by Jülich, shall be completed by approximately May 2015.

The transport of 152 Castor containers from Jülich shall be completed by June 30, 2016.

Then obviously planned to sent additional 305 Castor containers from the intermediate storage Ahaus on the trip to the US.

This Castor-Containers were brought to Ahaus between 1992 and 1995 in 57 transports from High-temperature reactor Hamm-Uetrop.

Forschungszentrum Jülich apparently wants to get rid of nuclear waste and the atomic image to win renowned scientists.

For years the Research-Centre Jülich protract the opportunity to build a new, earthquake safe interim storage on site, although it was clear that the approval of 1993 would be phased out for the old interim storage after 20 years, and although it was raining into the old interim storage since 2011.

The North Rhine Westphalian Ministry of Economy extended nor storage license via emergency regulations for two further periods half a year and in July 2014 arranged the evacuation of the old interim storage.

The research center should present a concept.

The Supervisory Board will decide in November.

Shareholders are the Federal Government (90%) and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW /10%) - each represented by the Federal Ministry of Research and the NRW Ministry of Science.

In April 2014 the US Department of Energy, the Federal Research Ministry and the NRW Ministry of Science have signed a letter of intent.

Next step will be:

- to complete a definitive agreement until beginning of 2015
- to reprocess nuclear waste in the plant H-Canyon

This way the graphite is separated and the fuel are worked up.

New technologies will be developed for. (Processing in a liquid salt melt)

- The technology DEVELOPMENT, implementation the processing and conditioning and disposal are to be paid by Germany.

For export must be applied for an export permit from the Federal Office of Economics and Export Control (BAFA), which is subordinated to Federal Ministry of Economics.

It should be checked whether the EC Dual-Use Regulation 2009 is complied when exporting AVR fuel

According to EC-Dual-Use the export of weapons-grade material must be controlled.

For this purpose, the Foreign Office must be consulted.

Finally, the Federal Environment Ministry should clarify the question whether disposal the German Atomic Energy Act is complied with.

The former Minister Röttgen had refused to agree to a planned transport of spent fuel from the from research reactor Dresden-Rossendorf to Russia.

Reasons for this were the uncertain conditions of acceptance and public protests.

What are the concerns in the US?

US environmentalists want to stop the deal.

Tom Clements, head of the local environmental organization Savannah

River Site Watch, told the newspaper "New Germany", "Germany has to dispose its garbage themselves and prevent senseless and dangerous transports".

Clements, who toured in September a week through Germany, doubts that the conversion of the existing processing plant for the "unusual nuclear waste" succeeds. The US has no repository. The SRS-terrain already stored plutonium from Canada, Belgium, Italy and Sweden. According to Clements additionally got about 180 million liters of liquid high-level radioactive waste from nuclear weapons production in the 1950s.

Savannah River Site is approximately 800 km². There are five military reactors for the production of plutonium and tritium for nuclear weapons. Furthermore, there are two reprocessing plants at the site. One has been in operation since 1955. In it, the nuclear material was separated. Liquid high-level waste emerged that are stored in 51 large tanks. The tanks also date from the 1950s and aging alarming. The contents of the tank, since leaks threatens, pumped and glazed in large containers.

Tobias Darge, Energy Speaker of ROBIN WOOD has meet Tom Clements of the environmental organization Savannah River Site Watch in September during his visit to Germany

Red Info box:

The Jülich mishaps reactor

The reactor in Jülich was a gas-cooled high-temperature pebble bed reactor.

The reactor was built in 1959-1966 by the Mannheim company Brown Boveri / Krupp and cost 113 Million German Mark.

The reactor was plagued from the start of incidents: Damage to fuel, excessive charges tritium into the air and shutdowns of several months because of steam generator leaks in the 1978th 1988 derReaktor was shut down and dismantled today.

He was operated by the Association experimental reactor AVR GmbH, Dusseldorf.

By 1985, the shareholders were 15 municipalities: Stadtwerke Dusseldorf AG (20.82%), Munich (12.5%), Stadtwerke Bremen AG (12.5%), Stadtwerke Hannover AG (8.32%), Wuppertal Stadtwerke AG (5.84%), Stadtwerke Duisburg AG (5%), electricity Minden-Ravensberg GmbH (4.17%), Stadtwerke Mannheim AG (4.17%), Stadtwerke Aachen (2.5%), electricity Wesertal werk GmbH (1.67%), Stadtwerke Bonn (1.67%) Stadtwerke Krefeld AG (1.67%), Oberhessische utilities (1.67%) Stadtwerke Würzburg (0.83%).

From 1966, work was initiated for the reprocessing of nuclear balls in Jülich. No later than 1974, it was clear that the recoverable fissile material in the reactor was useless.

Had been overlooked or underestimated the toxic effects of uranium-236.

The reprocessing plant was indeed completed, but never put into service and scrapped in the 1980s.

100,000 of these AVR-ball-fuel should be stored in 1976 as the first, highly radioactive nuclear waste in the experimental repository in the Asse salt mine in Lower Saxony.

But on the other hand was successfully sued.

From 1983 to 1992, the Federal Ministry of Research funded plans of the Nuclear Research Centre Jülich for a 5-year trial emplacement in boreholes in the Asse.

From 1990, this project was blocked by the red-green state government in Lower Saxony, and 1992 criticized by the Federal Court, so that the Federal Research Ministry stopped the financing.

In 1988, discovered that the maximum approved amount of fissile material was exceeded in the Jülich stock. The supervisory authorities had to intervene.

Since the stock options were not sufficient to accommodate the still present in the reactor fuel about 110,000, and 1993 in Jülich an interim storage facility for all AVR spheres was built.

However, its operating license only reached-2013.