



Savannah River Site Watch

**Savannah River Site Watch
Columbia, South Carolina USA
For Immediate Release
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**Secret Plans Underway to Bring Spent Research Reactor Stored in the United Kingdom to the
Savannah River Site – Material from the Republic of Georgia Should Stay in the UK**

Proposal On Top of Plans to Bring Foreign Plutonium to SRS as Nuclear Security Summit Approaches

Is SRS Becoming an International Nuclear Waste Site Under Thin Veil of Nuclear Non-Proliferation?

Columbia, South Carolina – Secret plans to bring more nuclear materials to the Savannah River Site in advance of the Nuclear Security Summit in March 2016 appears to be actively developing in the United Kingdom, according to Savannah River Site Watch, a public interest organization that has been aware of the initial shipment plans for two years.

Efforts to bring spent research reactor fuel now stored in the United Kingdom have created a stir in Scotland, where the material originating in the Republic of Georgia is stored.

SRS Watch believes that the material should remain in the UK, a nuclear weapon state which has ample nuclear waste storage facilities, and not transported via the naval port of Charleston, South Carolina to the Savannah River Site. In the past, ships such as the Pacific Egret, operated by Pacific Nuclear Transport Limited have secretly brought plutonium and spent nuclear reactor fuel in via Charleston.

“It is unknown why the U.S. and U.K. have not agreed to leave the material in the U.K. but it is suspected that it’s another case of U.S. officials pushing SRS as an international nuclear waste disposal site under the guise of nuclear non-proliferation,” said Tom Clements, director of SRS Watch. “It is troubling that SRS sees a future in expanded and often unjustified nuclear waste import, which is a dead-end that leads away from development of a viable future based on clean technologies.”

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved the cask to transport the material. The NRC stated in a February 6, 2015 letter to the cask manufacturer (NAC International, Inc.) that there was a one-time “authorization is necessary to support a shipment from the Dounreay Nuclear Facility in Scotland to the Savannah River Site in the U.S.” The letter gives details of the “five (5) special fuel assemblies.”

The news of the possible shipment from Scotland to SRS comes at the same time plans are underway to bring 331 kilograms of plutonium now in Japan to SRS. As SRS Watch revealed on December 21, the bulk of that plutonium is of U.K.-origin and should not come to SRS.

"Unfortunately, it appears that the upcoming Nuclear security Summit is stimulating shipments of plutonium and high-level nuclear waste to SRS," said Tom Clements, director of SRS watch. "While there are legitimate nuclear non-proliferation reasons to secure the nuclear material in question

It is believed that the fuel assemblies contain several kilograms of highly enriched uranium (HEU), but that bomb-grade uranium would have to first be extracted and it is far below the International Atomic Energy Agency's level of 25 kilograms of HEU making up a "significant quantity" (SQ) - enough for a nuclear weapon.

Contrary to rumors in Scotland that the material would be flown from Scotland to the U.S., a "certificate" for the NAC transport cask issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation clearly stipulates that "Air transport is not authorized."

Statement by Tom Clements, Director, SRS Watch, on the proposed shipment to SRS:

As the UK is a nuclear weapons state holding large stocks of weapon-usable materials, it serves no nuclear non-proliferation purpose to ship this material to the Savannah River Site. The additional land transport and the sea transport pose environmental and security risks that can easily be avoided by leaving the material in the UK.

I suspect that a major reason for the interest by the U.S. Department of Energy in receiving the spent fuel is financial - to store it with other research reactor spent fuel that serve as feed material to keep congressionally funded 60-year-old reprocessing plant at SRS operable as long as possible.

Given the absence of any heightened security risk of the material being left in the UK, its shipment to SRS may perhaps serve to be touted as a non-proliferation victory at the Nuclear Security Summit next March in Washington but such a proclamation will ring hollow. The summit should not be a reason for politically driven plutonium and nuclear waste shipment decisions, but rather the environmental, security and genuine nuclear non-proliferation considerations should determine both decisions and policies.

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Notes:

SRS Watch news on secret import of plutonium from Japan and other foreign countries, December 21, 2015 & link to report "DOE'S SOUTH CAROLINA PLUTONIUM DILEMMA: PLUTONIUM KEEPS SECRETLY COMING IN BUT NO VIABLE PLAN TO TAKE IT OUT,**"**

http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/srs_watch_news_japan_plutonium_december_2_1_2015.pdf

NRC letter of Feb. 6, 2015, "AUTHORIZATION FOR A ONE-TIME SHIPMENT OF THE DOUNREAY FUEL CONTENTS IN THE MODEL NO. NAC-LWT PACKAGE (TAC NO. L24972),"

<https://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/main.jsp?AccessionNumber=ML15041A093>

U.S. Department of Transportation document, July 30, 2015, *COMPETENT AUTHORITY CERTIFICATION FOR A TYPE B(U)F FISSILE RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS PACKAGE DESIGN CERTIFICATE USA/9225/B(U)F-96, REVISION 58*, states that "Air transport is not authorized." [for shipment of NRC-approved cask];

<http://osrp.lanl.gov/Documents/SFCertificates/USA-9225-B%28U%29F.pdf>

Articles from Scottish media that mention SRS:

Scotland Herald December 19, 2015

"UK Government urged to come clean about secret plan to ship weapons-grade uranium to US"

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14157268.UK_Government_urged_to_come_clean_about_secret_plan_to_ship_weapons_grade_uranium_to_US/

The Press & Journal (Aberdeen, Scotland)

"Secret plan to ship weapons-grade uranium from Dounreay to US"

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/highlands/785281/secreat-plan-to-ship-weapons-grade-uranium-from-dounreay-to-us/>

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