

# NUCLEAR MONITOR

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A PUBLICATION OF WORLD INFORMATION SERVICE ON ENERGY (WISE)  
AND THE NUCLEAR INFORMATION & RESOURCE SERVICE (NIRS)

## Editorial

Dear readers of the WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor,

In this issue of the Monitor:

Ray Acheson from Reaching Critical Will writes about the recent UN conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

we reprint a short statement marking the 15th anniversary of the arrest of Yvonne Margarula – Senior Traditional Owner of the Mirarr clan – for ‘trespassing’ on her land at Jabiluka in the Northern Territory of Australia.

Vladimir Slivyak from Ecodefense writes about the controversial Kaliningrad nuclear power plant in Russia

we reprint an article from the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons about depleted uranium contamination in Iraq, and report on the shelving of plans for DU testing in the UK

Jim Green from Friends of the Earth, Australia summarises a new report exposing the economic myths peddled by the uranium industry

the Nuclear News section has updates from India, Oman, the UK, Russia, the USA, and South Korea.

The next issue of the Nuclear Monitor will include articles about MOX and plutonium issues in the UK, the US and Japan; unfolding controversies regarding nuclear waste plans in Sweden; and recent developments in Japan in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster.

Feel free to contact us if there are issues you would like to see covered in the Monitor.

Regards from the Nuclear Monitor editorial team  
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## Fifteen years on and still no mine at Jabiluka

Fifteen years ago Yvonne Margarula – Senior Traditional Owner of the Mirarr clan – was arrested for ‘trespassing’ on her traditional land at Jabiluka in the Northern Territory of Australia. The action was part of the ultimately successful campaign to prevent uranium. The Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation released the following statement to mark the anniversary.

**762.4308** In the early hours of May 19, 1998, Yvonne Margarula was arrested along three other Aboriginal people – Jacqui Katona, Christine Christophersen and Reuben Nango – on the Jabiluka mineral lease. The highly controversial proposed Jabiluka uranium mine was under construction

at the time of the arrests but development of the mine was eventually halted as a result of the campaign lead by Ms Margarula.

Ms Margarula argued that her protest against the Jabiluka uranium mine was “traditional action taking a modern

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form” and that her long standing opposition to the mine was fulfilling her duties as a Traditional Owner. However, in an extraordinary court ruling Ms Margarula was found guilty of trespassing on her own land and after appeal was fined \$500.

Yvonne’s arrest took place on a shipping container which was the property of the mining company and she was aware of the fact that she may be arrested. This combination of factors was enough to see tens of thousands of years of living culture and connection with land overruled by the imposition of an unwanted mining project. Amidst significant publicity surrounding this ludicrous legal situation, Yvonne’s fine was anonymously paid and legal history was made.

Fifteen years ago Yvonne Margarula stood on her country and said no to unwanted mining just as her father said no to unwanted mining on Mirarr country at Ranger fifteen years before that. The efforts of the Mirarr to protect their country and culture continue. Please support the Mirarr in their continued fight to ensure responsibility at Ranger and to permanently protect Jabiluka.

Web: <http://mirarr.net>

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Twitter: @MirarrCountry

### Report on Australian mining companies and Indigenous peoples

Oxfam Australia has published a report revealing that the vast majority of Australian mining, oil and gas companies have no clear public commitment to gain the consent of Indigenous peoples before commencing projects on their land.

The report, ‘The Right to Decide: Company Commitments and Community Consent’, reviews the statements and guidelines of 53 mining, oil and gas companies among the top 200 listed companies on the Australian Securities Exchange and finds that only one Australian company had policies and a position to consider Indigenous peoples’ rights, including their ability to participate in decisions that affect them, their land and natural resources. The report also finds only 14 of the 53 companies have published a commitment to uphold human rights throughout their operations, which is particularly concerning given the extractives sector accounts for two-thirds of the alleged human rights abuses by private corporations, reported by NGOs.

Meanwhile, federal Labor MP Dr Andrew Leigh, a former economist, discussed

the ‘resource curse’ at a Mining for Development Conference in Sydney. Leigh said: “Like Australia, many developing countries are well-endowed with natural resources and yet we all know of the ‘resource curse’ – the fact that developing nations who have more natural resources tend to have lower growth rates and perform more poorly on indicators of democracy. ‘This ‘resource curse’ arises because mineral endowments are easier for non-democratic leaders to expropriate than incomes derived from other sources, such as farming, industry or services.

“The curse can be seen in the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country whose extraordinary mineral wealth has more often been a source of conflict than a wellspring of prosperity. In developed nations, oil and mineral assets generally raise living standards across the board but the term ‘resource curse’ was coined because of the tendency for developing countries with natural resources to grow more slowly than those without natural resources.”

The Oxfam report is posted at <https://www.oxfam.org.au/fpic>

## NPT PrepCom highlights frustrations over disarmament and Middle East

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The second preparatory committee (PrepCom) of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) met in Geneva from 22 April to 3 May 2013.[1] The key issues facing states parties at this meeting included the nuclear weapon possessors’ failure to comply with their disarmament obligations; the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons; and the failure to convene a 2012 conference on a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) free zone in the Middle East.

**762.4309** The PrepCom did not resolve any of these issues, nor did it make headway towards ensuring success at the next review conference. A walk-out by the Egyptian delegation in the middle of the PrepCom session, along with the mounting frustration from many non-nuclear weapon states with the failure to achieve nuclear disarmament, have indicated stress on

the NPT regime as it approaches the 2015 review conference.

The second PrepCom marks the halfway point in the treaty’s review cycle. It is an opportunity for states parties to assess implementation of the treaty and related commitments. It also a chance to start looking ahead to next review conference, to think about

what measures will be necessary to advance the treaty’s objectives. However, most of the PrepCom consisted of statements making the usual complaints or demands. Reviews of what has been implemented so far were provided more by civil society groups than states parties.[2] Aside from one session devoted to proposals for institutional reform, states did not focus

on elaborating next steps to improve a situation that almost everyone agrees is becoming dangerously untenable.

This is unfortunately typical for NPT meetings, because the review cycle is a process that favours the status quo by pitting possible forward momentum against maintaining the “stability” of the regime. This “status quo” is the indefinite retention of nuclear weapons by five countries. China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States, also the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5), feel that article VI of the treaty allows them to possess those weapons for now as long as they eventually plan to get rid of them. Countries that push for concrete progress in fulfilling the disarmament-related objectives of the treaty are told they are upsetting “strategic balance”.

Fortunately, this attitude is seen as increasingly unacceptable to the majority of states parties. Just two months ago in Oslo, Norway, 127 governments, several UN agencies, and many civil society representatives took a close look at what would happen if a nuclear weapon were detonated today.[3] The overwhelming conclusion was that no agency or government would be able to effectively respond to the humanitarian and environmental catastrophe that would be created by the use of nuclear weapons.

In the first few days of the PrepCom, 80 NPT states parties signed a joint statement condemning the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. “It is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances,” argued the 80 states. “We owe it to future generations to work together to rid our world of the threat posed by nuclear weapons.”[4]

The P5 and their nuclear allies largely ignored the joint statement. The P5 countries say that the consequences of nuclear weapons are so well known there is no longer any point in discussing them. Some of the P5 allies, which incorporate nuclear weapons into their security doctrines either through bilateral relations or through NATO, also distanced themselves from

the joint statement. Japan refused to sign because it stated that nuclear weapons should not be used under any circumstances.[5] Australia and Sweden refused to sign without commenting about which specific language they objected. Sweden’s foreign minister, in an impromptu call to a morning radio show, dismissed the statement as “no big deal” and the 80 co-sponsors as “not really serious states”. [6] Some NATO countries, including all of those that host US nuclear weapons on their soil, refused to sign because they saw it as “contradictory” to their NATO obligations. This position is clearly not an official NATO line, given that four NATO countries (Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, and Norway) saw fit to sign the joint statement.

The drama over the humanitarian statement is merely indicative of the broader problem with the NPT. There is a growing discord between the P5 and their nuclear allies on the one hand, and everyone else on the other. While most governments are adjusting their strategies and politics to the 21st century, the P5 and their nuclear allies lag behind.

Throughout the PrepCom, many governments voiced disappointment and frustration with the lack of tangible progress on nuclear disarmament. They expressed concern that the P5 do not appear to be implementing the commitments they agreed to in 2010, or their commitment to nuclear disarmament. The most tangible effort the P5 have reported on from their joint meetings since 2010 is the development of a glossary of key nuclear terms.[7] This has created some consternation among states parties that already feel that it has taken far too long for the P5 to engage seriously with their disarmament obligations.

### **Middle East**

Another point of serious contention at the PrepCom was the failure to convene a conference on the establishment of a WMD free zone in the Middle East. This conference was supposed to be convened in 2012 in Finland. However, the US announced the meeting’s postponement in December 2012, leading fellow conference co-sponsor Russia as well as the Arab League to denounce this decision. The Arab

states made it clear at the PrepCom that they consider this to be a violation of the commitment made at the 2010 NPT review conference and that they expect the conference to be held as soon as possible in 2013.

The facilitator of the conference, Jaakko Laajava of Finland, has proposed holding multilateral consultations on the topic as soon as possible.[8] The Arab League questioned the lack of agenda and framework for these consultations. It said it was ready to participate in such consultations if it was held under UN auspices and with an “appropriate” agenda attached to the invitation.[9] The US, on the other hand, stated that an “agenda simply cannot be dictated from outside the region – it must be consensual among the States who must live with the agenda”. [10]

To highlight its frustration with the lack of progress in fulfilling the commitment related to the WMD free zone – a commitment which stems back to the 1995 NPT review conference – the Egyptian delegation walked-out of the PrepCom after the facilitator gave his report. The delegation said it cannot wait forever for the start of this process. More broadly, it expressed frustration with making concessions for agreements that are never implemented – and then still being expected to comply with those concessions.[11]

While Egypt is the first country to walk out of an NPT meeting on this basis, it is certainly not alone in experiencing this frustration. Thus all NPT states parties have the responsibility to address this problem.

Egypt’s walk-out, regardless of one’s position on the matter, hinted at the potential fragility of the NPT. It made the point that the NPT regime is not so sacred that it can relegate important issues to an indefinite holding pattern. The 2015 review conference will be a crucial moment in the NPT’s history. Will the WMD free zone conference have been held by then? Will a process to establish such a zone be underway? Will the P5 really just report on a glossary of definitions, or will they have actually made progress on their obligations made in 2010 and in the treaty itself?

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### Still Assuring Destruction Forever

Reaching Critical Will, a project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, has published a new report on nuclear weapon modernisation entitled 'Still Assuring Destruction Forever'. The nuclear weapon states possess approximately 19,500 nuclear weapons and all of them have plans to 'modernise' – upgrade and/or extend the lives of – their weapons. The report includes chapters on the nuclear weapons programs of China, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, followed by three thematic chapters addressing international law, divestment, and political will. The report is posted at [www.reachingcriticalwill.org](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org)

# Nuclear plant near Kaliningrad – a bad plan that must be stopped

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For the first time in Russian history, the national nuclear corporation Rosatom is attempting to build nuclear reactors not for domestic supply but for the export of electricity to foreign countries. This is the case with Baltic nuclear power plant in the Kaliningrad region, located close to the border of the EU member Lithuania, which opposes the project.

**762.4310** Since 1990, the nuclear industry has lobbied for a nuclear plant in Kaliningrad at least three times. But every time local authorities were opposed. That changed after the federal government introduced political reform. Moscow started to appoint new governors by the decision of the president instead of public elections. And the first governor who came from Moscow to manage Kaliningrad – Georgy Boos – quickly decided to build the nuclear plant. Three years later he was dismissed as a result of the largest political protests in the past 20 years in Kaliningrad.

Ecodefense, Kaliningrad's first independent and the most established environmental group, started to campaign against the proposed nuclear

plant in 2007. After several protests, the local government declared that it had changed its mind and didn't want to build the nuclear plant any more. One year later the local government cheated residents of the region when it signed the agreement with Rosatom for a nuclear plant.

Ecodefense commissioned a public opinion poll in Kaliningrad which demonstrated 67% opposition to the nuclear plant. It also demonstrated that Kaliningrad residents overwhelmingly prefer renewable sources of energy instead of nuclear power. But the local government abandoned the plan to build a wind power plant after Rosatom came to the region to build a nuclear plant. Energy demand in Kaliningrad is 100% covered due to a new natural gas power plant built two years ago.

### Economics and export of electricity

The latest study of the Baltic nuclear plant has indicated that the local energy system is not capable of transferring the large amounts of energy the Baltic nuclear plant is slated to produce. It also concluded that the project is too expensive and that the price of energy from this plant will be higher than from other market suppliers in the Baltic region. The July 2012 study, 'Challenges of ensuring energy security of Kaliningrad Region', was conducted by Yury Zlobin, former chief of energy department in the Kaliningrad government, and Bulat Nigmatulin, former deputy minister for atomic power in the Russian government. It is posted at <http://tinyurl.com/a6hdgkd>

The project was conceived as an export scheme in spite of the fact that the neighboring countries – EU members Lithuania and Poland – have rejected offers to import electricity from the Baltic NPP (for more information on Poland's decision see bellona.

org/articles/articles\_2011/poland\_lithuania). During the past four years, Rosatom and Inter RAO, a company selling electricity from Russia to foreign countries, tried to find a company in Europe which would be interested in buying electricity from a nuclear plant near Kaliningrad or investing in the project. All attempts were unsuccessful. But the Russian nuclear industry kept on trying.

At the end of 2012, there was news from Germany that Rosatom was in talks with German utilities about exporting electricity from Kaliningrad. Although that may be true, it's hard to imagine that Germany, which has enough electricity for its own use and for export to other countries, and which is phasing out nuclear power, may consider buying nuclear electricity from Kaliningrad.

Although prospects look poor right now, the Russian government and the nuclear industry continue to push European countries to buy electricity from Kaliningrad. This is the whole idea behind the project and big money is at stake. Environmental groups in Russia, Lithuania and Poland must follow this situation and try to prevent the Russian nuclear industry in the areas around the Baltic Sea.

### **Problems with democracy**

From the beginning, the Russian nuclear industry ignored democratic principles of public participation. A large number of local citizens were not allowed by organisers and police to participate in the official public hear-

ings in 2009. Another public hearing in 2013 – about a planned second nuclear reactor in Kaliningrad – restricted public participation even more. Organisers announced that local residents must submit written applications to participate in the hearings, and must write down what they planned to say at the public hearings. On the basis of the applications, organisers said they would decide who to allow to participate.

Rosatom organised public hearings in only one very small city and refused to hold hearings in Kaliningrad itself and other smaller cities, even in areas which will be directly affected by the project.

### **Safety**

The Baltic nuclear project near Kaliningrad involves two VVER-1200 reactors – reactors which have never been operated in Russia and for which there is no confirmed safety history. This is an experiment.

The poor safety record of Russian nuclear industry is widely known, as well as its complete failure to clean up contaminated territories in Russia. Corruption scandals involving Rosatom over the past two years clearly demonstrate that the Russian nuclear industry cannot be trusted to produce quality equipment for nuclear plants. In February 2012, for example, a Rosatom-owned company was accused of selling shoddy equipment to nuclear plants inside and outside Russia ([bellona.org/articles/articles\\_2012/podolsk\\_corruption](http://bellona.org/articles/articles_2012/podolsk_corruption)).

Even after the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986, the Russian nuclear industry is still continuing to operate Chernobyl-type reactors. There is ongoing radioactive contamination in the Ural region where about 20,000 sq kms of land is contaminated as a result of the explosion at the Mayak nuclear facility in 1957. Local citizens are still living in the contaminated area and Rosatom doesn't want to spend money on resettlement of people.

### **Poor environmental impact assessment**

The Environmental Impact Assessment of the Baltic nuclear plant does not comply with Russian legal norms. The construction of the plant has begun and continues without relevant necessary technical and engineering studies or geological surveys. An evaluation of seismic risks at the site has never been performed. Technical project documentation doesn't include plans to manage radioactive waste or a plan for decommissioning of reactors – both required by Russian legal norms.

Although the site of the Baltic nuclear plant falls within the international airway zone to Kaliningrad, the reactor design has never been tested for the case of a large airplane crash, as acknowledged by Ivan Grabelnikov, chief engineer of the project, during a roundtable discussion in Kaliningrad in July 2009. According to the Lithuanian government, the Baltic nuclear project has not been subjected to safety testing based on the methodology agreed by the EU and other countries.

## **Depleted uranium contamination still blights Iraq**

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To mark the 10th anniversary of the 2003 invasion, a new report has highlighted continuing uncertainties over the impact and legacy of the use of 400 tonnes of depleted uranium (DU) weapons in Iraq. The report reveals the extent of DU's use in civilian areas for the first time.

**762.4311** 'In a State of Uncertainty', published by Dutch peace organisation IKV Pax Christi, has sought to do what the US has so far refused to do – reveal how widely the weapons were used in Iraq, and in what circumstances. It also analyses the costs

and technical burdens associated with DU use, arguing that a decade on, many contamination problems remain unresolved – leaving civilians at risk of chronic DU exposure. States argue that the use of controversial DU munitions is justified against

armoured vehicles, yet 'In a State of Uncertainty' documents their use against a wider range of targets in 2003, with attacks often taking place within civilian areas, leaving residents at risk from contamination. This resulted from both the US's use of DU in

medium calibre ammunition for aircraft and armoured fighting vehicles, and the frequency of urban combat operations in 2003.

The report also finds that the Iraqi government has struggled with the cost and technical challenges posed by the legacy of contamination, a situation compounded by the US's refusal to release targeting data. The Iraqi government acknowledges that there are more than 300 sites with known contamination, based on the limited data available, with new sites regularly discovered. Clean-up of sites typically costs around US\$150,000, but varies considerably depending on the setting, extent and level of contamination.

"The 300 or so known sites may be the tip of the iceberg," said an International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW) spokesperson. "While it is obviously difficult to extrapolate directly from other conflicts, in the Balkans, where 1/60th of the quantity of DU was used, we saw somewhat over 100 contaminated sites, we would therefore expect the total number of contaminated sites in Iraq to be far higher than the 300 identified by the Iraqi authorities."

### Health concerns

Reports collected by the International Committee of the Red Cross reveal that tribal leaders in southern Iraq highlighted DU contamination as a primary health concern, with fear of DU exposure widespread in Iraq. Iraqis commonly associate increased incidence rates of cancers, congenital birth malformations and other diseases

with DU, resulting in significant levels of anxiety. Prompted by numerous media reports of a health crisis in Falujah, linked by researchers to the toxic legacy of military activities, a major review of birth defect rates in six Iraqi provinces by the World Health Organisation and Iraqi Ministry of Health is to be published soon.

'In a State of Uncertainty' documents the enormous problem still posed by the poorly regulated storage and trade in military scrap metal. Deregulation of the scrap trade under the Coalition Provisional Authority resulted in casual scrap metal collectors being needlessly exposed to DU, and to the export of contaminated scrap to neighbouring countries. Scrap metal collectors continue to remain at risk of exposure, as do those who live near dozens of uncontrolled scrap sites. The Iraqi government has requested international assistance in analysing and managing contaminated military scrap.

"Because states are under no obligation to share targeting data, even when deploying toxic and radioactive munitions, it is unclear exactly how many locations may still be contaminated, or the extent of the risks that civilians face," said the report's author Wim Zwijnenburg.

"DU's apparent use in built-up areas against a range of targets in 2003 increased these risks, running counter to efforts to increase protection for civilians during armed conflict and further undermining DU's legitimacy. This uncertainty means that fear of DU

among Iraqi civilians is widespread yet effectively managing DU's legacy will require international assistance," Zwijnenburg said.

The United Nations General Assembly has twice called for greater transparency over DU weapons use, most recently in December 2012, where 155 states voted in favour. The US, UK, France and Israel were the only four states which opposed the text, which also accepted the potential risks from DU use and called for a precautionary approach to their post-conflict management.

Throughout, it is clear that for states recovering from conflict, effectively managing DU contamination to standards even approaching those in the states that employ the weapons poses significant challenges. IKV Pax Christi argues that the implications for the wider acceptability of DU munitions are clear.

"Even now, 10 years after the 2003 conflict, the true extent of the risks posed to civilian from DU in Iraq is unclear," said an ICBUW spokesperson. "As the US seems reluctant to share targeting data and any records of any clean-up work it may have undertaken during the 2003-05 period, it is unclear how this situation might be resolved. Greater transparency on usage would of course be extremely helpful in determining the extent of DU's use in civilian areas."

*In a State of Uncertainty' is posted at: [www.ikvpaxchristi.nl/media/files/in-a-state-of-uncertainty.pdf](http://www.ikvpaxchristi.nl/media/files/in-a-state-of-uncertainty.pdf)*

## Victory in campaign to halt test firing of DU in Scotland

**762.4312** Campaigners, parliamentarians and local citizens have blocked a fresh round of DU testing at the Dundrennan range in Scotland after the Ministry of Defence (MoD) shelved plans for the testing necessary to extend the life of the UK's final DU round. This is the first time that the MoD has bowed to public and political pressure and not fired DU as part of the life extension program. Despite local and national objections, the

MoD has fired 31 tonnes of DU from the Dundrennan Range near Kirkcubright, Dumfries and Galloway, into the Solway Firth since 1982.

Local Member of the Scottish Parliament Aileen McLeod said: "There's no question as far as I am concerned that this is a clear U-turn on the part of the UK government. Until now they have only ever been willing to say there are no current plans to test-fire DU

munitions. The concerted efforts of the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium have obtained the clearest statement to date that there are in fact no plans to test fire DU shells at all during the current, planned life extension programme of the munitions. Although this is a big step forward, the campaign must continue until there is a clear guarantee that there will be no more test firing of DU shells in Scotland at any point in the future."

Campaign Against Depleted Uranium campaigner Rachel Thompson said: "It is clear that this U-turn is linked to increased parliamentary and public

opposition to this environmentally dubious and potentially illegal practice. This is a major victory for our campaign and one that reflects the increasing global opposition to DU weapons.”

CADU campaigners plan to hold a public meeting in Dumfries at the end of May to discuss further plans with local residents.

In March, it emerged that the Ministry of Defence has been evading an international ban on dumping radioactive waste at sea by redefining thousands of DU weapons fired in the Solway Firth as “placements”.

### Dying soldier must raise cash for treatment

Katrina Brown, now 30, was exposed to radioactive material while serving as a medic at a 600-bed military clinic in Basra, Iraq, in 2003 and was later diagnosed with rare systemic sclerosis which is slowly attacking her organs and will eventually lead to her death if left untreated.

Mrs Brown believes the illness is linked to exposure to depleted uranium. She was handed a card before flying home from her 2003 tour warning her she had been in contact with radioactive materials. She says

her only hope is having stem-cell transplant to regenerate her organs, but the procedure is not available on the National Health Service and the health service has said it cannot pay for her transatlantic care. Mrs Brown is now trying to find £110,000 to fly out for an operation in the US after being turned down for funding by a host of charities.

(Anna Hodgekiss, 3 April 2013, ‘Soldier dying after being exposed to uranium in Iraq must raise £110,000 for treatment because the NHS can’t help her’, [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk))

(*International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons*, 29 April 2013, [www.bandepleteduranium.org](http://www.bandepleteduranium.org); *Campaign Against Depleted Uranium*, [www.cadu.org.uk](http://www.cadu.org.uk); *Sunday Herald*, 10 March 2013, [www.heraldsotland.com](http://www.heraldsotland.com))

## Yellowcake fever: exposing the uranium industry’s economic myths

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‘Yellowcake Fever’, a new report published by the Australian Conservation Foundation, exposes the economic misinformation of the uranium industry.

**762.4313** As an example of industry propaganda, the Australian Uranium Association’s Executive Director Michael Angwin claims that Australia “has enough reserves to be to uranium what Saudi Arabia is to oil”. However Australia’s uranium export revenue of A\$642 million in 2011 was 466 times lower than Saudi oil revenue in the same year. Australia would need to supply entire *global* uranium demand 31 times over to match *annual* Saudi oil revenue!

Uranium accounted for just 0.29% of Australia’s export revenue in the 10 years from 2002–2011. The figure is still more underwhelming considering that the four companies mining uranium in Australia are all either majority foreign owned or 100% foreign owned; in other words, a sizeable proportion of that export revenue never comes

anywhere near Australia.

Uranium mania reached its zenith in the mid-2000s due to a spectacular speculative price bubble which saw the spot price peak at US\$138 / lb U3O8 in June 2007. Since the bubble burst, the uranium industry has been battered from pillar to post as a result of falling prices, the Global Financial Crisis, the failure of the nuclear power ‘renaissance’ to materialise, and serious problems and production shortfalls at numerous operating mines.

Since March 2011 the punch-drunk uranium industry has had to deal with the fallout from the Fukushima disaster in Japan. In 2006, *The Bulletin* magazine spoke of a “radioactive heaven” whereas in late 2011 *The Australian* newspaper said the sector is doing a passable imitation of Death Valley.

A major constraint is the modest size of the global market for uranium. If all secondary supply is bundled into the primary market, and lower spot prices are ignored, the figure just reaches US\$10 billion annually:

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 2011 production   | 64,402 t U3O8 (142 million lb) |
| 2011 contract price   | US\$60/lb U3O8                 |
| Value of 2011 production  | US\$8.52 billion               |
| Value of total 2011 requirements (production met 85% of requirements) | US\$10.0 billion               |

With nine countries producing over 1000 tonnes of uranium annually and 10 countries producing smaller quantities (2011 figures), uranium doesn't make a significant contribution to any country's national export revenue. If there was an exception to that point, it would be Kazakhstan – the world's largest uranium producer. But uranium accounted for just 3.4 percent of Kazakhstan's export revenue in 2011. (35.6% of global production, estimated uranium revenue US\$3.0 billion, national export revenue US\$88.5 billion.)

Australia has around 31% of the world's known recoverable uranium resources (to US\$130/kg U). However a majority of that uranium is in one location – BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam mine in South Australia. Last year, BHP Billiton cancelled a planned mega-expansion of Olympic Dam (uranium production was to increase to 19,000 tonnes annually), disbanded its Uranium Division, and sold the Yeelirrie uranium lease in Western Australia for about 11% of the nominal value of the resource. Also indicative of the state of the industry was Cameco's announcement in February of a A\$162.5 million write-down on the Kintyre project in Western Australia.

The Australian uranium industry has a long history of promising great economic benefits and failing to deliver. Academic Richard Leaver from Flinders University writes: "Potential' is one of the most powerful chemicals available to the political alchemist. Any individual, firm, or sector deemed to have potential is relieved of a massive and perpetual burden – the need to account for past and present achievements (or, more probably, the lack

of them). ... The history of Australian involvement in the civil uranium industry offers an excellent example of this alchemy at work."

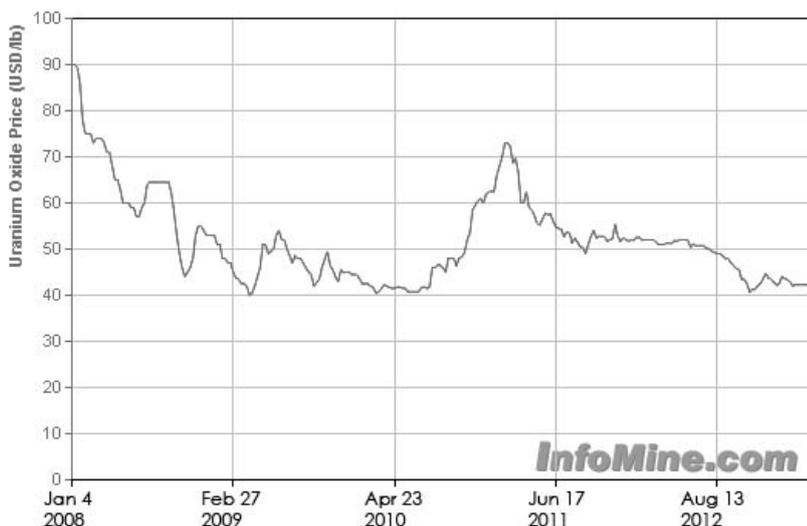
The 'Yellowcake Fever' report notes that in addition to industry propagandists, governments routinely inflate the significance and potential of the uranium industry, as do industry 'analysts' (some of them market traders), so-called business journalists and some academics.

There are real-world consequences to this propaganda – many small investors have been burnt. That problem was most acute during the speculative price bubble in the mid-2000s when small investors were spending big on penny dreadfuls while at least three major utilities were selling shares in Rio Tinto-controlled Energy Resources of Australia.

As journalist Tim Treadgold wrote in the *West Australian* in 2005, "smart money" was selling "while less clued-up people continue to buy uranium penny dreadfuls rather than do something sensible, like bet the house (the wife and the kids) on the horse carrying the jockey wearing pink polka dots in the fourth at Ascot next Saturday."

More broadly, and more importantly, the widespread misconception that uranium mining is – or could be – a major contributor to national economies distorts rational assessment of the costs and benefits of the industry.

*'Yellowcake Fever: Exposing the Uranium Industry's Economic Myths' is posted at [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)*



### Uranium Price Drops

FNArena News reported that participants at the World Nuclear Fuel Cycle conference in Singapore earlier this month hoped that the conference itself would ignite an increase in uranium trading but "the exact opposite is what ended up happening." Talk of new problems with Chinese import licenses was one concern, and uranium spivs were unsettled by a JP Morgan report that the Japanese nuclear regulator might impose "stringent" safety standards on nuclear power utilities. Heaven forbid. JP Morgan believes that 2-3 reactors will restart this autumn in Japan, which would only offset the closure of the Ohi plant in September.

The graph on this page shows the tail end of the speculative price bubble in the mid-2000s, and the uranium price fall since the Fukushima disaster. Currently the spot price is just above US\$40 / lb U3O8.

Canadian company Cameco saw net earnings drop 93% in the first quarter of 2013. While reporting a 5% fall in revenue to C\$444 million, Cameco said that net earnings for the first quarter of 2013 were C\$9 million, a 93% drop from the figure for the first quarter of 2012. Gross profit fell 37% during the quarter to C\$95 million.

Regarding the uranium industry, Cameco said: "Near- to medium-term uncertainty continues to impede a recovery, with neither buyers nor suppliers seeming to feel much pressure to contract. Most suppliers have significant commitments out to 2016, and utilities are well covered for a similar period." Uranium spot prices remained at a level "well below that required to incentivize new projects." (*World Nuclear News*, 2 May 2013, 'Cameco awaits market pick-up', [www.world-nu-](http://www.world-nu-)

# Nuclear news

## **UK: Radioactive materials lost in more than 30 incidents over past decade**

Radioactive materials have gone missing from businesses, hospitals and even schools more than 30 times over the past decade, a freedom of information request to the UK's health and safety authorities revealed. Some organisations have been prosecuted but others have just received a warning notice, papers released by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reveal.

Missing items include a 13 kg ball of depleted uranium from the Sheffield Forgemasters steel operation in 2008, plus small pellets of highly radioactive ytterbium-169 from Rolls-Royce Marine Operations. The Royal Free hospital lost caesium-137, which a report into the incident accepted had "the potential to cause significant radiation injuries to anyone handling [it] directly or being in the proximity for a short period of time." In another case, at the site of the former atomic energy research station at Harwell near Oxford, cobalt-60 was "found in a tube store under a machine during clearance," according to the HSE.

Consultant John Large said: "The unacceptable frequency and seriousness of these losses, some with the potential for severe radiological consequences, reflect poorly on the licensees and the HSE regulator, whose duty is to ensure that the licensee is a fit and competent organisation to safeguard such radiological hazardous materials and substances. I cannot understand why it is not considered to be in the public interest to vigorously prosecute all such offenders."

*(Terry Macalister and Richard Halpin, 5 May 2013, 'Radioactive materials lost in more than 30 incidents over past decade', [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk))*

## **Koodankulam: India court allows operations at nuclear plant**

India's Supreme Court has ruled that the controversial Koodankulam (Kudankulam) nuclear plant in Tamil Nadu state can start operations. The judges said the plant was "safe and secure" and "necessary for the welfare and economic growth of India". How-

ever they added the caveat that the plant should not be made operational unless all the authorities concerned grant "final clearance" for its commissioning and that a report "be filed before this court before commissioning".

The plant was supposed to open in 2011 but large protests have delayed the start-up. Several petitions had been filed before the Supreme Court challenging the project on safety grounds. Two of the plant's units, capable of generating one gigawatt of electricity each, have been ready for around two years, but the protests and legal challenges have prevented them from operating.

The plant was initially agreed upon in 1988, when India signed a pact with the former Soviet Union. Construction began in 2001, and the original scheduled date of commercial operation was December 2007. Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd has shifted the commissioning date back from May to June this year.

*(BBC, 6 May 2013, 'Kudankulam: India court allows operations at nuclear plant', [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk))*

## **Uranium sales to India feed proliferation**

A former diplomat has admitted the sale of Australian uranium to India would free up that country's domestic reserves for military purposes. For 30 years Australia banned uranium sales to India because of its failure to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, but negotiations are now underway on a uranium deal. When asked if Australian uranium would free up India's reserves for military use, former Australian Deputy High Commissioner to India Rakesh Ahuja said: "That has always been the case, yes." He went on to acknowledge that the same problem applies to uranium sales to China. ([www.sbs.com.au](http://www.sbs.com.au))

## **Oman abandons nuclear power plans**

Dr Badr bin Mohammed al Hinai, Oman's envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has confirmed that the Sultanate has opted not to pursue plans for nuclear power.

Addressing the Oman Power and Water Summit on May 5, Dr Al Hinai said: "After the Fukushima accident and following the safety and security concerns of establishing a nuclear programme, Oman followed the examples of other countries such as Japan and Germany not to pursue a nuclear programme but instead, to benefit from nuclear power applications. Let us mention that Oman is also seeking alternative sources of energy in solar, wind and wave energy, due to the propitious climate and geography of the region."

The imprecise reference to 'nuclear power applications' concerns scientific, medical and industrial uses of radionuclides, typically produced in research reactors or particle accelerators, not power reactors.

*(Conrad Prabhu, 6 May 2013, 'Sultanate opted not to pursue nuclear power', [main.omanobserver.om/node/163310](http://main.omanobserver.om/node/163310))*

## **UN chief says Chernobyl must never be forgotten**

On April 26, the 27th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon released a statement saying the disaster must never be forgotten and calling for continued international assistance for the people and regions affected.

"As we today mark 27 years after the Chernobyl disaster, we honour the emergency workers who risked their lives responding to the accident, the more than 330,000 people uprooted from their homes and the millions of people living in contaminated areas who have long been traumatized by lingering fears about their health and livelihoods," Mr Ban said.

"The countless women, men and children affected by radioactive contamination must never be forgotten. Environmental damage to food chains, land and water will in many cases last for years." ([un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=6780](http://un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=6780))

Hundreds of events around the world commemorated the Chernobyl disaster

on April 26. The [www.chernobyl-day.org](http://www.chernobyl-day.org) website listed 70 events in France alone.

A Green Cross study released on April 26 addresses the long-term psychosocial consequences of Chernobyl nuclear disaster. "Depression, anxiety and suicide are critical elements identified in populations living in contaminated areas or removed," said Maria Vitagliano, Director of Green Cross International's Social and Medical program. "We are putting in place methods for early detection of suicidal tendencies, using family clubs and therapeutic camps, as well as strategic partnerships with local governments to support cases of depression."

The report, 'Selected Health Consequences of the Chernobyl Disaster', is posted at [www.gcint.org/fs/Samet-Patel-Chernobyl-Health-Report-2013-light.pdf](http://www.gcint.org/fs/Samet-Patel-Chernobyl-Health-Report-2013-light.pdf) See also [www.gcint.org/news/road-chernobyl](http://www.gcint.org/news/road-chernobyl)

### **British Government fails test on Australian nuclear victims**

Efforts to secure Act Of Grace payments for Australian victims of British nuclear testing in Australia will be stepped up after the British Government's disappointing response, Australian Greens Senator Scott Ludlam said.

"Because of difficulties victims of the British nuclear testing were facing in the courts, I wrote to British Foreign Secretary William Hague twice making the case for ex gratia payments to Australians exposed to British nuclear testing in the 1950s and '60s.

"The British Minister for Defence Personnel Welfare and Veterans Mark Francois has now responded by washing his hands of the deadly legacy his government left in Australia, paradoxically arguing that because the victims of nuclear testing could not prove in court their higher rate of radiation-related illness was caused by the nuclear testing, they would not receive Act Of Grace payments.

"The point of Act of Grace payments would be to circumvent the inappropriate burden of proof of causation being imposed on the victims – yet Minister Francois applies the same utterly unre-

asonable standard that has hampered attempts to secure justice through the courts.

"Australian nuclear veterans are pursuing the matter through the Human Rights Commission and strongly support this action, but they should not have expend this ongoing time and effort to get what is rightfully theirs."

"Of the British and Australian veterans who were involved in the testing, and the Aboriginal people in the area at the time of the blasts, only 29 Aboriginal people have ever received compensation from the Australian government and veterans continue to struggle to obtain the medical support they need," Senator Ludlam said.

The British government conducted 12 nuclear bomb tests in Australia in the 1950s, and further 'safety trials' involving radioactive materials into the 1960s. Some of the 'safety trials' violated the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty.

A 2006 report commissioned by the Australian government showed the Australians at the Maralinga and Emu Field sites were 23% more likely than the general population to develop cancer, and 18% more likely to die from cancer. But it found it couldn't conclude whether that was due to radiation. Last year, the British Supreme Court ruled that veterans would struggle to prove the casual link between their illnesses and radiation exposure.

(Bianca Hall, 29 April 2013, 'No compensation for Maralinga radiation victims', [www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au))

### **Actions and arrests**

*From [www.nukeresister.org](http://www.nukeresister.org)*

May 20 – California, USA – Plowshares activist Fr. Steve Kelly should be released by the end of May. He was originally arrested at a Disarm Now Plowshares action at Lockheed Martin. At the time of his sentence he informed the court that because of his conscience he could not comply with the supervised release provision of his sentence. As a result he was later sentenced to 60 days in jail.

May 19 – Massachusetts, USA – Ten activists were arrested at the end of an anti-nuclear rally organised by Cape

Downwinders. They were attempting to deliver a letter to Entergy, operator of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in South Plymouth. This is the third time local protestors have been arrested trying to hand the facility's owner a letter. At some point the owner might see the wisdom of accepting the letter and avoiding further bad publicity. State Senator Dan Wolf spoke at the latest protest about the dangers posed by the nuclear plant.

May – Oak Ridge, USA – In just ten months, the US managed to transform an 82 year-old Catholic nun and two pacifists from non-violent anti-nuclear peace protestors accused of misdemeanor trespassing into federal felons convicted of violent crimes of terrorism. Now in jail awaiting sentencing for their acts at an Oak Ridge nuclear weapons production facility, the story of these Transform Now Plowshares activists should chill every person concerned about dissent in the US.

April 30 – California and New York – Five people were arrested after dozens of anti-drone demonstrators blocked the entrance to Beale Air Force Base for hours, resulting in hundreds of vehicles being prevented from entering the base. Two days earlier, 31 members of the "Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars" were arrested at Hancock Air Base in New York protesting what they believe is the illegal use of drones in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries. Over 275 people marched in a solemn funeral procession to demand an end to drone strikes. ([upstatedroneaction.org](http://upstatedroneaction.org))

April 20 – Koodankulam, India – Police arrested as many as 146 activists of the Anti-Koodankulam Nuclear Power Project People's Federation when they tried to take out a procession from Kanyakumari to Kudankulam. The activists, who gathered in front of Gandhi Mandapam in Kanyakumari, urged the government to take immediate steps to close the Kalpakkam Atomic Power Project as well as Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project, as it would adversely affect the livelihood of fishermen, farmers and other people.

April 12 – South Korea – Kim Young-Jae was arrested while standing in front of a truck on the road leading

into the site of a naval base under construction on Jeju Island. Two days later, he was issued a warrant and taken to jail, where he remains.

#### Only in America ...

Perry nuclear power plant security investigators have not been able to identify the person who left goldfish in a steam tunnel. The two goldfish were discovered on May 2 by workers taking apart scaffolding in the tunnel, which is locked and under constant video surveillance. The fish, which later died, had been swimming in a lemonade pit-

cher that contained reactor water. Both the fish and the water were slightly radioactive. The culprit may have come from the 1,000 additional workers on site during the refueling and maintenance shutdown that began March 18.

David Lochbaum from the Union of Concerned Scientists said: "Last year, Perry got into trouble with the [Nuclear Regulatory Commission] about weaknesses preventing unauthorized access to the plant. Goldfish are not authorized to be inside the tunnel, yet they were there. And Perry cannot

determine how they got there or who put them there. What if it hadn't have been goldfish but a bomb?"

Contractors came close to heavy radiation two years ago during a refueling shutdown because the equipment they were using to retrieve a gauge from the reactor core was inadequate and not up to industry specifications.

('Perry nuclear power plant's goldfish owners still unidentified', 14 May 2013, [www.cleveland.com](http://www.cleveland.com))

## WISE / NIRS Nuclear Monitor

The World Information Service on Energy (WISE) was founded in 1978 and is based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The Nuclear Information & Resource Service (NIRS) was set up in the same year and is based in Washington D.C., US.

WISE and NIRS joined forces in the year 2000, creating a worldwide network of information and resource centers for citizens and environmental organizations concerned about nuclear power, radioactive waste, proliferation, uranium, and sustainable energy issues. The WISE / NIRS Nuclear Monitor publishes information in English 20 times a year. The magazine can be obtained both on paper and as an

email (pdf format) version. Old issues are (after 2 months) available through the WISE homepage: [www.wiseinternational.org](http://www.wiseinternational.org)

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# WISE/NIRS NUCLEAR

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