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Gunter Wippel, uranium-network.org,

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This part (5) deals with the – ongoing – struggle for acknowledgement of health impacts on miners and the general public and the struggle for compensation.

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NIRS
Nuclear Information and Resource Service

wise
World Information Service on Energy
Founded in 1978

The struggle of uranium workers for acknowledgement of health impacts and compensation – Niger

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When mining started, people were mostly unaware of the adverse impacts uranium mining, and they were not informed by companies or governments. The long period of colonization which African countries had experienced, sometimes going along with brutal oppression, did not help either. The prospect of salaried jobs in often poor regions was – and is – a reason for people to work in mines.

When miners began to fall sick, died prematurely of ‘unexplained’ diseases – and started to ask for information and then compensation, they basically ran into a wall of disinformation and denial. The struggle started.

NIGER

When French CEA – Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique (CEA) had discovered uranium deposits in the sparsely habited north of Niger near Agadez, a region which formerly had been a French colony, people were promised jobs and prosperity. COGEMA (later AREVA, now ORANO) promised that the mining town Arlit, newly constructed in the middle of nowhere (to

Europeans, for local Tuareg and others, it was home) would become ‘a second Paris’.

Bungalows, some with swimming pools, were built for the engineers, and houses for the workers many of whom came from far away for the jobs.

Disillusionment came when the price of uranium dropped on the world market in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in parts due to the collapse of the uranium cartel which had artificially kept the price of uranium high. Production of uranium dropped, workers lost their jobs and the boom town dilapidated.

African film maker Idrissou Mora Kpai portrayed the downfall of Arlit in his film “**Arlit, deuxième Paris**” ¹.

Around the turn of the millennium, mine workers in Arlit area began to fall ill or die prematurely, from ‘unexplained’ diseases in numbers alarming their colleagues. At the time, the mines were in operation since 30+ years – roughly the latency period of lung cancer. Medical doctors in company hospitals were not authorized to diagnose occupational diseases.

Mine workers started a NGO, Aghirin’Man, a tamasheq (Tuareg) term (often translated as ‘shield of the soul’) to find out about the reasons for the premature deaths which left families in awe and economic troubles. In 2003, CRIIRAD physicists – to whom Aghirin’Man had reached out – traveled to Niger; upon arrival, their radiation measuring devices were confiscated. Some, however, had been sent by mail, this

¹ A 3min clip can be watched here: <https://idrimora.com/projects/arlit/> full length via Vimeo

enabled CRIIRAD to work. The first report was published in December 2003², in April 2005 a more detailed report followed³.

The situation in Niger is also addressed in a 52 minute documentary: “**Nucléaire, une pollution durable**” in French ⁴.

CRIIRAD had found radiation levels above the levels WHO deemed safe in drinking water, in soil, and in the air. Although CRIIRAD made no direct statement in regard to health damages, it was clear that the elevated levels of radiation have impacts on health of people in the mining towns, not only on the mine workers.

In 2009, mining company AREVA and SHERPA, a lawyers associations, Medecins du Monde, AghirIn’Man, CRIIRAD, L’Association Mounana (Gabon) and CATRAM (organisation of former uranium miners in Gabon) established an ‘Observatoire de Sante’.

The NGOs aimed to provide legal support to victims of the mining activities, contribute to the emergence of regulations governing the activities of economic players, and raise awareness to corporate social responsibility and good governance issues among civil society, economic players and institutions⁵.

In 2010, CRIIRAD cooperated with GREENPEACE and returned to Niger to evaluate the radiologic situation; GREENPEACE, among other things, interviewed local people in regard to the health situation. The results are published in a booklet “**Left in the Dust – Uranium Mining in Niger**” ⁶, highlighting some major problems around health (page 55):

> Workers stated that after having stopped working for AREVA, they were not treated in the company’s hospital anymore although, according

to their contract, AREVA should take care of their health for at least three years after finishing work. This was not done at least in some cases.

> There are no doctors licensed to diagnose an occupational disease

“In these hospitals, there are no occupational doctors. There are surgeons, general practitioners and midwives. They are very good at their jobs! But there is not a doctor working to declare occupational diseases, as required by Nigerien law. AREVA has done everything to avoid that, which explains the absence of occupational illnesses for 40 years. It’s very shocking.” (GP, ‘Left in the Dust’, p.55)

> Health problems were wrongly classified as HIV or malaria when in reality it was cancer. This sheds another light on a report by AREVA, claiming that cancers were “extremely rare”.

“In 2005 shocking allegations were made against one of the hospitals that it was misclassifying cases of cancer as HIV. According to the Sherpa 2005 report, a patient who suffers from lung cancer is never informed of that diagnosis. A former employee of one of the hospitals said that “the only confirmed cases of cancer involve people from outside the mining companies” and goes on in a very serious charge, “when these symptoms affect agents of corporations, one talks about malaria, AIDS...”

> Workers of the mine were denied access to their medical records.

For more in-depth publications see @ CRIIRAD: <https://www.criirad.org/somniger/>

² www.criirad.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/notecriiradfinal.pdf

³ www.criirad.org/actualites/dossiers2005/niger/notecriiradarlit.pdf

⁴ www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKmgOLnvBD0&list=PL3IbOGKW-BxZnXxOY9JGFFwuo5qZ_r5-g&index=12, from 13:00h on

⁵ <https://www.business-humanrights.org/fr/derni%C3%A8res-actualit%C3%A9s/niger-mise-en-place-officielle-de-observatoire-de-la-sant%C3%A9-de-la-r%C3%A9gion-dagadez-par-areva-soins-m%C3%A9dicaux-pour-son-personnel-des-mines-du-niger/>

⁶ <https://media.greenpeace.org/archive/Report-Left-in-the-Dust-27MZIFIXELWO.html>, video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ioRtzOWm07A, also available with German subtitles

GREENPEACE called upon AREVA to act and solve the problems addressed (GP booklet, p.63).

By 2009, the documentary **“Uranium – l’Heritage empoisonne”**⁷ (Uranium – The poisoned Heritage) by Dominique Hennequin, was released; it covers the impact of uranium mining in France, Niger and Gabon.

In 2010, IPS news stated in an article **“Lack of Data on Causes of Death Buffers French Company”**⁸ ... “that high radioactivity can be still be detected on the ground near Nigerien uranium mines, especially in the mining towns of Arlit and Akokan” quoting “Rianne Teule, nuclear energy campaigner for Greenpeace International, and Laure Antoine, spokesperson for the French doctors’ association Medecins du Monde, confirmed that it is practically impossible to document causes of death among Nigerien mine workers because of lack of access to data.”

The simple fact of not collecting data on the health of miners helps AREVA to hide the negative health impacts on miners.

By the end of 2012, lawyers’ association SHERPA left the ‘Observatoire de Sante’, stating it is “incomprehensible and unacceptable that the compensation process, while it has benefited two families of French expatriates (which is notoriously insufficient), has not benefited any Nigerian or Gabonese workers, even though the medical situation of more than a hundred of them has been examined.” AREVA said that 700 workers benefitted from medical examination, but also acknowledged that out of 700 only two were compensated for health damages⁹.

The case of Serge Venel

One of the employees was Serge Venel, an engineer; he had lived in Akokan’s housing for

engineers, from 1978 (aged 28) to 1985. He then returned to France with his family. By 2008, he started to feel always tired and began coughing. A doctor diagnosed lung cancer due to uranium inhalation. The doctor advised him to get the lung cancer acknowledged as an occupational disease very soon since he would not have much time left. Serge Venel passed away the next year, 31. August 2009.

Social security accepted his disease as caused by his profession. Venel’s wife and daughter started to track down his former colleagues: of 350, she was able to find 110.

“Of those, 70 were either dead or sick. And out of 110 people, 70 have died or are ill. Some have oesophageal cancer, kidney cancer and throat cancer. We also have lung cancer, of course, and bone cancer. But it's true that it's not just cancer of lung and bones. We have women with thyroid cancer and blood cancer.”^{7,10}

The Venel’s took the case to court. In May 2012 „[t]he court for social affairs (Tribunal des Affaires de Sécurité Sociale (TASS)) in Melun condemned AREVA on Friday in regard to the death of a former employee [Serge Venel] of a uranium mine of the French group in Niger, announced the lawyer of the victim's family. The court ruled that AREVA had committed a ‘not excusable mistake’ ...”¹¹

A compensation surpassing € 200,000 was fixed plus a doubling of the pension of the widow.

The author of this article attended the court session in Melun and spoke with the Venel family. They indicated that many other former workers were following the legal proceedings and, depending on the outcome, may also want to sue AREVA. Of course, AREVA was aware of that.

⁷ www.dailymotion.com/video/xuydiy

⁸ www.ipsnews.net/2010/04/niger-lack-of-data-on-causes-of-death-buffers-french-company/

⁹ www.actu-environnement.com/ae/news/fin-accord-sherpa-areva-sante-mineurs-uranium-17378.php4

¹⁰ Statement by Peggy Venel, Feature by Bettina Rühl, Deutschlandfunk, https://assets.deutschlandfunk.de/FILE_f2a0a91bc56d846f33a78466c3d57225/original.pdf

¹¹ www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2012/05/11/areva-condamne-apres-la-mort-par-cancer-d-un-ex-salarie-d-une-mine-d-uranium_1699804_3244.html

The “cold shower”, as some media called it, came a year later (2013): “The nuclear giant has won a case before the Paris Court of Appeal against the family of Serge Venel ...”

The court ruled that AREVA “holder of the mining deposit concession”, could not be held liable as an employer, according to the court; only the Nigerian company COMINAK which operates the site and with which the employee had signed his employment contract, could be sued.”¹²

The family would have had to take the case to Niger. Besides costs and complications, it seemed impossible to win the case in Niger, also due to the fact that the state is profiting from uranium exploitation.

The prospect of compensation for workers who had fallen ill or for relatives and families of deceased workers went to zero.

Conclusion

Uranium miners – or their family members – were not able to secure compensation from AREVA / ORANO although there is evidence that peoples’ health was – and continues to be – harmed due to the continued exposure to radiation via a variety of pathways.

NGO Aghirin’Man continues to work, among other things, to remove radioactively contaminated scrap metal from the market and from houses in order to minimize exposure of people to radioactivity. They are also working to get closed down Akouta mine, operated by ORANO’s subsidiary COMINAK, cleaned up and tailings covered to reduce future contamination.

In January 2023, Syntramin, the Niger mine workers trade union, launched a court case against COMINAK in regard to health care: “The second point of contention concerns the coverage of miners’ healthcare costs, with

employees complaining that they are unable to benefit from this care and that serious pathologies are not covered.”

COMINAK managing director countered, claiming “ ... there is a 5-year health insurance scheme, and that the Agadez regional health observatory provides free post-professional medical consultations for all former miners.”¹³

Latest developments

In March 2021, Akouta mine, operated by COMINAK, had been closed down due to the depletion of uranium deposits. A clean-up operation was started, also due to NGO Aghirin’Man and Civil Society.

However, in early 2025, the director of COMINAK stated “Orano Mining has informed COMINAK of the temporary suspension of financing for the site rehabilitation works (RdS)”, and asked companies working on rehabilitation of the mine to remove all vehicles and equipment before 21 February 2025 (personal communication with Aghirin’Man).

The people in the mining town will continue to be exposed to radiation for a not foreseeable time.

The suspension of financing the rehabilitation work comes especially astonishing after ORANO published a 2024 “Net income for the period 712 Billion €”¹⁴.

The new (military) government in Niger had withdrawn mining licenses from ORANO for the Imouraren project and through blockade of the ECOWAS countries, the shipping of already produced yellowcake had become impossible. These circumstances may contribute to the unwillingness of ORANO to continue payments for clean-up work of Akouta.

¹² www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20131025.AFP0084/la-justice-douche-les-espoirs-d-ex-mineurs-d-areva-victimes-de-cancer.html

¹³ www.nigerinfos.com/la-cominak-face-a-ses-engagements-non-tenus-le-syntramin-lattaque-en-justice

¹⁴ https://cdn.orano.group/orano/docs/default-source/orano-doc/finance/publications-financieres-et-reglementees/2024/r%C3%A9sultats-annuels-2024/orano-2024-annual-results-presentation_vdef.pdf?sfvrsn=c29f4537_4, p. 29

By July 2025, the Niger government nationalized COMINAK¹⁵ after the company was close to bankruptcy due to the impossibility of exporting uranium already mined; according to media, there are still 1,300 tons yellowcake, estimated value of € 250 billion¹⁶, sitting at the site.

These latest developments make it even more improbable that ORANO will take care of health problems, pay compensations or even fulfill its commitments in regard to the rehabilitation of the millions of tons of tailings.

French energy corporations continue to cooperate with Russia

Jan van Evert

Despite the war in Ukraine the French energy corporation Framatome continues to cooperate with the Russian company Rosatom. The French nuclear industry is heavily dependent on Russian uranium supplies and already signed a long-term strategic partnership with Rosatom in 2021. Framatome operates the German nuclear fuel facility in Lingen, Eastern Germany, through its subsidiary Advanced Nuclear Fuels. The company produces fuel elements for Soviet-designed nuclear power plants with Russian help. Framatome, a subsidiary of the state-owned energy group EDF, wants to use its partnership with Rosatom to win new customers in Eastern Europe.

Rosatom, which was founded by President Putin in 2007, is a state entity in charge of nuclear weapons; it reports to him directly. It is also directly involved in the war against Ukraine. Because it is not on any Western sanctions list that were created since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it has offered to supply important components to Russian arms manufacturers who

are under those sanctions. France and also Hungary consistently block new EU nuclear sanctions against Russia. Rosatom manager Lichatsjov said in the Russian parliament that his company is developing non-nuclear weapons and military equipment “some of which have already gone into series production and are being deployed in the special military operation in Ukraine”.

Europe imported \$700 million worth of Russian uranium products last year, the Brussels-based think tank Bruegel calculated in April. While that is a sharp drop from the pre-war situation, analysts warn of the political influence it gives Moscow. Rosatom has a share of twenty percent of European uranium supply which enables it to influence customers and the market.

Sources:

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¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/niger-nationalize-somair-uranium-venture-operated-by-frances-orano-2025-06-19/>

¹⁶ <https://energynews.pro/en/orano-faces-interest-from-buyers-for-its-uranium-mines-in-niger/>, May 19, 2025

Nuclear Roulette

Dr David Lowry, Institute for Resource and Security Studies

"For more than sixty years, good management and good fortune have meant that nuclear arsenals have not been used. But we cannot rely on history just to repeat itself, " so said Margaret Beckett when Labour's Foreign Secretary in a notable speech to a nuclear affairs conference in Washington DC on 25 June 2007.

This week, as the world commemorates the 80th anniversary of atomic immolation of two Japanese cities - the unforgettable Hiroshima and Nagasaki -in which some 200,000 human beings were instantly incinerated and fatally irradiated, the nuclear sabres have been rattling once more.

President Trump theatrically pronounced he had "repositioned" two US nuclear submarines (he did not clarify whether they were nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed) in response to some bellicose nuclear rhetoric by ex-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. The latter was responding to the recent forward deployment by the US Airforce of new nuclear-armed fighter bonnets at the RAF Lakenheath airbase in Suffolk, home of the US Strategic Air Command in Europe.

In the latest atomic tit-for-tat, the Kremlin announced in 5 August it was forward deploying intermediate range nuclear weapons to its ally Belarus and to the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, the furthest western Russian outpost. This is a blatant breach of the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty.

The Labour government is determined to fully back nuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) for U.K. national defence. Starmer and defence secretary John Healey proclaim Trident and the new free-fall nuclear bombs to be deployed on F-35 jets, as non-negotiable.

But all nuclear WMDs held by Governments such as the UK, are possessed in the mistaken belief

that their possession adds to national security, rather than undermining it. This creates the conditions for almost certain accidents.

The most celebrated example of the deadly danger of so-called nuclear deterrence may be found in the Daily Telegraph obituary of 18 September 2017 of Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov, who has been dubbed 'The Man Who Saved the World.'[\[1\]](#)

"Stanislav Petrov, a lieutenant colonel in the Soviet Air Defence Forces, was the officer on duty at the Soviet Union's early warning centre when malfunctioning computers signaled the United States had launched missiles at the country in September 1983.[\[2\]](#)

His decision to ignore warnings is credited with averting Atomic Armageddon. On the night of September 26, 1983, he was on duty at the Soviet Union's early warning centre near Moscow when computers warned that the United States had fired five nuclear missiles at the country. The 1983 false alarm is perhaps the closest the world has come to nuclear war"

The machine indicated the information was of the highest certainty," Petrov later recalled. "On the wall big red letters burnt the word: START. That meant the missile had definitely been fired."

He had just minutes to decide whether to assess the attack as genuine and inform the Kremlin that the United States was starting World War Three - or tell his commanders that the Soviet Union's early warning system was faulty. Guessing that a genuine American attack would have involved hundreds of missiles, he put the alarm down to a computer malfunction.

Lt Col Petrov was vindicated when an internal investigation following the incident concluded that Soviet satellites had mistaken sunlight reflected on clouds for rocket engines. The

Soviet government's policy in the event of a US nuclear attack was to launch an immediate and all-out retaliatory strike in accordance with the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction.

Although Petrov was feted by his colleagues and initially praised by superiors for his actions, he was not rewarded. He later complained that he was scolded by superiors for failing to complete a routine paperwork during the incident and had been scapegoated by generals embarrassed by the failure of the early warning system.

A premier of a Danish documentary film *The Man Who Saved The World* that recounted these events was screened at an international nuclear disarmament conference on the *Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons* organised by the Austrian foreign ministry in December 2014, which I attended along with several US nuclear weapons experts. It was a chilling experience for each of us.[\[3\]](#)

A very detailed survey of other such incidents - called "Broken Arrows" in the understated language of nuclear weapons risk experts - are contained in a terrifying report published by the distinguished international affairs London think tank, Chatham House in April 2014, under the title: 'Too Close for Comfort: Cases of Near Nuclear Use and Options for Policy,' by Dr Patricia Lewis, then the research director for international security, and her colleagues Dr Heather Williams, Sasan Aghlani, and Benoît Pelopidas.[\[4\]](#)

An equally disturbing study is the new book "Nuclear War: a scenario," written by Los Angeles-based author, Annie Jacobsen, who in 344 page takes the reader step-by-step how a geopolitical crisis can lead to the catastrophic exchange of nuclear weapons. Based on dozens of interviews with high-level nuclear WMD decision-makers, she constructs an all too real escalatory scenario that involves, inter alia, the atomic destruction of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in Southern California.

Just last week reports reached me from an eye-witness contact in the former closed small city of Sosnovy Bor ("Pine Wood") that three swarms of Ukrainian drones had attacked the giant nuclear complex next to the city. The Sosnovy Bor atomic complex contains six nuclear plants, a reprocessing facility, plutonium and radioactive waste stores and next door is an atomic powered rocket research centre.

The plant is on the southern shore of the Baltic Sea, around 70 miles west from St.Petersburg, in the Leningrad Oblast (region).

The drones damaged the high voltage power lines that feed into the nuclear complex. This power is needed constantly to keep cool the radioactive waste in giant cooling tanks. If the cooling is halted, it could lead to the waste overheating and an explosion.

This is exactly what happened different nuclear waste complex at Kyshtym, in Chelyabinsk Oblast, in early October 1957. A waste tank exploded, contaminating the local Techa River, and the surrounding forest, which still remains closed off nearly 70 years later.

Ukrainian academic, Sergio Plokhly, now based in the United States, published a 200-page study last year "Chernobyl Roulette: a War Story", on the Russian drone attacks on the Chernobyl (Chernobyl in Ukrainian) sarcophagus that covers the reaction stricken by the major 1986 accident. He concludes:

"what has been absent so far in the variety of international responses to Chernobyl 11 is any concentrated effort to rethink the international legal order and reform the International Atomic Energy Agency to make it capable of reacting in a timely and effective manner." (Epilogue, p.182)

The breaching of the nuclear faith

The continued blatant violation by the UK of its legal obligations to be engaged in good faith negotiations towards nuclear disarmament, as stipulated by Article 6 of the NPT, puts the U.K.

on a much higher nuclear naughty step than other alleged violators, like Iran.

The UK is the worst violator because it is a depositary state (with the US and Russia, originally the USSR, who have entered into several nuclear arms control and disarmament negotiations in SALT 1 & 2, START, and INF), charged with protecting the interests of signatory members states. China and France, as later nuclear weapon state signatories to the NPT, are also in violation, but do not have depositary state status.

Defence ministers like to make statements like: "We constantly have discussions right across Government to make sure that our continuous at-sea nuclear deterrence can be sustained... and will continue to do so in the long term.. our nuclear deterrent has kept Britain, and also our NATO partners, safe over 50 years... We have to recognise the need to invest in a whole spectrum of different capabilities, [including] nuclear deterrence..".[\[5\]](#)

This contemporary ministerial assertion in respect of the continuous requirement for British nuclear weapons could have been cited from defence ministers going back over 60 odd years.

Up to 1968 that was a national security decision purely the responsibility of the Government of the day. Post 1968 when the UK signed the NPT, the UK possession and deployment was no longer solely a UK national security issue, but an international legal nuclear disarmament obligation.

Using materials extracted from British Official diplomatic papers which I discovered in the British National Archives, it is possible to demonstrate the differences between British official disarmament promises recorded for posterity and contrast those with the subsequent belligerent nuclear practice of development and deployment of Polaris and its replacement Trident nuclear WMD systems, in

violation of clear NPT commitments and on-the-record pledges.

A memorandum prepared by the Foreign Office in advance of the visit to London of the then Soviet premier, Alexei Kosygin, in February 1967, included the following final paragraph:

"We assume that the Soviet Union regard, as we do, the proposed review conference (for the NPT) as being an adequate assurance to the non-nuclears that the military nuclear powers are serious about the need for action on nuclear disarmament."

Nearly a year later, on 18 January 1968, Fred Mulley MP, the then Labour Minister of State for Disarmament at the Foreign Office, told the 358th Plenary meeting of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) - the forerunner to the present day UN Committee on Disarmament (CD) - in respect of the then proposed Article 6 of the nascent NPT:

"My own Government have consistently held that the [Nuclear Nonproliferation] Treaty should and must lead to such [nuclear] disarmament." (emphasis added).

He added: "If it is fair to describe the danger of proliferation as an obstacle to disarmament, it is equally fair to say that without some progress in disarmament, the NPT will not last....As I have made clear in previous speeches my Government accepts the obligation to participate fully in the negotiations required by Article 6 and it is our desire that these negotiations should begin as soon as possible (emphasis added) and should produce speedy and successful results. There is no excuse now for allowing a long delay to follow the signing of this Treaty, as happened after the Partial Test Ban Treaty, before further measures can be agreed and implemented."

Mr. Mulley subsequently wrote a confidential memorandum to the British Cabinet Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (OPD(68)6), on 26 January 1968, in which he set out the then policy position on NPT article 6 (which at this

stage in negotiations did not yet include the clause “at an early date”):

“A number of countries may withhold their ratification of the Treaty until the nuclear weapon states show they are taking seriously the obligations which this Article imposes upon them. It will therefore be essential to follow the Treaty up quickly with further nuclear disarmament measures (emphasis added) if it is to be brought into force and remain in force thereafter.”

If we leap forward nearly, nearly forty years, we can see what the then New Labour Foreign Office ministers thought about the status of British nuclear disarmament under the NPT.

On 10 March 2007, the then Foreign Secretary had a Letter to the Editor published in *The Times*, under the headline ‘Is Mr Gorbachev’s concern over Trident misplaced’ responding to an earlier letter published on 8 March, from former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev. Inter alia, She wrote:

“[By replacing Trident we will] simply enable the UK to maintain a deterrent until we can achieve our continuing objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.”

She later added:

“...We continue to encourage Russia and the US to make further bilateral [nuclear disarmament] progress. They are still some way from the point at which the part of the global stockpile that belongs to the UK (less than 1 percent) would need to be included in such negotiations.”

A few weeks later in early May 2007 in Vienna, the then British Disarmament Ambassador, Foreign Office diplomat John Duncan, presented the UK submission to the NPT preparatory committee, asserting: “The United Kingdom is absolutely committed to the principles and practice of multilateral nuclear disarmament. Our ultimate goal remains unchanged: we will work towards a safer world free from nuclear

weapons - and we stand by our unequivocal undertaking to accomplish their total elimination.”

He went on to claim that the UK “continues to support the disarmament obligations set out in Article 6 of the Treaty [NPT] and has an excellent record in meeting these commitments.”

This was, and remains, a contestable claim, as the Article 6 that the ambassador invoked requires the nuclear weapons states signed up to the NPT “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

Not one UK nuclear weapon or warhead had, or has since, been withdrawn from operational service as a result of multilateral disarmament negotiations in the 55 years of the NPT, as was confirmed for example in a written reply by the then defence secretary Des Browne MP, who told the independent MP Dai Davies in a written reply: “None of the [nuclear weapons reductions since 1998] have taken place as a result of any separate multilateral disarmament negotiations.” [\[6\]](#)

And then, as now, nearly 17 years on, none of Britain's nuclear arsenal features in any nuclear disarmament negotiations. The only UK nuclear weapons withdrawn from service over the past five decades are those declared surplus to requirements by the military, by unilateral decision by Government, so they represent no reduction in nuclear reliance.

The UK has presented a genuinely schizophrenic policy on need for retention of nuclear WMDs and aspiration towards a nuclear weapons-free world for the entire sixty year period since the NPT was signed on 5 July 1968, with justification for possession and deployment of nuclear WMDs coming alongside pledges for nuclear disarmament, but never quite yet.

On 25th June 2007, Margaret Becket MP made that valedictory speech as British foreign Secretary at the annual Carnegie Endowment Non Proliferation conference in Washington DC, with which I started

She told delegates robustly in her keynote speech:

"What we need is both vision - a scenario for a world free of nuclear weapons. And action - progressive steps to reduce warhead numbers and to limit the role of nuclear weapons in security policy. These two strands are separate but they are mutually reinforcing. Both are necessary, both at the moment too weak.Weak action on disarmament, weak consensus on proliferation are in none of our interests... we need the international community to be foursquare and united behind the global non-proliferation regime.... So we have grounds for optimism; but none for complacency. The successes we have had in the past have not come about by accident but by applied effort. We will need much more of the same in the months and years to come. That will mean continued momentum and consensus on non-proliferation, certainly. But, and this is my main argument today, the chances of achieving that are greatly increased if we can also point to genuine commitment and concrete action on nuclear disarmament.(emphasis added) ...After all, we all signed up to the goal of the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons back in 1968; so what does simply restating that goal achieve today? More than you might imagine. Because, and I'll be blunt, there are some who are in danger of losing faith in the possibility of ever reaching that goal.

When it comes to building this new impetus for global nuclear disarmament, I want the UK to be at the forefront of both the thinking and the practical work. To be, as it were, a "disarmament laboratory".[7]

Following the bombing of Iran in June, are there any prospects for a Middle East WMD free zone?

Israel is the only nation in the region possessing nuclear weapons, and which consistently refuses to join the NPT

However, at the completely overlooked Paris Summit of Mediterranean countries, held on 13 July 2008, under the co-presidency of the French Republic and the Arab Republic of Egypt and in the presence of Israel - which was represented by its then Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert - the issue of peace within the region were explored in depth, and the final declaration stated the participants were in favour of:

"regional security by acting in favour of nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation through adherence to and compliance with a combination of international and regional nonproliferation regimes and arms control and disarmament agreements.."

The final document goes on to say:

"The parties shall pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems. Furthermore the parties will consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive accumulation of conventional arms; refrain from developing military capacity beyond their legitimate defence requirements, at the same time reaffirming their resolve to achieve the same degree of security and mutual confidence with the lowest possible levels of troops and weaponry and adherence to CCW (the convention on certain conventional weapons) promote conditions likely to develop good-neighbourly relations among themselves and support processes aimed at stability, security"[8]

Despite all that has happened in Gaza, the bombing of Iran, Lebanon, Yemen and Syria by Israel in the past few months, there is hope that a secure peace without nuclear weapons can be achieved in the globe's most volatile region.

Do what would nuclear disarmament mean?

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.” “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.” [9]

Yet the US has currently deployed worldwide 9,938 nuclear weapons, according to an excellent study, Model Nuclear Inventory, prepared by a New York-based non-governmental organisation, Reaching. Critical Will.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The “Nuclear Ban” Treaty, whose originators and promoters - The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) were awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for their initiative and its success - is an essential complement to the NPT regime.

A report (also by *Reaching Critical Will*, an international disarmament and diplomatic lobby group, based in New York) on the conference hosted by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna in December 2014 - which I attended - shows how it created the diplomatic climate for the Ban Treaty to be actualized. It is titled: *Filling the gap: report on the Vienna conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons*: a conference report for the meeting hosted by the government of Austria on 8-9 December 2014 on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.[10]

It is compelling reading. I provided a detailed written submission to the *Vienna conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons*, (11)

Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 5, 2025

[1] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/18/man-saved-world-dies-77/>

[2] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/0/stanisla-v-petrov-true-story-grumpy-russian-singlehandedly-stopped/>

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Man_Who_Saved_the_World

<https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/disarmament/weapons-of-mass-destruction/nuclear-weapons/vienna-conference-on-the-humanitarian-impact-of-nuclear-weapons/>

[4] <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/199200>

[5] <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-14/debates/B155F4FA-6BB4-40FF-B8A5-F3E3F96E7BC1/Vanguard-ClassLifeExtensionProgramme>).

[6] Hansard, column 820w <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070516/text/70516w0015.htm#07051686000187>

[7] <https://carnegieendowment.org/2007/06/25/keynote-address-world-free-of-nuclear-weapons-event-1004>

[8] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/101847.pdf

[9] From ‘Alice Through the Looking-Glass,’ Lewis Carroll (1872; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpty_Dumpty)

[10] <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/vienna-2014/filling-the-gap.pdf>

[11] https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Abruestung/HINW14/Statements/HINW14_Statement_David_Lowry.pdf

Referendum in Taiwan fails: no return to nuclear power

Jan van Evert

A national referendum was held on August 23rd in Taiwan aiming to restart the Maanshan Nuclear Power Plant's second reactor. The Maanshan plant is located on Taiwan's southern tip and consists of two 951 MW reactors. Taiwan shut down its last reactor in May under a policy of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to phase out nuclear power which once provided about twenty percent of the island's electricity. The country has three nuclear power plants, all decommissioned. The small Taiwan People's Party (TPP) proposed the referendum earlier this year, backed by the much larger Kuomintang (KMT) party. The question asked in the referendum was: "Do you agree that the

Third Nuclear Power Plant should continue operating, provided that the competent authority confirms there are no safety concerns?" The initiative was defeated after the number of votes in favour of the motion fell short of the threshold of a quarter of the eligible voters. Nevertheless, 74 percent of the voters were in favour of the proposal.

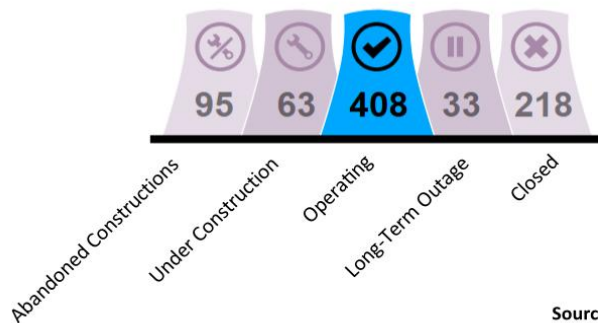
Although the referendum failed, President Lai acknowledged that the result showed that Taiwanese sought "diversified energy options". He indicated that he would consider exploring nuclear power options that reduced waste and increased safety

NUCLEAR NEWS

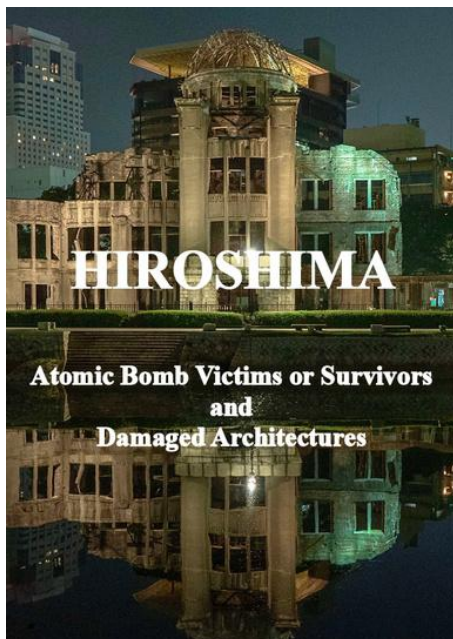


World Nuclear Power Status

Number of Reactors
(as of July)



Source: <https://www.worldnuclearreport.org>



As 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Y. Takashi and S. Hiroshi have compiled and curated a photographic archive documenting the aftermath of the bombing. The result is a photo book entitled *HIROSHIMA – Atomic Bomb Victims, Survivors, and Damaged Architecture*.

This collection features a significant number of historically valuable and emotionally powerful photographs capturing Hiroshima in the immediate aftermath of the bombing. In recent years, such visual records have been increasingly suppressed or labeled as “graphic” or “violent,” making them less accessible to the general public. In response to this concerning trend, they have created this photo book as a visual archive with the intention of preserving historical memory and preventing its erosion.

The book is available for **free** in Epub format, accessible to anyone via the link below:

Title: *HIROSHIMA*

Subtitle: *Atomic Bomb Victims, Survivors, and Damaged Architecture*

Download Link:

<https://www.lulu.com/shop/hiroshi-s-and-takashi-y/hiroshima/ebook/product-e7wy482.html?q=HIROSHIMA&page=1&pageSize=4>

