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STRONG PROTEST AGAINST AKATSUKIMARU'S DEPARTURE FOR JAPAN

Akatsukimaru left the port of Cherbourg early this morning around 5:00 am Japan time bound for Japan loaded with 1.5 tons of plutonium.

We adamantly protest this shipment of such huge amount of plutonium. The shipment will threaten the entire world with its danger and toxicity, and will pave the way for Japan to become a plutonium giant.

Japan already has an overstock of plutonium and there is no need to transport this plutonium from France. The Japanese government has not disclosed any convincing supply and demand documentation to support the need for this plutonium. If these shipments continue, Japan will be burdened with an enormous stockpile of plutonium.

Furthermore, it has now become apparent from the isotopic concentration of the plutonium to be returned, that it includes plutonium extracted from spent fuel other than that from Japanese nuclear waste. This is of grave concern regarding the management of nuclear materials.

This shipment is DANGEROUS, because:

- * The safety of the casks is not assured. There has been no testing done to prove that the casks withstand actual shipboard fires, collisions, or deep sea immersion.
- * No authorized environmental assessment has been done for this shipment. All the Japanese government has done is to commission a simple, unreliable risk analysis. The study was consigned by the Science & Technology Agency of Japan to the Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry. It is extremely irresponsible of the French government to have issued an export license based solely on this study, and we strongly condemn this French government's unacceptable action.

This shipment NEGLECTS all people, especially the peoples en route of the transport, because:

- * Although the Japanese government admits it has planned for contingencies, it has not made any arrangements whatsoever for this in advance with any governments.
- * Neither the date nor the route of the shipment, nor the details of the reliability of the transport casks have been disclosed.
- * No information has been revealed to the public, not even to the people of the en route countries of the shipment.

Akatsukimaru was docked in the military port of Brest in France for refuelling and loading of supplies before entering Cherbourg to load the plutonium. It will be guarded by French Navy within the French territorial waters, and then be monitored the entire way by U.S. military satellites. If plutonium cannot be transported without using such military facilities, it can never be called a material for 'PEACEFUL uses'.

We vehemently and firmly protest to the Japanese government forcing this shipment in spite of international and national concern and protest.

For more information, please contact the Citizens' Nuclear Information Center.

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DANGERS OF JAPANESE PLUTONIUM SHIPMENT

For Immediate Release
November 9, 1992

On October 29th, French Minister of Industry and Commerce, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, issued an export license for the return of plutonium from France to Japan. Approval for this license was based on the extremely inadequate safety analysis report submitted by IPSN (Institut de Protection et de Surete Nucleaire). This license, therefore, is completely improper and unjustified. We strongly protest the issuance of this export license which blatantly ignores crucial safety issues.

Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, with Nuclear Control Institute based in Washington, D.C., had already sent two open letters (dated September 4th and October 22nd) to Minister Strauss-Kahn concerning this transport. In the letters we stated that there is already a surplus of plutonium in Japan and therefore it was unnecessary to import plutonium from France. We also stated that the safety of the transport casks had not been confirmed, and therefore the transport should not be approved. In our communiques, we urged that the transport license not be issued. We consider it extremely regrettable that the Minister has not responded to either of our letters to date, approved the flawed and deficient IPSN report, and issued this export license.

According to the summary of the analysis by IPSN of the Transport System Safety Document which we obtained (dated October 29th by IPSN, and made public on October 30th by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce) the transport casks:

- *meet international standards
- *can withstand fire and accidents
- *can be retrieved up to ocean depths of 500 meters in the event the transport vessel sinks, and moreover, even if the casks leak due to irretrievability, and the total amount is discharged instantaneously at the bottom of the sea, the radiological effects to human beings will be extremely small and negligible.

Nevertheless, actual tests for fire have only been conducted at 800 degrees centigrade for 30 minutes. Extrapolated from this data, IPSN has calculated to prove that the joints of the casks will hold up to only 90 minutes for fires of 1000 degrees centigrade. However, considering that the average shipboard fires last for one whole day with temperatures of 1100 degrees C, the

limited resistance of these casks to fires is of grave concern.

In addition, it has been stated that tests conducted in France and in Japan regarding pressure due to deep sea immersion showed that there is no "significant deformation" observed on the confinement enclosure portion of the casks up to pressure tests of 1000 bars, equivalent to deep sea immersion of 10,000 meters. The IPSN report does not mention, however, that the test in Japan for 1000 bars was conducted for only a duration of 20 minutes, during which the "development of deformation of the casks, which had occurred in the test, stopped". It therefore remains completely uncertain whether the casks are capable of withstanding deep sea immersion for long periods of time.

Moreover, if the plutonium casks fall to ocean depths of over 500 meters due to ship collision, it would be very difficult to retrieve the casks, and under such circumstances it is pointed out that the plutonium could leak out due to corrosion from long term contact with sea water. However, the report states that even if the total amount of plutonium is discharged instantaneously at the bottom of the sea, it will not have a measurable effect on the health of human beings. This conclusion is based merely on Japan's Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry's "Summary of Environmental Impact Assessment" report, a report that could not be called scientific under any circumstance.

This study was consigned by the Science & Technology Agency of Japan to the CRIEPI to assess the risks of the Japanese people in case of accidents occurring at points 40km, and 500 to 1000km away from the coast of Japan. In whichever cases, the risks to the Japanese people are concluded as negligible, much lower than the exposure to natural radiation.

What is apparent from this study is that this is not a risk analysis for the whole transport, since it does not assume any accidents which may occur at any other places during the long voyage from France to Japan. It does not assume any exposure to any other people en route of the transport except the Japanese people. It does not assume any other forms of accidents other than just sinking, like explosions in case of attacks, fires, etc., causing the plutonium to blow up into the atmosphere and absorbed by human beings through lungs.

We absolutely cannot call this an "Environmental Assessment", and cannot accept this plutonium shipment export license which has been issued based on this extremely faulty IPSN report.

We therefore protest the actions of both the French and Japanese governments. We repeat our demand that this transport be halted. And we also intend to further our efforts to inform the people of the world concerning the dangers of this transport.

For more information, please contact the Citizens' Nuclear Information Center.