

Statement by Caricom Heads of Government on the Shipment of Nuclear Waste Through the Caribbean Sea

Caricom Heads of Government, meeting in Port-of-Spain for their Twentieth regular session from July 4-7 July 1999, discussed reports that two British flagged ships carrying nearly 450 kilograms of plutonium were soon to leave Ports in Britain and France for Japan via routes traversing the Caribbean Sea.

The Heads of Government recalled with great concern the fact that it was only four months ago at their Tenth Inter-Sessional Meeting in Suriname in March that they had grave cause to reiterate their unwavering opposition and that of the people of the Caribbean to this blatant and persistent misuse of the Caribbean Sea for the transshipment of highly toxic nuclear material, a stance fully supported by the April 1999 Summit of the twenty five member Association of Caribbean States (ACS) which rejected the continuous use of the Caribbean Sea "for the transport of nuclear and toxic waste."

The Heads of Government were particularly outraged at the callous and contemptuous disregard of their appeals by the governments of France, the United Kingdom and Japan to desist from this dangerous misuse of the Caribbean Sea. They also bitterly regretted that their appeal to the United States to use its authority as the nation in control of the passage of vessels through the Panama Canal to prohibit such shipments, fell on deaf ears.

In light of these situations Heads of Government have vowed to take all necessary steps to protect their people and the fragile ecology of the Caribbean Sea from this highly dangerous threat to which they are now habitually exposed, as well as to safeguard the livelihood of the millions of people who depend on that unique resource for their well-being.

Issued on July 16, 1999.

The Governor of Puerto Rico

January 30, 1998

The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

In 1995 and again in 1996, I had occasion to contact the U.S. Department of State concerning the imminent prospect that maritime cargoes consisting of extremely hazardous nuclear waste would be crossing the Caribbean sea. Both times, fortunately, the shipments in question were diverted elsewhere (around Africa in one instance; around South America in the other).

I communicate with you today because the threat posed by such shipments has arisen anew, and because the scenario now confronting our region is even more immediately alarming than those which prompted my previous correspondence on this subject.

The freighter *Pacific Swan* -- which departed France on January 21, 1998, bound for Japan -- has entered Caribbean waters en route to the Panama Canal. Sometime this weekend, that vessel is expected to transit the Mona Passage that separates the islands of Puerto Rico and Hispaniola. Reportedly aboard the *Pacific Swan* are at least 60 tons of nuclear waste material.

On behalf of the 3.8-million United States citizens of Puerto Rico, I take this opportunity to join our Caribbean neighbors in urging that you monitor this shipment closely to guarantee its secure transit through the Mona Passage and that you take steps to ensure that the risk of radioactive contamination is reduced to an absolute minimum through the rigorous application of United States-Euratom Agreement safety measures pertaining to "irradiated nuclear material."

Thank you in advance for addressing this perilous situation at once.

Sincerely,

(signed)
Pedro Rossello

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February 11, 1999

Mr. Paul Leventhal
President
Nuclear Control Institute
1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 804
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Leventhal:

Reference is to your letter dated February 5, 1999, alerting me on the advanced planning stage of the first many commercial shipments of plutonium "mixed oxide" fuel from Europe to Japan, supposedly during the next few months. I am grateful for this information which is of grave importance to my government. I have transmitted the matter for their attention and appropriate action.

Please accept my best wishes, and I greatly appreciate your update on this very important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Richard L. Bernal
Ambassador

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37 OBSERVATORY CIRCLE, NW
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15 February 1999

Mr Paul Leventhal
President
Nuclear Control Institute
1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 804
WASHINGTON DC 20036

Dear Mr Leventhal

Thank you for your letter dated 5 February 1999 about the planned shipment of mixed oxide fuel (MOX) from Europe to Japan. Many New Zealanders continue to be concerned about shipments of nuclear material, particularly those which come through the Tasman Sea. The Government has made it very clear, both in bilateral contacts and in public statements, that we want such shipments to stay as far away from New Zealand as possible.

As far as the MOX shipment is concerned, there is clearly a need for adequate protection of a cargo which presents a potential proliferation risk, even though the possibility of a terrorist attack is remote. We note that all the countries concerned are members of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, and that the security provided would have to meet or exceed established international standards.

I understand from information provided by Greenpeace Pacific that the MOX shipment is likely to be delayed for at least a further six months. In any case, and irrespective of the level of security, we hope that, the states concerned will take heed of our clearly expressed preference, and keep these shipments well away from New Zealand.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon James B Bolger, ONZ
Ambassador

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(President Statement on the Clandestine Shipment from Europe to Japan)

PALIKIR, Pohnpei (FSMISDN INFORMATION SERVICE) -- The President of the **Federated States of Micronesia** Leo A. Falcam, today gives his statement on the clandestine shipments of Japan plutonium from Europe to Japan.

"We have recently learned from a delegation composed of representatives from the United Kingdom, France and Japan that the first ever commercial scale transport of mixed plutonium/uranium oxide (mox) fuel will take place aboard the nuclear freighters, the Pacific Teal and the Pacific Pintail, and that while they remain secretive about the shipping route, it is expected that these nuclear freighters will pass through the FSM Exclusive Economic Zone sometime between mid-September to October. In noting the measures taken to insure the security and safety of the shipment, we remain concerned that no assurances have been made by these shipping nations on an emergency response, damage mitigation or liability in the event of an accident.

"The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia wishes therefore to reiterate its continued strong opposition to the shipment of plutonium fuel through the region, especially through its own waters, and calls on the nations involved in the plutonium-shipping operation to heed the concerns of Forum Leaders expressed in the 1998 forum communique. It is quite apparent that the shipping nations continue to show blatant disregard for these concerns and to ignore their responsibility under international maritime law."