

Explanation by the United States Government regarding transfers of solid waste exposed to radioactivity in Yokosuka for maintenance performed onboard USS GEORGE WASHINGTON

USS GEORGE WASHINGTON has been forward deployed in Yokosuka since September 2008. The ship requires routine maintenance, which necessitates transfers of solid waste exposed to radioactivity that is properly packaged in strong, tightly sealed containers directly from USS GEORGE WASHINGTON to a tender facility (such as the military sealift command ship NOBLE STAR in the case of the transfer which took place in 2009). The United States Government (USG) provides the following explanation on such transfers:

As stated in the Fact Sheet on U.S. Nuclear Powered Warship (NPW) Safety of 2006, the USG has made firm commitments including those in the Aide-Memoire of 1964, the Statement by the USG on operation of Nuclear Powered Warships in Foreign Ports of 1964, and the Aide-Memoire of 1967. The USG states that every single aspect of these commitments continues to be firmly in place. In particular, the USG affirms that transfers of solid waste exposed to radioactivity from USS GEORGE WASHINGTON are in keeping with those USG commitments.

Routine maintenance of the propulsion plant is performed to ensure the safety and normal operation of USS GEORGE WASHINGTON. Some propulsion plant maintenance work involves routine periodic maintenance of components and systems containing very low levels of radioactivity. Despite these very low levels of radioactivity, the U.S. Navy requires strict radiological controls for this work. In Japan, USS GEORGE WASHINGTON propulsion plant maintenance work requiring radiological controls is only performed onboard the ship. This work is never performed on Japanese shore. This work is not reactor repair¹ or fuel change. As stated in the Fact Sheet on U.S. Nuclear Powered Warship Safety of 2006, fuel change and reactor repairs are not performed in any foreign countries. Reactor repair and fuel change can only be accomplished with proper specialized equipment and in facilities authorized by the U.S. Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, which are only located in the United States.

The propulsion plant maintenance work described above generates small amounts of solid wastes such as cloth wipes, plastic sheeting, and work gloves that contain very low levels of radioactivity. The radioactivity is from trace amounts of metal particles from corrosion and mechanical wear in the primary system which become affixed to the solid waste during maintenance work. The radioactivity is not from fission products within the fuel. With the high integrity fuel design, fission products inside the fuel are never released from the fuel. The generation of this solid waste containing low levels of radioactivity is a normal and expected byproduct of routine maintenance. For perspective, the radiation levels in close proximity to the containers which enclose and seal the solid waste are typically so low that they are no greater than natural background radiation levels from sources such as rocks and soil.

Transfer of the solid wastes containing low levels of radioactivity from USS GEORGE WASHINGTON is a necessary step to maintain the ship in proper material condition and a high state of readiness. The USG transfers solid waste that is properly

¹ The term "power plant" in the Aide-Memoire of 1964 refers to the reactor itself. This terminology is consistent with the Fact Sheet on U.S NPW Safety of 2006.

packaged in strong, tightly sealed containers directly from USS GEORGE WASHINGTON to a tender facility. This is completed without the container contacting the Japanese shore. The Aide-Memoire of 1964 states that solid wastes are transferred to U.S. shore or tender facilities for packaging and burial in the U.S. in accordance with approved procedures. The Aide-Memoire of 1964 also states that no material exposed to radioactivity is normally removed from NPWs while in foreign ports. The phrase "removed" in the Aide-Memoire of 1964 is understood as removed to Japanese shore. Therefore, the direct transfer of solid waste from USS GEORGE WASHINGTON to a tender facility without contacting Japanese shore, for the purposes of disposing of this solid waste in the U.S., is wholly consistent with the commitment contained within the Aide-Memoire of 1964.