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EDF serving the Bomb

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"The Minister of Defense announces the future contribution of the Civaux power plant to nuclear deterrence"

Under this title, on Monday 18 March at 4.55pm, Franceinfo published a brief article saying:

"Sébastien Lecornu, accompanied by two of EDFs directors, landed by helicopter on Monday mid-afternoon on the Civaux nuclear site. This meeting was not on his official agenda. That evening they announced jointly the launch of a production of irradiated metals, intended to complete our deterrence weapons." (...)

"This visit has occurred in the context of increased tension between France and Russia over the war in Ukraine." (...)

"Afterwards, the Minister and the EDF directors made announcements. The Civaux plant will be employed for producing irradiated metals for the Atomic Energy Commissariat" [CEA in French], "intended to complete our deterrence weapons." *

What are these metals, and how will they be turned into deterrence weapons? Many possibilities can be imagined...

However, a communiqué by the Defense Ministry that evening brought clarifications which Franceinfo shared in its update at 8.55 pm.

« Announcements for Defense

A meeting was held, behind closed doors, with local elected representatives, the union of the plant workers, and the local information commission, and completed their programme in the Poitiers prefecture building early in the evening.

The defense objectives, planned since the 1990s, now have a timeline. Authorisation has been requested from the Nuclear Safety Authority [ASN in French], to be examined probably in September 2024. The aim is to conduct a first test in 2025 when one of the reactors is halted in what is called a "partial halt".

« A first in France

The use of a civil nuclear plant in the defense industry is new in our country. Yet the technology is not a total novelty because the USA has done it for over twenty years in a nuclear plant run by the Tennessee Valley Authority. This is the biggest US electricity enterprise, and has the most recent equipment.

That is why the Civaux plant was chosen, for its operational nuclear equipment is the "youngest" in France and consequently has the longest possible longevity at this point.

« A technique integrated into electricity production

So an irradiation service, supported by the CEA, is going to operate in Civaux. Into the core of the reactors along with the usual fuel, materials will be inserted containing lithium. They will stay in place for a whole cycle (about 16 months) and then will be loaded into radiation-blocking containers and transferred to the CEA with a view to producing tritium. "It is a rare gas that is indispensable for deterrence weapons", says the Ministry's communiqué.

« A redundant method of defence

The minister insisted on this point : "Deterrence is for the long term". This process will enable France to have an additional way of securing the military supplies of tritium. "The project begun today will enable the people in charge of our defense in 10 or 15 years to have more means at their disposal, so as to keep all options open," declared Etienne Duthéil, echoing the words of the Minister.

For the moment the CEA is the only producer of nuclear tritium in France. An agreement will be signed between the State, the CEA and the ASN to set this up, and a contract between EDF and the Minister to determine the remuneration for this activity. This will be a minor activity compared with power generation which will remain the main mission of the Civaux plant (and will have negligible impact on the amount of power produced).

To make this redundant method the strongest possible, the two reactors of the Vienne will later be involved in this military irradiation activity.»

Other press outlets (*les Echos, la Tribune...*) quickly repeated this information, followed by the media the next day.

We understand that the "irradiated metals" are only lithium, a metal which when irradiated produces tritium, one of the three gaseous isotopes of hydrogen. Along with another isotope deuterium, which is easily available in nature, tritium is one of the two elements making up the explosive mixture in H-Bombs (which is triggered by an A-Bomb based on plutonium). So we need tritium to make these H-Bombs, but also to keep them explosable, because, given its limited half-life of 12 years, it disintegrates gradually and needs to be replaced periodically to retain its critical mass.

This information prompts a number of remarks.

1. The communiqué postulates but does not say how the tritium can be collected - it is very volatile, and already manages to leak and contaminate the environment in the ordinary operation of the reactors.
2. It is not exact to say that "the use of a civil nuclear plant in the defense industry is new in our country".

At the start, and up until EDF chose the Westinghouse technology, France's first electro-nuclear reactors (those at Chinon), using the uranium-graphite-gas chain, had a double purpose, military and civil. Their main objective was in

fact to produce the plutonium needed for making bombs.

It is true, however, that now for the first time the civil nuclear industry is openly proclaimed as serving our industry of mutually-assured destruction.

3. The armed forces already need fuel from the nuclear plants for the reactors in the nuclear-powered ships (4 SNLE subs, 6 SNA and the aircraft-carrier "Charles de Gaulle"). That is not new, but it should now be obvious for everyone: **the nuclear-power industry is in the pay of the military.** The origin and raison d'être of the civil nuclear industry is the military. General Ailleret, one of the "fathers" of France's deterrence, said that already "I always made sure the two advanced in tandem; suppress one and the other will vanish." And President Macron said at Le Creusot on 9 December 2020 : **"Without civil nuclear, no military nuclear, without military nuclear, no civil nuclear."**

Anyone wanting to get rid of one has to get rid of the other.

4. In the minds of France's leaders, that collusion between power-plants and bombs ought to never end. For them, "deterrence is for the long term". It matters little that in 1992 France signed the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) which obliges her to negotiate without delay with the other nuclear-armed states their elimination. This treaty, let it be said, is a mere scrap of paper when it requires the total elimination of nuclear arms (but not when it advocates the proliferation of nuclear power). Thus, the communiqué affirms that "the Civaux plant was chosen, for its operational nuclear equipment is the youngest in France and consequently has the longest possible longevity at this point." Later it adds that "to make this additional method the strongest possible, the two reactors of the Vienne will later be involved in this military irradiation activity."

In reality, despite all the precautions taken, the new system is threatened with two kinds of end:

- ▶ that due to global warming, which could deprive the Vienne river of a summer water flow needed for the cooling of one or both of the Civaux reactors, which would already be the case without the contribution of the artificial lake of Vassivière and the other dams upstream, and which would happen if their level were to fall seriously;
- ▶ the other one that the bombs of our much loved (and very expensive) nuclear deterrent promise us, as instruments of collective suicide.

Not to mention of course the untimely "unit shutdowns", due to "technical problems", which forced the Civaux plant to close its two reactors from November 2021 to January 2023 and cast great doubt on its redundant "robustness".

5. The decision proclaimed on 18 March must clearly be seen by Russian strategists as identifying the Civaux plant and its two reactors as a priority target among all the 18 plants and 56 nuclear reactors in France - all are potential "dirty bombs". A small A-Bomb, or even a big conventional bomb, could strike and destroy it, which would be enough to contaminate the whole region, as far as Poitiers and well beyond.

President Sarkozy said that the atom bomb was "*our life-insurance*". The people of Poitou now have evidence. They must surely be delighted...

* [Source : France 3 Nouvelle Aquitaine \(18/3/2024\)](#)

EDF serving the Bomb

[Electricité de France (EDF) is France's chief power company. Civaux plant is not far from Poitiers]