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**Nuclear Free Local Authorities, Scotland.**  
**Nuclear Briefing January 2006.**

**1.0 New Nuclear Monitor - Scotland**

1.1 Jack McConnell has given the go-ahead for the Scottish Labour Party to reassess its opposition to new nuclear power stations. The First Minister has approved an internal consultation process, which is designed to update policy on nuclear power. But sources close to McConnell have stressed that there were no pre-conditions or pre-conceptions in the policy review and it did not necessarily mean that the party would back nuclear power. McConnell has promised that any decision to build nuclear power plants will be taken on Scottish terms without influence from Westminster, according to *The Herald*.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 The Scottish Labour Party's current position is that nuclear power stations should not be built in Scotland until the issue of nuclear waste disposal has been resolved. But now that CoRWM is about to produce recommendations on nuclear waste management options, according to *The Scotsman*, Labour managers say they need a new policy. After the CoRWM report is published they will not be able to hide behind the waste issue any longer.

1.3 The consultation is part of Labour's policy forum process that will lay the foundation for the Party's 2007 Holyrood election manifesto. Stage two of the consultation process which involves activists and affiliated bodies will include a series of questions on nuclear power.

1.4 While energy policy is reserved, it is now thought that the Scottish Executive has the ability to block any new nuclear stations through the planning process. David Cairns, the Scotland Office Minister, confirmed that "consent decisions for any such new generating plant are for the Scottish Executive".<sup>2</sup>

1.5 One of the architects of devolution, Lord Sewel, disagreed and said the Executive has no power to block the wholesale building of new nuclear power stations north of the border.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> McConnell paves way for nuclear power U-turn. Sunday Herald, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<http://thescotzman.scotsman.com/politics.cfm?id=70132006>

McConnell agrees to nuclear re-think by Labour, Scotsman 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<http://thescotzman.scotsman.com/politics.cfm?id=70132006>

McConnell: Holyrood will decide nuclear question, Herald 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<http://www.theherald.co.uk/politics/54308-print.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> McConnell pledges role in nuclear debate. Scotsman 2 December 2005

<http://news.scotsman.com/politics.cfm?id=2337932005>

<sup>3</sup> Sunday Times 4th December 2005

Executive took issue with the former Scottish Office minister.<sup>4</sup> Anne Moffat, the Labour MP for East Lothian urged Scottish Secretary, Alistair Darling, to amend the Scotland Act so that MSPs would lose the veto. Mr Darling said there were no plans to amend the Scotland Act.<sup>5</sup>

1.6 The Liberal Democrats are against any new nuclear stations in Scotland and will push Labour to adopt a similar policy. So any change in Scottish Labour Party policy could lead to a divide between the coalition partners. But even the Scottish Liberal Democrats are split. John Thurso MP, the party's Scotland spokesman, says there is a case for building a new generation of nuclear power stations.<sup>6</sup>

1.7 The SNP has announced plans for its own energy review. It warns that the government is ignoring Scotland's "distinctive challenges and opportunities". Wave power inventor, Professor Stephen Salter, will lead the investigation, together with solar power expert Dr Kerr Macgregor and oil and gas expert Nigel Ross. The terms of reference for the review exclude nuclear power as an option for investigation.<sup>7</sup>

1.8 Nuclear power is currently providing around 35% of Scotland's electricity. With Hunterston B due to shut in 2011 there is concern that Scotland will suffer an energy shortfall if it does not replace its existing nuclear capacity. But as detailed in the November report by 2011 there will be almost 1,900 MW of additional power capacity available in Scotland. The lights will not go out, although exports of electricity might drop. By 2011 even with Hunterston B, Longannet and Cokenzie all closed generating capacity will be at least 7,000MW - higher than the peak demand of 6,200MW, although it would leave a relatively low margin to allow for non-availability of plant.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.0 New Nuclear Monitor - UK

2.1 Tony Blair announced the second review of energy policy in five years at the CBI's Annual Conference on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2005. He put nuclear power at the heart of a national debate on energy policy, promising a decision on whether the government would give the green light to a new generation of nuclear plants by early next summer.<sup>9</sup>

2.2 *The Independent* editorial called nuclear power a "costly dangerous and expensive distraction". New nuclear power stations would do little to combat climate change, according to a senior research fellow at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change. Kevin Anderson attacked what he called the "abysmal" standard of debate on the issue in the UK. Claims that nuclear power was the only way for Britain to meet demanding greenhouse gas targets were fundamentally wrong. He said: "that argument is way too simplistic. We can easily deal with climate change without nuclear power."<sup>10</sup>

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<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2090-1903708,00.html>

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Herald 5th December 2005 <http://www.theherald.co.uk/politics/51937-print.shtml>

Times 5th December 2005 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,170-1904815,00.html>

<sup>5</sup> Scotsman 14th December 2005

<http://news.scotsman.com/politics.cfm?id=2403392005>

<sup>6</sup> Sunday Herald 11th December 2005

<http://www.sundayherald.com/53305>

<sup>7</sup> e-politix.com 9th January 2006

<http://www.epolitix.com/EN/News/200601/79733685-6934-4c25-9b4f-bb9e6832fb08.htm>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.no2nuclearpower.org.uk/articles/comment\\_051114.php](http://www.no2nuclearpower.org.uk/articles/comment_051114.php)

[http://www.no2nuclearpower.org.uk/articles/comment\\_051209.php](http://www.no2nuclearpower.org.uk/articles/comment_051209.php)

<sup>9</sup> Tony Blair's speech to the CBI Conference 29<sup>th</sup> November 2005

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page8606.asp>

<sup>10</sup> Guardian 17th January 2006

2.3 Energy Minister, Malcolm Wicks, said the Review is to “assess where we are in relation to achieving the goals set out in the 2003 Energy White Paper”. The Review will be taken forward by a cross-departmental team based in the DTI, with officials drawn from key relevant departments and the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit. The devolved administrations and territorial departments are already involved and will continue to be involved throughout the course of the Review. The Review team will draw on expert support and analysis both within and outside government.<sup>11</sup>

**2.4 A formal consultation phase is currently expected to be launched on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2006** with a statement of current evidence on the White Paper goals and the government’s plans for engagement with the public and stakeholders. The Review will consider all options including the role of current generating technologies (e.g. renewables, coal, gas and nuclear power) and new and emerging technologies (e.g. Carbon Capture and Storage). The Review will also consider transport and the role of energy efficiency. The Review team will report to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in early summer.

2.5 Tony Blair began “a softening up exercise” to prepare the public for decision on new nuclear power stations when he spoke at a Policy Forum in Nottingham on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2006. According to *The Independent* the Government is proposing to streamline major planning inquiries and senior nuclear industry figures also want to strip public inquiries of the power to investigate the safety of Britain’s new nuclear reactors in order to keep down costs and secure the support of investors. Alan Simpson, a leading member of the left-wing Campaign Group of Labour MPs, said: “The review is a sham solely for the purpose of providing the pretext for a new generation of nuclear power stations.

2.6 Recent moves by Russia to turn off gas supplies to the Ukraine have been used by nuclear enthusiasts to provoke a panic about the security of our energy supplies. Former energy minister Brian Wilson, for example, says it showed that Tony Blair was right to resurrect the nuclear power industry.<sup>12</sup>

2.7 Nuclear reactors can only produce electricity, which cannot replace the oil that fuels our cars and lorries or the gas we use to power our central heating boilers. Only around 30% of UK gas consumption is currently used to generate electricity. Nuclear power isn’t necessarily reliable either. Professor Jonathan Stern, director of gas research at the industry-funded Oxford Institute for Energy Studies says: “It is a 1970s fallacy that anything you produce yourself is secure and anything you import is insecure. It’s just not an empirical fact.” Stern’s view is that importing gas is likely to be a more secure option than relying on nuclear power. Russia has never defaulted on gas supplies – it is not in its interest to do so. In any case, the UK isn’t likely to depend on Russian gas in the foreseeable future. At the moment, it is importing gas from Norway and is planning to take more from Belgium and the Netherlands. The UK is also investing over £6 billion in facilities to import gas from the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and Latin America in the future.

2.8 Environmentalists argue that it is more important to control the demand for energy than to increase the sources of supply. “If the UK is serious about gas security we’d be going crazy over using it efficiently,” said Greenpeace’s chief scientific adviser, Dr Douglas Parr. “We burn our gas wastefully in big power stations when local power stations, which use the heat as well, could slash our need for gas. With our commitment to efficient gas use so lacklustre, worrying over gas supplies is just posturing to generate support for the unpalatable nuclear option.”

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/story/0,,1688034,00.html>

<sup>11</sup> Energy Review Terms of Reference 29<sup>th</sup> November 2005

[http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/energy\\_review\\_press\\_notice.pdf](http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/energy_review_press_notice.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Over a Barrel, Sunday Herald 8<sup>th</sup> January 2006 <http://www.sundayherald.com/53456>

2.9 Gordon MacKerron, chair of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Managements, writing in *The Observer*, asked who will put up the cash for new reactors? A decision to proceed might be made in 2007, followed by a commercial choice of reactor and supplier, a safety licensing process, a public inquiry and a period for construction and commissioning. If all these were to run smoothly, the first power from a new reactor might be produced around 2018 - or more likely around 2020. A series of reactors through the 2020s might significantly improve security of supply, but so might other measures that might be at least as cost-effective. An important question is how nuclear power might get financed and built, given that no direct government money will be involved. Nuclear is a large-scale technology, requiring large unit sizes and substantial numbers of reactors if costs are to be at their lowest. This is a serious inflexibility. The worst-case scenario following a commitment to nuclear new-build would be a sterilisation of non-nuclear investment while the nuclear programme itself stalled. Such a scenario is far from a remote chance - the last time a UK government committed to 10 nuclear stations (Margaret Thatcher's in 1979) only one station was built, Sizewell, and then only after 15 years. If that were to happen again, security of supply would substantially worsen in the 2010s.

2.10 A study by Nirex reveals that most of existing reactor sites are threatened by rising sea-levels caused by climate change. At least 11 nuclear sites are so low-lying they could be drowned or damaged by rising seas, causing radioactive waste to leak. The sites at long-term risk include Hunterston and Dounreay, as well as nine in England and Wales. Torness and Chapelcross are not on the list, but only because the reports authors did not have the necessary information to make a judgement. The latest predictions suggest that the global warming caused by pollution will increase average sea levels around the UK by nearly half a metre by 2100. Within the next 50 years, the height of storm surges is likely to increase by up to 1.4 metres. The biggest danger is that ever-fiercer and more frequent storms will undermine nuclear sites, the Nirex report warns. "Coastal erosion can be dramatic and may, for many, if not most sites, provide a far greater worry than sea level rise alone," it concludes.<sup>13</sup>

2.11 A group of Labour MPs are organising to prevent Tony Blair pressing ahead with a new generation of nuclear power stations. It is the first sign of parliamentary opposition to nuclear power since the prime minister announced an energy review in the autumn, and is backed by the environment minister Elliot Morley. The group, brought together by a former minister, Alan Whitehead, is using the same tactic as the backbench opponents of government plans to establish semi-independent state secondary schools, publishing their own proposals in an effort to steer policy, rather than oppose it outright. The new 9,000 word manifesto being drafted by the backbenchers will set out the case for continued investment in renewable energy, rather than taking "a dangerous leap with nuclear". It will be published in February, as the government's energy review gets under way with a consultation document in January.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.0 Nuclear Waste News

3.1 Investigations have been launched into the risks to public health and safety posed by secret radioactive waste dumps containing thousands of cubic metres of contaminated rubbish from Hunterston nuclear power station. The waste has been dumped in five shoreline pits accessible to the public. Yet official records of what the pits contain have been destroyed.<sup>15</sup>

3.2 Meanwhile there is increasing concern that statements from the Committee on Radioactive

<sup>13</sup> Global warming scuppers Blair's nuclear power plans, Sunday Herald 27<sup>th</sup> November 2005  
<http://www.sundayherald.com/53111>

<sup>14</sup> Guardian 22nd December 2005  
<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/green/story/0,9061,1672438,00.html>

<sup>15</sup> Sunday Herald 15th January 2006  
<http://www.sundayherald.com/53590>

Waste Management are having the affect of appearing of removing one of the biggest barriers to building new reactors. CoRWM has said that nuclear waste is not an insurmountable problem to building new reactors. Although it says it does not want its report next July to be considered a green light or a red light to new reactors, by emphasising that new waste can be accommodated, rather than the huge rise in nuclear waste stockpiles likely to be produced by new reactors, the committee is unintentionally supporting the case for new reactors. In what sounds like buck passing, the committee says the problem of new waste generated by new reactors should be considered as part of a wider consultation on new reactors.<sup>16</sup>

3.3 A new generation of nuclear power stations would triple the amount of highly radioactive spent nuclear waste fuel stored in the UK according to CoRWM. The figures contrast with claims that a new generation of plants would add only 10% to the volume of waste. Experts say this is misleading because the majority of existing waste is made up of bulky, less hazardous material. Chris Murray, chief executive of nuclear waste management body Nirex, said: "The volume is not the whole story. We need to be very exact about what type of waste new reactors would actually produce and how it needs to be dealt with."<sup>17</sup>

3.4 Meanwhile, Nirex has been accused of sexing its report on the wisdom of dumping nuclear waste underground. The Anglo-Welsh Environment Agency is particularly concerned that the proposed containers for burying nuclear waste could crack and leak within 500 years, making the plans for a deep underground repository "overly optimistic". The agency says: "The positive arguments are given prominence and corresponding negative arguments are not examined." The agency warns that there is a long-term risk that the concrete and steel waste containers will corrode and fail. The agency does, however, conclude that deep geological disposal is still "viable" and could end up being granted a safety licence "provided a publicly and technically suitable site were available".<sup>18</sup>

3.5 Scientists and technical experts who have been advising CoRWM have now completed their assessment of the various options short listed by the Committee. CoRWM is now inviting stakeholders to comment on their findings. A series of meetings will be held around the country for stakeholders to make their own assessments of the options. Scottish meeting will be held at Thurso on 31<sup>st</sup> January and Helensburgh on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. The public are also being invited to comment on the technical experts report by 17<sup>th</sup> February.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4.0 Sellafield News

4.1 The Thorp reprocessing plant will not re-open before summer 2006 adding another complication to the proposed sale of British Nuclear Group. BNFL has also admitted there is a significant risk of future radioactive leaks at the plant. The company did so in response to demands from the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) that safety culture is improved before it can restart the plant, which has been closed since a serious leak was discovered in April.

4.2 The NII has made 49 recommendations affecting Thorp and the Sellafield site. But the fact the regulator is willing to allow Thorp to re-open, provided its demands are met, offers a partial reprieve for the nuclear lobby. The early permanent closure of Thorp would damage the case for

<sup>16</sup> FT 15<sup>th</sup> December 2005

<sup>17</sup> Ministers warned of huge rise in nuclear waste, Guardian 9<sup>th</sup> January 2006  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,16518,1682244,00.html>

<sup>18</sup> Fear over future UK nuclear leaks, New Scientist 7<sup>th</sup> January 2006  
<http://www.newscientist.com/channel/earth/mg18925333.100>

Eco Soundings, Guardian 11th January 2006  
<http://society.guardian.co.uk/societyguardian/story/0,7843,1683141,00.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.corwm.org/content-898>

new nuclear plants. It could also jeopardise the government's £56bn programme to clean up Britain's nuclear legacy, which gets more than a quarter of its income from Thorp. The recommendations will not be made public until the NII has decided whether to prosecute BNFL over the leak - a move that would face the state-owned company with the threat of potentially unlimited fines. The bill for repairing the plant, which media speculation has put at hundreds of millions of pounds, is likely to be less than £10m, according to a senior figure in the industry. But the consequential cost of the leak will soar if the reopening is delayed so long that BNG cannot meet its existing contracts for reprocessing spent fuel by the 2010 deadline.<sup>20</sup>

## 5.0 Dounreay

5.1 The Dounreay waste cementation plant will be closed until summer 2006 after a spill of highly radioactive liquid waste last September which will cost taxpayers £1m to clean up. An operator failed to see that the lid of a drum was sealed shut as he prepared to release a batch of highly-radioactive waste into it. The liquid poured over the lid. A number of alarms were ignored and a total of 260 litres of the liquor ended up settling into sumps on the floor. An extensive in-house investigation has found that no single factor was to blame though it noted there had been an over-reliance on automated controls.<sup>21</sup>

5.2 Dounreay has its biggest consultation exercise to decide how to tackle the problem of radioactive particles on the seabed and beaches near the nuclear site. The particles, or hotspots, discovered in the 1980s are believed to date from operations at the site in the 1950s. They are among the biggest challenges facing the UK Atomic Energy Authority as it aims to decommission Dounreay by 2036. A newsletter has been sent to more than 1,000 groups and individuals and a series of meetings and exhibitions will be held in January on options for tackling the problem. Two independent expert reports are also due to be published in 2006 and the findings, together with feedback from ongoing studies, will form part of the consultation, with recommendations on a best practical environmental option expected in 2007.<sup>22</sup>

5.3 The bill for dredging the seabed to remove all the radioactive particles could be as high as £70bn. UKAEA says finding and removing all particles from beaches and the seabed near the plant will be impossible.<sup>23</sup>

5.4 Furious residents living near Dounreay are opposing plans to build a low-level nuclear store. People living in Buldoo, a small community just a few hundred yards from the plant, have spoken out over proposals to build the new storage facility behind their homes. It follows reports that the local community seemed to welcome the plans after a public consultation meeting in Reay to gauge local views on the issue passed without much comment earlier this month.<sup>24</sup>

## 6.0 Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

6.1 The projected cost of cleaning up the sites of Britain's old nuclear power stations is likely to leap to more than £70bn when new figures are published early this year. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) says it is "almost certain" that its initial estimate of £56bn -

<sup>20</sup> BNFL tells regulator of significant leak danger, FT 16th January 2006

<http://news.ft.com/cms/s/0721e1d2-8634-11da-bee0-0000779e2340.html>

<sup>21</sup> BBC 28th October 2005 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/4386546.stm>

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.ukaea.org.uk/sites/dounreay\\_particles\\_in\\_the\\_marine\\_environment.htm](http://www.ukaea.org.uk/sites/dounreay_particles_in_the_marine_environment.htm)

<sup>23</sup> Scottish Herald 10th January 2006 <http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/53925.html>

Scotsman 10th January 2006 <http://news.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=41692006>

<sup>24</sup> Northern Times 6th January 2006

[http://www.northern-times.co.uk/article.tvt? ticket=2XGDALOLO9M2TRRIVPPH9NTHLZIZBHSJ7TRFOOOAHO1FDPT9C HVRO94EIOQNCMTEDWFXYGSGX4QFIVN9AN0J9LLGEGSG03QFIUW9ANZH9LLDN5FV49IX& scope=Flow/Northern%20Times/News&id=80560&ARTICLECAT=News](http://www.northern-times.co.uk/article.tvt?ticket=2XGDALOLO9M2TRRIVPPH9NTHLZIZBHSJ7TRFOOOAHO1FDPT9C HVRO94EIOQNCMTEDWFXYGSGX4QFIVN9AN0J9LLGEGSG03QFIUW9ANZH9LLDN5FV49IX&scope=Flow/Northern%20Times/News&id=80560&ARTICLECAT=News)

itself the equivalent of a charge of £800 for every adult and child in the country - would have to be revised upwards. Inflation alone is likely to push the costs up to almost £58bn - but a closer look at conditions in some of the older nuclear sites, particularly Sellafield and Dounreay, has convinced inspectors the figure is likely to be more like £70bn. The figure does not include the cost of cleaning up Ministry of Defence sites, or nuclear plants owned by British Energy.<sup>25</sup>

## 7.0 Nuclear Safety

7.1 Emergency services were called to Torness nuclear power station on 22<sup>nd</sup> December when staff disposing of spent fuel noticed "anomalous behaviour" of the irradiated substances. This was the first full-scale emergency incident at the Torness since the station opened 17 years ago. MSPs pressed for the results of an investigation to be made fully open to the public. Willie Waddle, director of the East Lothian plant, said debris prevented a spent fuel element being properly located in position. British Energy, which operates the plant, said that the emergency services were called in as a precaution, because one possible explanation for the problem was that the fuel element was broken and therefore leaking radiation. But the problem was caused by debris which had made its way into the fuel handling area and prevented the element from fitting properly into its container.<sup>26</sup>

7.2 A deliberate attempt to disrupt security with a tripwire is one of more than 200 "abnormal events" at Scotland's two nuclear power stations revealed in documents obtained by the *Sunday Herald* under the Freedom of Information Act. Other safety incidents recorded at Torness and Hunterston include unauthorised waste discharges and problems with reactor fuel and fires. The environment and equipment at the sites have also been contaminated with radioactivity.<sup>27</sup>

7.3 Police were called to Torness in March 2003 after a black cable was found stretched across the top of a flight of stairs. This had caused a security guard patrolling the nuclear site to trip and fall down the stairs. Both the police and British Energy launched investigations to try and trace the culprit, but failed to do so. The revelation of the incident has rekindled fears that nuclear plants could be vulnerable to sabotage by terrorists. Police chief superintendent David McCracken told East Lothian councillors last week that Torness was a target for international terrorist groups.

## 8.0 The Terrorism Threat

8.1 Greenpeace has released a frightening video showing a jumbo jet crashing into the nuclear power station at Sizewell. <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/fridaythe13th/>

8.2 The video montage is accompanied by a briefing on nuclear terrorism.

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/fridaythe13th/mediabrief.pdf>

8.3 The Oxford Research Group has told the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee that nuclear power should not be part of the UK's energy supply, because it presents a major threat to national and international security.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Cost of cleaning up after nuclear power stations are closed down rises to £70bn, Independent 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2006. <http://news.independent.co.uk/environment/article336256.ece>

<sup>26</sup> BBC 22nd December 2005 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/4554302.stm>  
Emergency at Torness fuels nuclear power row, Scotsman 24<sup>th</sup> December 2005  
<http://news.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=2455972005>

<sup>27</sup> Over 200 'abnormal events' at nuclear plants since 2000, Sunday Herald 4<sup>th</sup> December 2005  
<http://www.sundayherald.com/53177>

<sup>28</sup> Oxford Research Group Report November 2005  
<http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/programmes/nuclearissues/secureenergy.htm>

8.4 An Al-Qaeda website contains 80 pages of detailed instructions on how to make a “dirty” bomb along with pictures of kitchen bomb-making techniques.<sup>29</sup>

8.5 The Lucas Heights nuclear research reactor - Australia's only nuclear reactor - and its spent nuclear fuel store (situated 25 miles south west of central Sydney) may have been a target of suspected terrorists. Three of eight Sydney men currently facing terrorism charges in Australia were stopped by police near the nuclear facility in December 2004. When interviewed separately by police all three gave different versions of the day's events. Police inquiries revealed the access lock for a gate to a reservoir at the reactor had recently been cut.<sup>30</sup> This was not the first time the Australian reactor had been the subject of a suspected terrorist plot. In March 2000 police in New Zealand uncovered a possible plot to blow up the reactor during the Olympic Games.<sup>31</sup>

8.6 Somewhat more dramatically, a foiled Chechen rebel assault on the Russian city of Nalchik in October was reported to have involved an attempt to hijack five planes that could be flown into various targets, including a nuclear power station.<sup>32</sup>

8.7 If the worst did happen then the results of emergency planning exercises give little cause for comfort. According to confidential reports obtained by New Scientist, and the Sunday Herald, UK authorities are not fully prepared to protect people from being exposed to radioactivity. Regular assessments of the problems thrown up by civilian nuclear exercises are conducted by the government's Nuclear Emergency Planning Liaison Group (NEPLG). Its latest report highlights 48 “areas for improvement”, prompted by more than 20 exercises at nuclear sites over the last five years. Critics say the NEPLG report details an astonishing catalogue of fundamental and recurring failures - agencies still can't get even the basics right after years of practising. Failures include inadequate radiation monitoring, communication breakdowns, poor planning and a chronic shortage of basic facilities.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> “Al-Qaeda woos recruits with nuclear bomb website” by Uzi Mahnaimi and Tom Walker, Sunday Times, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2005 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-1859222,00.html>

<sup>30</sup> “Nuclear Link to Terror Suspects”, BBC 14<sup>th</sup> November 2005  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4434270.stm>

<sup>31</sup> Olympic Bomb Plot to Blow up Sydney Nuclear Reactor Foiled: How Serious the Threat? By Dr. Ely Karmon, Institute for Counter Terrorism.  
[http://www.ict.org.il/articles/nuclear\\_reactor\\_threat.htm](http://www.ict.org.il/articles/nuclear_reactor_threat.htm)

<sup>32</sup> “Chechen attack was grandiose attempt to copy September 11” by Andrew Osborn, Independent 29<sup>th</sup> October 2005.  
<http://news.independent.co.uk/europe/article323186.ece>

<sup>33</sup> “Nuclear accident planning plagued by ‘recurring failures’” by Rob Edwards, Sunday Herald, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2005, <http://www.sundayherald.com/51386>  
“If a nuclear convoy should crash” New Scientist, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2006  
<http://www.newscientist.com/channel/opinion/mg18825253.000.html>