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Russia Is Importing Toxic Nuclear Waste From Germany, Greenpeace Warns

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Sergei Konkov / TASS

A European uranium enrichment firm has resumed shipments of a highly toxic and radioactive waste product from Germany to Russia, Greenpeace Russia warned Wednesday.

The enrichment firm Urenco and Russia's state nuclear company Rosatom halted the radioactive waste imports from Germany in 2009 over revelations that the waste was stored in the open. German media reported Tuesday that Urenco had resumed exports of the toxic compound used to enrich uranium, sending up to 3,600 metric tons to central Russia in May-October 2019.

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"Russia should not become a radioactive burial ground for the rest of the world," Greenpeace's energy campaigner Rashid Alimov said, demanding the release of government documents and punishment of officials responsible for resumed shipments.

Urenco plans to send 12,000 metric tons of uranium hexafluoride to Russia in 2019-2022, the Die Tageszeitung newspaper reported, citing officials' communications.

Greenpeace estimates that Russia has stored 1 million metric tons of the uranium hexafluoride, a waste product known as "tails."

Vyacheslav Alexandrov, the head of the state-run radioactive waste management operator's Novouralsk branch where Urelco had reportedly sent the "tails," said Russia prohibits nuclear-waste imports and expressed surprise over Greenpeace's warning.

In comments to the Znak.com news website, Alimov agreed with Alexandrov that "Russia formally observes the law" but contended that about 90% of the imported toxic "tails" remain in Russia after enrichment.

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