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**Press Statement by Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Specialist, Beyond Nuclear  
Re: Holtec International application to U.S. NRC, to open a Centralized Interim Storage Facility for  
High-Level Radioactive Waste in Southeastern New Mexico**

Washington, D.C.—“Beyond Nuclear fully intends to resist Holtec’s risky, nonsensical scheme – in association with the Eddy-Lea Energy Alliance (ELEA) -- at every turn, just as it is doing with Waste Control Specialists’ very similar scheme in West Texas, located just 35 miles from Holtec’s targeted parking lot dump site. The two parking lot dumps are a cynical attempt to turn the Texas/New Mexico border region into a nuclear sacrifice zone, despite the risks (as to the Ogallala Aquifer, very near to, and downstream from, the Ogallala Aquifer at the WCS site).

Just as a coalition of many hundreds of environmental justice groups nationwide, working in solidarity with low-income, Skull Valley Goshute Indian opponents to the Holtec-based Private Fuel Storage, LLC (PFS) parking lot dump, targeted at Utah in years past, stopped that environmental injustice, so too will we stop these current environmental injustices. In fact, Holtec shipping and storage containers formed the basis of the failed PFS scheme.

West Texas and Southeastern New Mexico have a large percentage of Latin American and low-income residents, already heavily polluted by fossil fuel (oil and natural gas), nuclear (uranium enrichment and “low” level radioactive waste disposal), and other hazardous industries. Thus, WCS’s and Holtec’s proposals are textbook examples of environmental injustice, or radioactive racism. For this and many other reasons, they must be stopped.

Holtec’s scheme would launch unprecedented, countless thousands of “Mobile Chernobyls,” “Dirty Bombs on Wheels,” and/or “Floating Fukushima” – irradiated nuclear fuel shipments by road, rail, and/or waterway – through most states. These shipments would be vulnerable to severe accidents, and/or intentional attacks, risking the release of catastrophic amounts of hazardous radioactivity, as they pass through population centers or other high-risk zones.

Compounding these Mobile Chernobyl risks, Holtec has some very serious skeletons in its closet, regarding widespread quality assurance (QA) violations with its shipping/storage containers. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was either incompetent, or worse – complicit or colluding – with Holtec’s QA violations, most times not even requiring corrective actions.

Industry whistleblower Oscar Shirani and NRC whistleblower Dr. Ross Landsman brought these QA violations to light a long time ago, but to the best of our knowledge, Holtec and NRC never did anything about them. Shirani questioned the structural integrity of Holtec containers sitting still, at zero miles per hour, let alone traveling 60mph, or faster, down the rail lines. Shirani concluded that Holtec casks are “nothing but garbage cans” if they are not made in accordance with government specifications and industry standards. Dr. Landsman, NRC’s now retired Midwest region dry cask storage inspector, compared the Holtec QA violations, and NRC’s inaction in the face of them, as similar to the reasons why Space Shuttles have hit the ground. (continued over→)

See a summary of Shirani's QA violation revelations, as well as Landsman's full support for Shirani's allegations, as posted here:

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/centralized-storage/2017/4/5/summary-of-oscar-shiranis-allegations-of-quality-assurance-v.html>

In fact, such QA violations extend not just years and decades back in time, but are evidently still a persistent, widespread problem today. And it is not just Holtec containers. Many other cask models – including Nuclear Assurance Corporation and Areva Transnuclear NUHOMS, to be used at WCS in Texas – have also suffered documented, safety significant QA violations. NRC – either incompetent, or worse, complicit and colluding -- simply rubber-stamps approvals for such casks, despite the rampant, unresolved QA violations.

Centralized interim storage facilities, as Holtec/ELEA proposes in Southeastern New Mexico, make no sense. They would simply multiply transport risks, as the wastes would have to be moved to a final burial repository elsewhere anyway, someday.

In fact, that burial dump could be back in the direction from which the wastes came in the first place – thus calling into question the wisdom of shipping the wastes cross-country to a so-call “interim,” or temporary, site, in the wrong direction.

The Holtec-based PFS, LLC is a case in point. PFS intended to “temporarily” store 40,000 metric tons of commercial irradiated nuclear fuel for 20 to 40 years on the Skull Valley Goshute Indian Reservation in West Utah, and then to ship it to Yucca Mountain, Nevada for permanent burial. But of course, the Yucca dump scheme was wisely cancelled by the Obama administration in 2010. So what was PFS's “plan B”? It was “return to sender”!

Maine Yankee was a PFS consortium member. More than 50 Holtec casks would have traveled more than 5,000 miles, round trip, accomplishing absolutely nothing – other than exposing millions of people in numerous states to not one, but two rounds of Mobile Chernobyl risks.

Given such risks, another specter is that the Holtec/ELEA Centralized “Interim” Storage Site in Southeastern New Mexico would become, by default, a *de facto* permanent surface “parking lot” dump.

After all, it would then be two U.S. Senators versus 98 others, one U.S. Representative versus 434 others, and one State Attorney General and Governor versus 49 others.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act, as Amended, does contain the wisdom of not allowing “interim” storage, unless and until a permanent repository is open and operating. This guards against “temporary” becoming *de facto* permanent. In fact, Jeff Bingaman (Democrat-New Mexico), Chairman of the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, stood by this wisdom during the 2012 congressional session, when these proposed Centralized “Interim” Storage Facilities were first generically proposed.

Legislative proposals, such as one introduced by U.S. Reps. Conaway (R-TX) and Issa (R-CA), would take steps to legalize private interim storage facilities, and abolish any linkage between interim storage and permanent disposal, exacerbating risks of parking lot dumps becoming *de facto* permanent surface storage, vulnerable to age-related degradation, as from exposure to the elements, ultimately risking catastrophic environmental releases of hazardous radioactivity, if abandoned and institutional control lost over time. Such bills would also unlock the Nuclear Waste Fund for use on centralized interim storage facilities, making companies like Holtec and WCS filthy rich at nuclear ratepayer expense, but draining away vital funding long intended for permanent disposal, leaving future generations of taxpayers to make up that massive shortfall of many tens of billions of dollars.”