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## UK terror Act to gag nuclear ship reports

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BY DAVID OSLER

Lloyd's List will be barred from publishing details of Pacific Nuclear Transport ships, write and Brian Reyes ANTI-TERRORISM legislation currently before parliament could see a ban on Lloyd's List reporting the movement of British-flagged nuclear cargoships.

Section 80 of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act will make it illegal to disclose anything that might 'prejudice the security' of nuclear material carried on board a British ship.

Maximum penalty for such disclosures will be seven years' imprisonment, a fine or both.

The Act - introduced by home secretary David Blunkett after the September 11 outrages - has aroused civil liberty concerns, not least because of its provisions for internment without trial for terrorist suspects.

The legislation would severely curtail the British press' ability to report on Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd, the British Nuclear Fuels shipping subsidiary managed from Barrow in Furness by James Fisher & Sons.

However, such material could quite legally be covered by foreign-based shipping publications and other media, in most cases freely available on the internet.

PNTL - largely engaged in carrying reprocessed nuclear fuel from Britain to Japan - has been the subject of many stories in Lloyd's List in recent years.

Articles have focused on protests staged by environmentalists against such voyages, and the political reaction from governments along the route.

Although the government ordered the suspension of Lloyd's List on national security grounds in both the First and Second World Wars, this is believed to be the first time selective restrictions have been proposed.

Even at the height of the cold war, for instance, we were freely able to report on worldwide movements of British, US and Russian merchant vessels.

We are today able to report that PNTL ship Pacific Sandpiper left Barrow in Furness two days ago bound for Cherbourg, France, where she will pick up her cargo of nuclear waste before sailing for Japan.

Greenpeace claimed that this will be the second largest such shipment ever undertaken.

'It's an absolutely tremendous amount of material,' said Greenpeace campaigner Damon Moglen.

In terms of radioactivity, it represents twice the levels released after the Chernobyl disaster, he said.

Mr Moglen also criticised the anti-terrorism Act:section on nuclear security reads as if BNFL simply wrote it.' Greenpeace has published a 'nuclear ship spotter's guide' in response, and has vowed to continue releasing information about the industry.

'If the government believes that these nuclear shipments are a security risk then it should stop (them)... and not the democratic right of people... to know about the horrendous risks these ships carry,' said Greenpeace nuclear campaigner Bridget Woodman.

A spokesman for BNFL said that the legal situation remained unclear, but that the company would fully comply with the law.

The Act is at committee stage in the House of Lords.

Meanwhile, the Irish government's attempt to win an injunction to halt the start-up of a Pounds 472m (Dollars 664m) nuclear fuel manufacturing plant in Sellafield yesterday fell.

Ireland said it was worried about radioactive discharges and the potential risks involved in the transportation of nuclear material to and from the plant.

But the application has been refused by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg.

However, it did order the British and Irish governments to consult extensively on the safety implications of the plant before submitting written reports on December 17.

Ireland is likely to appeal.Blunkett: Act introduced after US attacks has aroused civil liberties concerns and would see Lloyd's List reports such as those left effectively being banned.

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