

## Nuclear Hotseat #780 - June 9, 2026

### Nuclear Russian Roulette in Ukraine - Nuke Reactors in a War Zone - Joseph DeMare

**Libbe HaLevy:** [00:00:00] Nuclear Russian roulette in Ukraine. In calculating the issues raised by nuclear reactors, neither the industry, governments, nor think tanks have ever made public what they know about the risks of having nuclear reactors on the ground in a war zone. But reactors are sitting ducks for not only attacks on the containment structure, but the vulnerable spent fuel pools containing years of highly radioactive plutonium-riddled waste.

Drones are making it ever easier for incursions into the airspace over the nuclear reactors in Ukraine, with Russia playing a game of chicken by launching attacks that have come dangerously ever closer to setting off a true disaster. While the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, which is the UN agency charged with protecting the world from nuclear disasters, fumbles its [00:01:00] way into ever greater irrelevance as their pleas to protect Ukraine's nukes keep getting ignored.

Their call for an end to the danger have been ignored, in part because there doesn't seem to be a clear plan forward. It takes someone outside the nuclear call-and-response matrix, a veteran podcaster and environmental activist who researches, understands, then shares what he has found, to make the logical point of what can and must be done to bring this under control.

And when he tells us-

**Joseph DeMare:** Literally the only sane course of action in this situation is to shut the plants down, defuel them, and actually have international troops guarding the spent fuel pools, both in terms of soldiers and in terms of air defenses. Because if these pools melt down, the fallout is [00:02:00] gonna cover all of Europe.

It's not just gonna affect Ukraine. It's not just gonna affect Russia if the wind is wrong. It's gonna affect pretty much everyone in the Eurasian continent, and that is something we cannot allow to happen.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Well, when environmentalist, activist, and radio podcast producer and host Joseph DeMare shares his understanding of the situation in Ukraine and what can be done and must be done to neutralize the nuclear

dangers there, you get a shocking, frightening look at a leading outpost of that awful, deadly, dangerous seat that we all share.

**Nuclear Hotseat Theme:** Nuclear Hotseat. What are those people thinking? Nuclear Hotseat. What have those boys been drinking? Nuclear Hotseat. The corium is sinking. Our time to act is shrinking, but our activists are linking.  
[00:03:00]

Nuclear Hotseat. It's da bomb

**Libbe HaLevy:** Welcome to Nuclear Hotseat, the weekly international news magazine keeping you up to date on all things nuclear from a different perspective. We're a show for people who know nothing about nuclear who would like to know something, and people who already know something about nuclear who would like to know just a little bit more.

My name is Libbe HaLevy I am the producer and host, as well as a survivor of the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island from just one mile away, so I know what can happen when those nuclear so-called experts get it wrong This week we talk with Joseph DeMare. He is producer and host of the podcast broadcast For a Green Future, as well as a longtime anti-nuclear, environmental, and political activist.[00:04:00]

He shares his insights about the nuclear reactor dangers of the war in Ukraine, and why the IAEA has not managed to make any meaningful changes to the risks posed by attacks that are coming ever closer to the highly radioactive spent fuel pools. We will also have nuclear news from around the world, Linda Pentz Gunter with the Nuclear Hotseat hot story, Jack Cohen Joppa of The Nuclear Resister with another story from our shared history of activist resistance to nuclear reactors and weapons, and lots more honest and verifiable nuclear information.

All of it coming up in just a few moments. Today is Tuesday, June 9th 2026, and here is this week's nuclear news from a different perspective. Starting out here in the US, where the White House plans to let private companies use surplus plutonium in their experimental startup reactors. [00:05:00] More insanity.

Here's Linda Pentz Gunter with this week's Nuclear Hotseat hot story.

**Linda Pentz Gunter:** Just when you think things couldn't get any worse, they invariably do. But this is the Trump regime we're living under, so it's not really a surprise. The latest any worse development on the nuclear front is the news

that the White House has now settled on five private companies to be the recipients of plutonium from dismantled nuclear warheads.

Plutonium is the trigger component of an atomic bomb and an enticing nuclear weapons usable material. The companies, inexperienced startups with no proven track record, are vying to build new reactors, and they want to use 20 tons of US plutonium as fuel. Even though surplus plutonium has long been considered and handled as a lethal waste, the Trump turnaround would refashion it into a commodity with value, a dangerous precedent.

The most enthusiastic advocates [00:06:00] argue that using plutonium in reactor fuel is a way to dispose of the leftover plutonium, but it doesn't actually dispose of it. We already have the evidence from the reactors in France, some of which are designed to use what is known as MOX fuel, reactor fuel that includes some plutonium retrieved after an extremely dirty process known as reprocessing.

But once the MOX reactors fission, they, like all reactors, produce plutonium as part of the radioactive waste they generate, and that waste cannot be reprocessed, so the plutonium still isn't gone. One of the companies most eager to get hold of plutonium is Oklo, not uncoincidentally the company on whose board the present energy secretary, Chris Wright, formerly sat, and who will now choose the lucky recipients of government-owned plutonium.

No conflict of interest there. The other companies on the recipient list are Standard Nuclear, Exodus Energy, Shine [00:07:00] Technologies, and Flibe Energy. If you have never heard some or any of those names, don't be disturbed. You will probably never have to know them because whatever nuclear phantom they are promising will probably never happen.

But guess whose stock soared right after the plutonium giveaway announcement? Yes, Oklo's, because this is the only thing any of this is actually about, making a quick profit. Delivering an actual reactor? Eh, not so much. We've been down this road before in the US, and it was, like most nuclear pathways, a dead end.

A MOX fuel fabrication plant was approved and began actual construction at the Savannah River site in South Carolina in 2007. By 2018, it was halted after costing US taxpayers \$50 billion. The MOX debacle is really the poster child for new nuclear schemes, an obscene waste of taxpayer money generally [00:08:00] delivering precisely nothing at all.

Yet here we go again, whether it's the plutonium handout or the reactors that promise to use it, we are looking at another long, expensive road to nuclear nowhere. I'm Linda Pentz Gunter with Beyond Nuclear reporting for Nuclear Hotseat, and that's this week's hot story.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Linda Pentz Gunter. Her new book is *No to Nuclear: Why Nuclear Power Destroys Lives, Derails Climate Progress, and Provokes War*.

In Socorro, New Mexico, the community's battle against an AI data center being developed there is raising some important nuclear issues as well. At a full-to-bursting town hall in May, matters of environment and climate change, gaping economic inequality and creeping oligarchy, local land use, legacies of the nuclear weapons age and space exploration, and other factors boiled over [00:09:00] in what's being labeled a lively, perhaps at times hostile, and extremely memorable meeting fit for the history books.

The occasion was Canadian company Green Data's proposal in possible partnership with Socorro-based New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, better known as New Mexico Tech, to build a massive data center on 10,000-plus acres of land owned by the public university. Last January, unbeknownst to locals, the New Mexico Tech administration signed a letter of intent with Green Data to explore a possible deal.

Former Socorro resident Damacio Lopez, who works with Veterans for Peace and is co-chair of the Uranium Weapons Working Group, was there, and he said in this public forum, quote, "I am very concerned about the dust that accumulated from the testing of depleted uranium in the area," and expressed concerns that data center construction [00:10:00] activities could result in exposures to workers and others of this highly toxic and radioactive nuclear waste.

Damacio goes into great details on the problems of depleted uranium in the Socorro area in his book, *My Last Battle: Ban Uranium Weapons: Memoirs of a U.S. Air Force Veteran*. By the way, in Spanish, the word Socorro means help. Former Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chair Greg Jaczko is running for DC Delegate to Congress.

But this week, he took on New York State, saying its lawmakers should approve the proposed nuclear moratorium bill to protect taxpayers from possible financial overruns from new nuclear power plants. The proposed New York State legislation comes as Governor Kathy Hochul pushes for more nuclear power.

Jaczko, who chaired the [00:11:00] NRC during the Barack Obama administration, said financial challenges continue to be the crux of adding new nuclear power. He added that 20 years ago, a nuclear renaissance was promised and did not come to fruition, and he believes that will be the case here. He said, "It was a craze of the early 2000s when the industry promised tens of new reactors will be built around the country.

The result was a significant failure. Only two reactors were built at significant cost overruns in Georgia, and in fact, another two reactors in South Carolina were under construction and canceled after four of the people involved were indicted for federal fraud." He's hoping the message can get across to New York State legislators in time so the state does not risk the same cost overruns and nuclear failures.

In Ukraine, on Saturday, May 30th, a drone struck the machine room building of [00:12:00] one of the power units at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in southeast Ukraine. The International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog, said the Zaporizhzhia plant temporarily lost all offsite power for the 16th time since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The facility's six reactors are in a state of cold shutdown and last produced electricity in 2022. But that doesn't mean that the site is immune to the dangers that come from this kind of a strike, and that makes this story a perfect lead-in for this week's featured interview, which focuses on the danger posed by nuclear reactors in a war zone.

So here's this week's featured interview. I find that it helps me to discuss nuclear issues with other activists, journalists, and podcasters, people who pay close attention to the stories unfolding around us so that I may [00:13:00] gain their valuable insights. One such resource to our community is Joseph DeMare.

He is producer and host of the podcast Broadcast for a Green Future, as well as a longtime anti-nuclear and environmental activist. I caught a passionate post from him on Facebook about the threats posed by Russian attacks on Ukrainian nuclear reactors, attacks which are coming ever closer to triggering an irreversible radiological disaster.

It gave us the chance to also discuss other actions he is taking on behalf of people and the environment to combat the never-ending list of nightmares that we face. We also share a sense of humor, so we got to laugh a bit as well. I spoke with Joseph DeMare on June 8, 2026. Joseph DeMare, thank you so much for joining us today on Nuclear Hotseat.

**Joseph DeMare:** Libbe, I'm happy and honored to be here.

**Libbe HaLevy:** [00:14:00] Start out by giving us a sense of your background and the work that you do hosting your program For a Green Future.

**Joseph DeMare:** I, uh, have been someone who's been interested in the environment since a young age, since I was like 12, and I'm somewhere around 64 now, so I've been at this for a while.

In terms of nuclear power, I'm a green. I'm a Green Party person, and a lot of people don't remember, but way back at the v- very beginning of the Green Party, one of the founding reasons we got started was opposition to nuclear power. Because over in Germany, none of the major parties were opposed to nuclear power even as we were learning, everyone was learning the, the real dangers and the, the horrors of nuclear power.

And so, uh, that was one of the founding... one of the reasons Petra Kelly and the other greens in Germany started going, and that sort of sparked the movement worldwide. So I've been opposed to nuclear power my whole life. I remember Three Mile [00:15:00] Island vividly. I remember Fukushima, of course, and Chernobyl.

And that was also one of the impetuses for creating For a Green Future, because my show doesn't just focus on nuclear, but it is one of our main focuses, and pretty much what I try to do with For a Green Future is bring out the stories that nobody's talking about, bring out the big, important environmental things that happen that don't make it into the mainstream media but really have a profound impact.

You know, I've been doing my show for about seven years. You know, not as long as you, but I've been very honored to have incredible guests from a wide array of issues: activists, scientists, you know, glaciologists, biologists, just regular people that are being impacted by environmental issues, and of course, a lot of nuclear activists too.

**Libbe HaLevy:** We will, of course, link to where people can find your show to be able to check the archive and look back on some of the episodes that you've had. You said that in your coverage you talk with a [00:16:00] wide range of people and a wide range of issues. Do you find that anything in particular sparks the greatest feedback from your audience?

**Joseph DeMare:** The greatest feedback from the audience is when the passion of a guest comes through, and it really almost doesn't matter what that guest is passionate about. It could be water fleas, aeroplankton. Could be nuclear, opposing nuclear power. But when I get that guest that, you know, I manage to tap into that vein of passion that, that's running through their lives, their professional lives as well as their personal lives, that's when people respond and say, "You know, that was a good interview."

**Libbe HaLevy:** Speaking of passion in the sharing of information, you very recently did an extensive post about Zaporizhzhia, and what is going on in Ukraine as regards the nuclear reactors there. And that's what motivated me to reach out to you, to tap into that passion in you [00:17:00] that you had expressed in this post, 'cause there was a lot of knowledge and a lot of outrage there.

So explain first to the listeners what the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is, and its importance to the region.

**Joseph DeMare:** Well, it's one of the largest nuclear power plants there is, and it is important to the region in that it supplies... Nuclear is supplying something like 60% of the electricity. But the problem with it is that this is an operating nuclear power plant that's operating in the middle of a war zone, and the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency, is constantly sounding the alarm, saying, you know, things like, oh, external power has been cut off, or this building has been damaged, or, you know, these, the people are being prevented from operating efficiently.

Every time you cut off external power to a nuclear power plant, it has begun the process of meltdown. Because once the fuel runs out from the [00:18:00] backup generators, unless there's external power, the pumps stop, and the plant starts overheating, and you're on your way to a meltdown. And what is happening at Zaporizhzhia is there's a increasingly dangerous game of chicken going on.

There's strikes that are getting closer and closer to destroying the plant. The power has been cut off, I can't count how many times. I think it's something like 15 or 20 times external power has been cut off. The plant has had to rely solely on its backup diesel generators, sometimes for a couple days at a time, and that is a, a recipe for disaster, because we see these backup diesel generators can fail, especially if you're in a war zone and you can't get the fuel to them because your fuel trucks are being targeted by drones.

Once again, once those d- backup generators stop, the plant's on the way to a meltdown. And what prompted my post and what prompted the, the, the passion you saw in that posting is that the [00:19:00] latest outrage is that the Russians sent a drone that blew up a building in the spent fuel area, the area where pools of water are filled with spent nuclear fuel rods, which as your listeners know, I'm sure, are not at all spent in terms of being able to fission or having radioactivity.

They're just too radioactive to keep in a nuclear power plant. And if the pumps stop at a spent fuel pool Those things contain hundreds, sometimes, you know, tens, sometimes hundreds of times as much radioactive fuel, as much uranium and plutonium as the inside of a reactor because those spent fuel rods have been piling up in those pools for decades.

Because, you know, when nuclear power started, we were all assured, "Oh, we will have a solution for the, for nuclear waste in no time."

**Libbe HaLevy:** And that's the literal truth. It's in no time. Yeah. It hasn't happened.

**Joseph DeMare:** Right. [00:20:00] Since we're talking about, you know, my past or whatever, the way I spent my 18th birthday, I went to a seminar at the Rochester New York Institute of Technology on nuclear power.

And, uh, you know, it was very informative. There were pros and cons, but at the end of it, there was supposed to be a debate between a pro-nuclear and an anti-nuclear guy, and the pro-nuclear guy got up there on stage in front of everybody... Remember, this, I'm 64 now, this happened when I was 18. And he said, "Before we begin, I just want to assure everybody we have now found the final solution for nuclear waste.

Okay? So we don't even need to discuss that." "That's off the table." We... And the, the anti-nuclear guy was, was like, "Well, well what is it? What's this solution you guys have come up with?" And he said, "I can't tell you. I can't let y- I can't admit, say that now. It's still secret, but just trust me, we have found it."

And of, and of course he was lying, and I, I guess in a foreshadowing for the rest of my life, [00:21:00] I actually stood up in the audience and said, "It's obvious he's lying," you know? "Let's just move on. You know, let's start, y- let's all go with that understanding." And it kinda shut the whole debate down, 'cause the pro-nuclear guy didn't wanna talk, thinking that, you know- Uh

knowing that everybody knew he was lying. So back to the present. So these spent fuel pools at the Zaporizhzhia plant contain more radioactivity, contain more plutonium and, and uranium than the plant itself. So even if you were to bomb the nuclear plants directly and have them melt down, it's just a fraction of the seriousness of what would happen if these spent fuel pools dried out and melted down.

And those, the rods in those pools are still hot, so again, just like in a nuclear plant, if the pumps that are putting cooling water on them stop, then the water evaporates off, the zirconium cladding catches fire, and you have meltdowns [00:22:00] in those pools. And those pools are nowhere near as contained, nowhere near as robust as the, the nuclear power plants.

And so the disasters are on a much larger scale. And what the IAEA has been doing is going back and forth between Ukraine and Russia saying, "Oh, please don't do this. Please don't do that. You know, let's all agree to not blow up the, the nuclear plants or have the drones or soldiers or minefields near them."

And it has brokered six ceasefires around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, and they put this on their X account as if that's something to be proud of. But the th- the reason they've brokered six is because every single one has failed. And we are years into this conflict now. We keep getting closer and closer to this nuclear disaster, and the IAEA is continuing to just pretend that they can talk their way out of it.[00:23:00]

Okay? There's, there's no way you're gonna negotiate an agreement between Russia and Ukraine that will hold and that will be effective because they're in the middle of a war, and both those countries are doing everything they can to win that war. And this is why for two years now ceasefires have failed, agreements have failed, because this is war, and people don't follow rules in war, you know?

The IAEA has come up with their, their, what do they call them? The seven indispensable concepts for nuclear safety in a war, which it's kinda like, you know, the Boy Scouts scout laws or something, you know? They're, they're pretending that by making rules they're gonna somehow control this, this animal, which is war.

And I believe, and I'm, what I'm calling for and what I'm hoping I can get other people to, to call for is literally the only sane course of action in this situation is to shut the plants down, defuel them, and actually have [00:24:00] international

troops guarding the spent fuel pools, both in terms of soldiers and in terms of air defenses.

Because if these pools melt down, the fallout is gonna cover all of Europe. It's not just gonna affect Ukraine. It's not just gonna affect Russia if the wind is wrong. It's gonna affect pretty much everyone in the Eurasian continent, and that is something we cannot allow to happen. The IAEA also says we cannot allow it to happen, but they're saying, "So guys, play nice during your war," and it just has not been working for years.

It's clearly failing, and we have to do something about it. Everyone from the IAEA to the UN to the EU, everybody should be calling for these plants to be shut down, defueled, and the spent fuel secured.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Another point about the release of radioactivity, which is what would happen in a meltdown, be it the spent fuel pool or be it a strike on one of the [00:25:00] reactors themselves, is that it would go up into the atmosphere and through the jet stream travel around the world.

So this would not be restricted to Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Russia. It would be all of us, because we were all impacted initially by the radiation that was released by Chernobyl. So there's really, in the words of the song by Holly Near, which was written right after Three Mile Island, "Ain't nowhere you can run."

Mm-hmm. There's no way to be safe for this. So what they are doing over there is important to us over here. Now, am I correct in having read something that there were now landmines being placed in the area around Zaporizhzhia?

**Joseph DeMare:** That's correct. There have been landmines placed, and in fact, IAEA issued a condolence press release because a Russian soldier was actually killed in the process of trying to remove some of these [00:26:00] landmines.

So there's already been people dying on the altar of nuclear power, and people are saying, "Oh, we can't shut down the nuclear power because that'll shut down, you know, electricity." But that already has been happening in Ukraine. You know, Russia's been blowing up transformers. They've been blowing up the thermal plants, like the coal plants, and the only reason they're not blowing up the nuclear plants is because they're still afraid of the meltdown, but that fear seems to be lessening every day.

This latest attack, they actually blew up one of the buildings in the spent fuel compound, and that shattered windows in all the buildings, and it was just a few hundred yards from the actual spent fuel pools. So using a drone with an explosive warhead, they blew up a building that was just a football field or two away from the spent fuel pools, and these spent fuel buildings are not secured.

They're not like the nuclear plants. Usually, they're just [00:27:00] corrugated metal with some insulation. Very easy to blow a hole into and get a drone into. It's literally insanity. War is insane, but this is like insanity squared.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Insanity on steroids. Interesting that you mention a drone strike because it was a drone strike on the new confinement structure over Chernobyl, which was supposed to keep all the radioactivity in and protect the environment and protect all of us.

It was built, I think, for a couple of billion dollars, and it was put in place, and then in January of 2025, there was a Russian drone strike, just a little drone, but it punched a hole in the top of the confinement structure, which then lit a fire in the insulation. It totally compromised the environment there.

It totally opened up the confinement to the outside, and as someone very nicely said, "If a confinement is not confined, it's not [00:28:00] confinement." So the radiation there is liable to leak into the environment, and now they're finding out that it's going to be probably the better part of a billion dollars to fix it, if it can be fixed, and they're not certain that it can.

So all of this playing with war and with drones and the game of chicken and getting close and closer and closer to a nuclear disaster, one day somebody's gonna slip on the banana peel, and it's going to hit the wrong thing, and then we're all going to be in trouble and they'll go, "Oh, gee, what do we do now?"

When it could've been stopped so much earlier.

**Joseph DeMare:** Right. And now is the time to make that decision and, and pull that plug. You know, you could almost forgive the IAEA for believing in the beginning of this war that they might be able to work out some kinds of agreements or compromises. But as the years have progressed and the war has continued, and ceasefire after ceasefire has failed, and [00:29:00] agreement after agreement has been broken, they have to admit reality now.

And yeah, as you say, what happened at Chernobyl is a perfect example. The- just one drone did billions of dollars in damage, and similarly, you know, one or

two drones in the wrong place hitting one of these spent fuel pools, and you're talking hundreds of billions of dollars in damage because Ukraine would lose a huge swath of territory.

It'll be another dead zone, just like Chernobyl, around Chernobyl or Fukushima. And the insanity of continuing to pretend that this is not gonna happen even as, as you say, the game of chicken is they're getting closer and closer, it's insanity on top of insanity. It seems like the IAEA people have forgotten That nuclear plants and, and new spent fuel rods actually can melt down.

They're sort of believing their own propaganda that this kind of thing can't really happen in this day and age, but, you know, it's, it's [00:30:00] happening right before our eyes, basically. The process has already begun. As your listeners probably know, as I've sort of touched on, you cut off external power, you disable the diesel generators either by blowing them up or cutting off the fuel to them.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Or waiting until the fuel runs out because they only have enough for seven or eight days.

**Joseph DeMare:** Yes. So playing this game of chicken... Well, I, I compared it to Russian roulette, you know, because at the time, you know, they had spun the chamber five times 'cause they had five failed ceasefires, and now, you know, then they put the sixth one in place, and they're spinning the chamber again.

You know, it's one thing to play Russian roulette, but it's another thing to play it six times with a six-cylinder gun. It's just crazy, and I, I, I really think that we should be on the doorsteps of the IAEA demanding that they change their tune from, "Okay, let's play nice while we have a war, but keep the nukes running," to doing the only thing that an organization that was truly concerned about nuclear [00:31:00] safety would do, and that is to call for the shutdown and removal of fuel.

**Libbe HaLevy:** We'll return to the conclusion of this week's featured interview with podcast broadcaster and activist Joseph DeMare in just a moment. But first, I was recently at a social gathering for professional journalists and did my best to network some of the information I've gained here at Nuclear Hotseat with these reporters, columnists, and educators.

Many of them had some familiarity with local nuclear issues, and I was encouraged that several engaged in as much conversation as the noise level of our meeting place would allow. But in most instances, what they knew was

spotty, incomplete, and limited, lacking in any deeper understanding. In a few instances, I had to contradict a working journalist or two when they started trying to tell me how we need nuclear reactors for energy when we really [00:32:00] don't. These are the people we must trust to spot nuclear untruths, call out the industry, and convey legitimate concerns of the public to the public.

So the lack of understanding I encountered, along with the shredding of the media environment that takes money, time, and personnel away from these kinds of meaningful stories, goes a long way to explaining how the nuclear industry gets away with their focus-grouped, misdirected talking points with little opposition.

And that is why you need Nuclear Hotseat. Our different perspective is the one that roots out the truth about nuclear with verifiable stories and interviews with credentialed experts who share footnoted, peer-reviewed information that is diametrically opposed to the multimillion-dollar nuclear PR propaganda talking points.

Next week, Nuclear Hotseat will mark the completion of [00:33:00] fifteen years of weekly programs. That's more than seven hundred eighty hour-long episodes and counting. So in honor of that, how about helping Nuclear Hotseat celebrate our fifteenth year and move into the sixteenth with a tax-deductible donation of any size?

You can make it a one-time only or as a recurring monthly gift, which you can make for as little as five dollars. It all goes towards keeping this show alive. Nuclear Hotseat is a 501[c][3] nonprofit organization, which means that your donation is tax-deductible. Just go to [nuclearhotseat.com](http://nuclearhotseat.com) and click on the red Donate button.

Or if you have Zelle, you can send money directly to [info@nuclearhotseat.com](mailto:info@nuclearhotseat.com). Don't wait. Please donate now by going to [nuclearhotseat.com](http://nuclearhotseat.com), and know that whatever you can do to help, I'm deeply grateful that you're listening and [00:34:00] that you care. Now, here's the conclusion of this week's featured interview with podcaster, broadcaster, activist Joseph DeMare.

I think of the IAEA's posture through all of this with Rafael Grossi. I can't imagine what the antidepressants are that this man must be on. But he goes up and he will make a speech and it will sound okay. I refer to that as nuclear theater.

**Jack Cohen-Joppa:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Because what they're doing is they're out there and they are pretending.

What difference might it make, or what difference do you think that it would make if the IAEA suddenly came out, stamped their foot and said, "Guys, this is insane. You're playing with the future of the planet. Stop all of this. Leave the nukes alone. Turn them off. Get rid of this, but don't make them a target"?

But I mean, if they really got up there and threw an international hissy fit saying, "Do you [00:35:00] realize you're not even playing with fire, you're playing with worse than fire here. You're playing with something that could be devastatingly destructive to life on Earth."

**Joseph DeMare:** I think it would be very important for several reasons.

One is that they would be officially admitting that their industry has the potential to do that. You know, they, they always dance around that question. The latest statement he made about the whole situation with Zaporizhzhia was he said, uh, that it was very concerning. Okay. That's not exact- that's not exactly what you're talking about in terms of getting up there and, and really laying the truth out.

You know, very concerning is, uh, I guess is... That'd be about the same as worrisome, right? Very concerning. But c- actually if the IAEA were to call for shutting nuclear plants down because the conditions warrant it, because the wars make it unsafe to continue operating them, that would be a sea change. That would literally change everything, because once [00:36:00] they've crossed that line, okay, now what other situations should we shut nukes down in because there's a real chance that they can be destroyed or melted down?

That is part of what would deescalate nuclear power back down into the, the basement basically. If the IAEA started on that slope, it could take the whole industry with it, which is why I think they're not doing it. But by not doing it, they're literally, as you said, putting the whole globe in, at risk. An illustration of the Grossi's antidepressant overdose, just yesterday he gave a, a big speech saying that the IAEA is going to start promoting using nuclear power plants to power merchant sailing vessels to- What?

Yeah.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Excuse me.

**Joseph DeMare:** Yeah. I know. I know. It's, it's insane, and it's especially insane in light of what's happening in the Gulf and in the Baltic Sea, where we see [00:37:00] drones blowing up warships. You know, not just merchant vessels that don't have any shielding or anything. They're blowing up armored war battleships The US just fired a Hellfire missile at a merchant vessel.

So if these merchant vessels have nuclear power plants on them, now you're talking, again, you're talking not just disaster, you're talking disaster squared. Because if one of them, either through sabotage or attack or accident, were to, to melt down in some, in a sea, like an enclosed sea, like in the Mediterranean or in the Black Sea or the Baltic or some place, or the Panama Canal, okay?

If one of them were to be destroyed or melt down whilst trying to traverse the Panama Canal, it would cause unbelievable damage to the economy, to the ecology, to the people in that region. Yeah, it's insanity on top of insanity, because even as it's being proved daily by missile strikes and drone strikes that shipping [00:38:00] is not immune to the kinds of dangers that we see at Zaporizhzhia, that we see in any of these war zones, the IAEA is starting to promote it, and that's insanity on top of insanity.

**Libbe HaLevy:** I know many people who are aware of these issues and are upset about them, and other people who might not know anything, but when they learn something, if they happen to be around me when I'm off on a rip and a tear, will become concerned about it. What can normal people do to tell the people at the top, "Knock it off."

We need some leadership on this. We need somebody who's willing to bite the nuclear bullet and say, 'No more,' and push for it in a very public way"?

**Joseph DeMare:** There's two sort of prongs of attack on this that I see having some impact. One, as I said, is to go to the IAEA, get on their doorstep, contact their offices in New York, and basically tell them, "You're putting all of us at risk."

You're, you're the [00:39:00] organization that's supposed to protect us from nuclear disasters, and instead you're putting us at risk for unbelievable nuclear catastrophe." I think we need to pressure the IAEA in a way it has literally never been pressured. The other actually is Ukraine, because Ukraine has been very, very cognizant of public opinion around the world.

One of the reasons they've been able to hold Russia off, even though they're so badly outnumbered, and one of the reasons they've been able to succeed the,

against these unbelievable odds, is that they pay attention to what the rest of the world says and what the rest of the world thinks. And if enough of us were to say to Ukraine Please, you know, stop putting us all at risk.

Shut your nuclear plants. And we were to provide an alternative because that's also very important. We can't just say, "Shut your nukes and freeze in the dark because [00:40:00] we're scared you're gonna... it's gonna... they're gonna hurt us." But we have to help Ukraine. We have to give them the financing. We have to give them the methods to switch over to a non-nuclear, non-fossil distributed energy grid.

And if we do those two things, I'm confident that the Ukraine would shut their nuclear plants because they don't want to be seen as threatening the rest of the world by holding onto something that's dangerous for the rest of the world. Ukraine has been incredibly reasonable through this whole war, you know.

Th- they are the good guys, and they've kept their calm and kept cool through this whole thing. So if we present the case to them and simultaneously give them the financing, give them the means to replace that power with distributed generation, which I wanna point out Ukraine is already doing. They're doing as fast as they can.

They're putting up wind turbines, individual households. After last winter, the installation of [00:41:00] solar panels and home batteries has just taken off exponentially in Ukraine, so that even if Russia manages the same level of destruction of the grid this winter, it's not gonna be nearly as bad f- uh, for the Ukrainians as last winter was.

So Ukraine is already heading in that direction. If we can accelerate that pace and make the case to them that they're putting everyone else at risk, then I think they would do it. I think they would, again, be the good guys, make the sacrifice, and put the rest of the planet at a lower risk.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Of course, one of the issues with this is that Ukraine is not in control of Zaporizhzhia.

It's Russia that's in control of it, which is why anytime they have a drone strike or something goes awry there, they try and blame it on Ukraine, but Ukraine's got no reason to blow up or do damage to Zaporizhzhia because they're on the front lines. It's right there. They're the ones who are going to be [00:42:00] harmed by it.

Do you think that Russia would have the wherewithal to kind of go, "You know, maybe this isn't a good idea. Maybe we should back down from it." Think there's any possibility at all of that happening under Putin?

**Joseph DeMare:** I have to say no. I don't see Russia backing down in that manner, but I do see th- they're both pretending.

You- you know, they're both acting under the auspices of the IAEA. They're both pretending, you know, we're in negotiations, you know, we're being reasonable. Okay, yes, we'll agree to this, this ceasefire. Oh, sure, we'll play it by the rules. You know, Russia is the crooked player in the soccer game, the one that commits the fouls when the ref isn't looking, but they're still in that soccer game.

And so if the ref were to say, you know, "Okay, you have a penalty kick," you know, "Okay, you have to shut that nuke down," I don't think Russia would actually stand up against that. I think that if the IAEA, because [00:43:00] they're the international organization that's supposed to control all things nuclear under the auspices of the UN, I don't think that Russia would stand against that.

Because right now, Russia's position in the UN, and even its position on the Security Council, are getting more and more tenuous as this war continues, as they continue to break promise after promise. If they were to outright disobey a directive from a UN agency, I think it could be part of the, one of the things that would give fuel to the countries that are actually saying that Russia should actually be kicked off the Security Council and should be, you know, demoted at the UN.

I don't think Putin would want that. Yes, I think in that case, there would be an effect.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Hmm. You've been doing your show now for six years, and is that every week that it's on?

**Joseph DeMare:** Seven years, yeah. We go every week. It airs live Sunday mornings, 10:00 to 11:00 in Toledo, and, uh, then it's [00:44:00] rebroadcast on the other stations during the week.

**Libbe HaLevy:** We will have a link up so that if people want to find the program when it's live or when it's online or your archive, they will be able to do so, because I can tell that you have a lot of information that comes from a

different angle than perhaps I take on it, especially the nuclear You're also involved on another level in public discourse and position and power.

You're running for office. Tell us what that is about.

**Joseph DeMare:** I mentioned the Green Party way back at the beginning. I'm, I'm the co-chair of the Wood County, Ohio Green Party, and I am right now running for county commissioner in Wood County. The impetus for this is that we, our county has been hit by a data center, a huge data center, not as big as some, but really large, 300 megawatt data center for Meta, is the company that's running it.

And our county committee has been completely controlled by Republicans for many years. Many, many years. But [00:45:00] this was especially egregious because many of our legislators signed NDAs, non-disclosure agreements, and basically kept the details of this whole thing secret until it was too late for the people of Wood County to do anything about it.

And our county is a very rural county. People really like the peace and quiet. They like that it's not industrial and that we're primarily agricultural. And everybody across the political spectrum really hates this data center that's going in. And so I'm the anti-data center candidate in this. Now, in Ohio, the Republicans actually took away the Green Party line several years back, and so I'm on the ballot as an independent.

But that actually is to my advantage because in Wood County, like in many places around the country, people have been leaving both the Democrat and Republican parties, and now in Wood County, Independents are the largest voting bloc. So I think I have a good shot at it, and if I do get in there, then I will do [00:46:00] everything I can to make sure there's no more data centers going up in our nice, beautiful rural county.

**Libbe HaLevy:** And I'm certain you'll be pushing for no nukes as well.

**Joseph DeMare:** Oh, absolutely. Of course. Yes.

**Libbe HaLevy:** So if you're elected, what impact might that have on your radio program?

**Joseph DeMare:** Well, that's a good question. Right now, my radio program, I'm having to take extraordinary measures to keep from, uh, my... The station

that originally airs it is a Cumulus Broadcasting station, and their lawyers are very concerned about the equal time law.

So my name can't be mentioned on my own show. I can't be the narrator. My voice can't be on there, so I've had to get someone else. I actually got my son to host the show while I'm running. Once I'm elected though, then I'm no longer campaigning, and then once I'm not campaigning, I can go back to running the show.

I'm really looking forward to that. County commissioner is a full-time job, but I [00:47:00] already sort of work like 60 hours a week anyway, so I think I'll be able to go back to hosting the show and being a county commissioner.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Well, if you need a female voice to do a narration for a plug for you, I would be happy to donate my voice to your campaign.

**Joseph DeMare:** Oh, thank you, Libbe. Thanks.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Is there anything we haven't covered that you think is important to get to now?

**Joseph DeMare:** I think that this is a hard time, as you know, to be an anti-nuclear activist, just because the propaganda, the pro-nuclear propaganda is so overwhelming and coming from so many different directions.

But I take great heart... There was a survey just a few, uh, weeks ago that still 53% of Americans disapprove of nuclear power, and something like 70% of them don't want nuclear power in their backyard. So there's like a 20% that'll say, "Oh, it's okay, as long as it's somewhere else." But the important thing to remember is that we still are the majority, and even though there's all these [00:48:00] paid influencers that are spouting, you know, the, the wonders of nuclear power, and politicians, Democrats and Republicans, are suddenly both embracing nuclear power together, you know, ménage à trois with plutonium rods or whatever.

Even though all that is happening, we have to remember the truth of nuclear power is the same as it has always been. It's a deadly industry that we cannot allow to flourish, and we have to call for... We have to seize these opportunities like the war around the Ukrainian nuclear power plants. We have to seize every opportunity to remind everyone and to point out that we cannot continue to pursue this insane technology.

**Libbe HaLevy:** With voices like yours and shows like yours and mine, hopefully we will be part of turning this around before the lemmings go over the cliff.

**Joseph DeMare:** Here, here. Absolutely, Libbe.

**Libbe HaLevy:** So for now, you've been a great guest. I've truly [00:49:00] enjoyed this conversation. Uh, I want to thank you for being my guest this week, Joseph DeMare on Nuclear Hotseat.

**Joseph DeMare:** Thank you very much, Libbe.

**Libbe HaLevy:** That was podcaster, broadcaster, activist Joseph DeMare. We will have links up to his podcast, For a Green Future, also his YouTube channel, and his website. All of that will be on our website, nuclearhotseat.com, under this episode, number 780.

**Activist Shout-Out:** Activists shout out, shout out, shout out.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Let's start out with one of the favorite monthly features, another story from our shared history of resisting nukes. Here's Jack Cohen-Joppa, co-coordinator of The Nuclear Resister, with another true story that you probably didn't know, but I think you will enjoy

**Jack Cohen-Joppa:** In the late 1980s, the federal government was wrangling with the states over where to dump the highly [00:50:00] radioactive spent fuel from commercial nuclear reactors.

The state of Idaho was being pressed to accept such waste at INL, the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory. Now, Idaho has never had commercial reactors, but INL is a federal lab, and there was already a lot of nuclear trash there. At least 50 one-of-a-kind test reactors have operated there, with all but three now out of service.

A particular sore point for Idaho back then was the shipment of used fuel from the defunct Fort St. Vrain commercial nuclear power plant in Colorado. Fort St. Vrain was unique. It was the first and last full-scale high-temperature gas-cooled reactor in the USA. And after only a decade of trouble-plagued underpower operation, it was shut down in 1989, and a third of its fuel sent to INL for research.

Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus banned more shipments of the Fort St. Vrain waste, citing [00:51:00] a provision of the 1987 Nuclear Waste Policy Act that federal facilities such as INL may only be used to store spent commercial nuclear fuel as a last resort. But in September 1990, the state lost its challenge in federal court.

When the first new shipment of this waste arrived in Idaho in the middle of the night on October 5th, a few protesters were on hand as the trucks pulled off the interstate for inspection at the Idaho Port of Entry. Feeling powerless in the face of the court decision, state officials slowly scrutinized the vehicle for any safety or technical reasons to stop the shipment.

Feeling the power, environmentalist Bill Chisholm just sat down in front of the truck. The truck couldn't leave until he was arrested. He was charged with failure to obey a lawful order and posted bond a few hours later. A second shipment slipped through without protest, but the third, in the pre-dawn hours of October 16th, met more [00:52:00] resistance.

Forty people turned out to demonstrate at the port of entry. Bill Chisholm, along with Will Small and Ron Fokinga, sat in front of the truck again. The three were arrested and charged with joining together for an illegal activity. The truck was finally stopped for good a few miles down the road, where the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Reservation straddles the highway.

Tribal police refused to let the waste pass through until the tribe gets a seat at the table to regulate such hazardous waste shipments. The truck was forced to retreat back to Colorado. Chisholm's co-defendants pled no contest in return for forfeiting their nominal ten-dollar bail. Chisholm stood trial on both counts.

The jury found him guilty of failure to obey for the first action, but his peers agreed that he was not guilty on the second charge because the shipment itself was illegal and not the action his small band had undertaken. Chisholm appealed the five-day [00:53:00] jail sentence, but that's not the end of this story.

Two years later, in the fall of 1992, the Navy was shipping spent reactor fuel to INL from its training reactors at the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory near Albany, New York. Activists tracked the shipment by rail all the way across the country, and when it rolled into Idaho on October 23rd, Bill Chisholm was waiting.

From a highway overpass, he poured a bucket of red paint, striking the last of the three distinctive transportation casks. As he told it, the rapist had returned uninvited and unwelcome, and that red paint was akin to bloody scratches down the assailant's back. Chisholm was eventually fined and ordered to pay restitution to the Navy for cleaning up their special train.

More than three years later, a Bannock County magistrate reluctantly found Chisholm in contempt of court for refusing to pay the full restitution. [00:54:00] He had paid the fraction he agreed was a reasonable sum for the cleanup, but put his own conditions on paying the balance due of \$1,250. He had his bank cut a check for the disputed amount, but the check also required the signature of both Chisholm and then Idaho Governor Phil Batt.

And Chisholm wouldn't sign until a five-point plan for resolving U.S. nuclear waste policy was adopted. "You're probably the finest man I've ever sent to jail," the judge said, "But I have no choice." Yet Chisholm's principled persistence prevailed, and 12 days later, the judge let him go without paying, and the Navy somewhere found the money to clean up their train.

This has been Jack Cohen-Joppa for Nuclear Hotseat, with another story of nonviolent direct action for a nuclear-free future from the archives of The Nuclear Resister.

**Libbe HaLevy:** Jack Cohen-Joppa of The Nuclear Resister. You can sign up for the [00:55:00] organization's excellent newsletter by going to [nucresister.org](http://nucresister.org).

**Activist Shout-Out:** Activists shout out, shout out, shout out.

**Libbe HaLevy:** The Union of Concerned Scientists invites you to one of their upcoming training webinars on how to draft and submit a public comment to hold the Department of Energy and the National Nuclear Security Agency accountable to fully consider the public and environmental risks that come with plutonium pit production.

UCS has already held two of these trainings, and the next two are going to be on Wednesday, June 17th and Wednesday, June 24th at different times to hopefully fit in with your schedule. We'll have links up to where you can learn more at [nuclearhotseat.com](http://nuclearhotseat.com) under this episode number 780. Congratulations to all the winners of the 15th International [00:56:00] Uranium Film Festival, which was held in Rio de Janeiro and just concluded.

The best investigative documentary is Bombshell, directed by Ben Loderman, an American film which explores how manipulative media narratives about nuclear were built after World War II. It includes a great deal of factual information on the man who is the focus of my play, Atomic Bill and the Payment Due, the New York Times reporter who was embedded in the Manhattan Project and who set up much of the narrative that ignored radiation exposure and what it did as a result of nukes and cleared the way for our present acceptance, if not adoration, of the technology.

Best Documentary Feature went to Canada's The Atomic Screen, Emerging Filmmaker Award to Maja Hohenberg of Germany for her poetic documentary Albram, [00:57:00] and the Native Spirit Award went to The Moth from Canada, directed by Michelle DeRosier and Zoe Gordon. We'll have a link up to where you can check on all of the films that were winners and how they can be accessed for viewing.

John LaForge of NukeWatch, a regular contributor to Nuclear Hotseat and a source we have relied on for many years, has a new article published in CounterPunch.org, Radiation Exposure Rule Changes to Increase Cancer Rates. That will also be linked. This has been Nuclear Hotseat for Tuesday, June 9, 2026.

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And you can help us out because if you have a story lead, a hot tip, or a suggestion of someone to interview, send an email to info at nuclearhotseat.com. And remember, if you can go to Nuclear Hotseat and donate, please do so. Any amount will help us out, and we really appreciate your support. This episode of Nuclear Hotseat is copyright 2026 Libbe Halevi and Nuclear Hotseat.

All rights reserved, but fair use allowed, as long as you cite the program, website, names of any guests whose comments you use, and me. For now, this is Libbe Halevi of Nuclear Hotseat, reminding you that there is no adequate medical or humanitarian response to a nuclear war. The only way to respond is to abolish these [00:59:00] weapons, and we must abolish them before they abolish us.

Dr. Robert Dodge, head of Physicians for Social Responsibility in Los Angeles. There you have it, your weekly nuclear wake-up call. So whatever you do, don't go back to sleep, because we are all in the Nuclear Hotseat.

**Nuclear Hotseat Theme:** Nuclear Hotseat. What are those people thinking? Nuclear Hotseat. What have those boys been drinking?

Nuclear Hotseat. The corium is sinking. Our time to act is shrinking, but our activists are linking.

Nuclear Hotseat. It's da bomb