

Hon Mark Burton
Minister of Defence



5 July 2002

Media Statement

RNZAF to monitor movement of Nuclear Waste Ship

The Royal New Zealand Air Force will monitor the passage through the Tasman Sea of a vessel carrying nuclear fuel, Defence Minister Mark Burton announced today.

The vessel, Pacific Pintail, and its escort Pacific Teal, have left Japan to transport rejected plutonium mixed oxide (MOX) fuel back to the United Kingdom.

"The New Zealand Government has been advised that the two vessels intend to travel through international waters between Australia and New Zealand," Mark Burton said.

"We expect that, as with previous shipments, the vessels will stay well clear of New Zealand's 200-mile exclusive economic zone. However, the Joint Force Operational Headquarters at Trentham will closely monitor the progress of the vessels.

"At the appropriate time, a RNZAF Orion will be sent to locate the vessels and track their progress. A similar approach was taken in March last year when an Orion located and photographed the Pacific Pintail and Pacific Teal, which were transporting MOX fuel from Europe to Japan.

"New Zealand remains strongly opposed to shipments of nuclear material through the Pacific," Mark Burton said.

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