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Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat

Rijksluchtvaartdienst

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Datum
7 januari 2000
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Aantal pagina's (inclusief voorblad)
20

Onderwerp
depleted uranium installed in B747, accident investigation

Dear John,

Referring to our telephone conversation I send you the following information, that will help you answer most questions, i.e:

Boeing Letter B-B600-16143-ASI, may 30 1997
Boeing Service Letter 747-SL-51-11-F
Advisory Circular AC 20-123 12/20/84
some RLD correspondence

General information about depleted uranium balance weights:

- balance weights (max 24 positions in only horizontal and vertical stabilizer) are plated with cadmium for corrosion protection;
- radiation is very low and difficult to measure beyond 4 inches distance from the weights;
- melting point balance weights is 1232 Celsius, boiling point 3818 Celsius, uranium corrodes at roomtemperature;
- uranium oxide is toxic, so contact with balance weights should be avoided, and protective material be used, see instructions;
- FAA has never found any depleted uranium balance weights melted during accident investigations

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Bereikbaar met de trein (Schiphollijn)



I would advise you to take following actions:

- find out s/n aircraft (< s/n 550 means that depleted uranium balance weights are installed in production aircraft);
- find out if Korean has replaced balance weights by Tungsten/Wolfram balance weights. They should have SB's etc on file, and records that tell you how many uranium weights have been replaced with Tungsten/Wolfram;
- protect and inform all personnel to avoid contact (skin contact) with depleted uranium, see Advisory Circular;
- try to find all balance weights and keep record of total weight found, since in future there will be questions (by press, politicians, etc) about how many kg's are found, what happened with it, and so on; pay attention to transport of material
- since my experience with the El Al accident Investigation I would advise you to write instructions for protection of personnel;
- try to communicate as open as possible with public and all organisations involved (fire department) about depleted uranium, to avoid escalation of problems;
- communicate with fire departments

Important

- depleted uranium has been a hot issue in dutch press since the El Al accident happened in 1992, and one of the main reasons for questions in parlement for a period over 7 years after 1992. It is important that you will not underestimate the public concern associated with the term uranium

If you need any information:

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Best regards,

Henk A. Pruis