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# Re-enrichment of West European depleted uranium tails in Russia

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Since 1996, depleted uranium tails from West European enrichers Urenco and Eurodif are being sent to Russia for re-enrichment. In Russia, the imported tails are, instead of natural uranium, fed into surplus enrichment cascades. The product obtained from re-enrichment is mostly natural-equivalent uranium plus some reactor-grade low-enriched uranium. These products are sent back to Urenco and Eurodif, while the secondary tails generated remain in Russia, where they are re-enriched further to obtain more natural-equivalent uranium and/or slightly enriched uranium. The latter is then used as blendstock for the downblending of surplus highly-enriched weapons-grade uranium into reactor-grade low-enriched uranium. The ultimate tails left, still comprising at least two thirds of the amount imported, remain in Russia with unknown fate. This paper collects the scarce information available on this strange business, sets up a mass balance for it, looks into its odd economics and the policies behind it. Three driving forces are identified: Urenco's and Eurodif's aim to avoid tails disposal cost, Russia's shortage of uranium deposits, and the trade restrictions for Russian enrichment services.