



Thousands of Tonnes of Suspected Toxic Waste Returns to Albania from Trip to Thailand

Environmentalists reveal contamination at the Thai import facility and request split sample of wayward cargo

Durres, Albania. October 28, 2024. An estimated 2,100 total metric tonnes of suspected hazardous waste packed in 102 containers aboard the Turkish-flagged container ship MOLIVA finally returned to Durres, Albania today after travelling thousands of miles across the globe to Southeast Asia and back. The massive shipment of what is suspected of being waste pollution control filter dust from the steel industry, first left Durres on July 4th, 2024, on two Maersk chartered ships. Shortly thereafter, the Basel Action Network (BAN), following a tip from a whistleblower, alerted authorities of Albania, multiple transit countries, and the intended destination country of Thailand that the ship was likely involved in the criminal trafficking in hazardous waste. As a consequence, the Thai government stated they never agreed to accept the waste and asked the Singaporean government to stop the shipment.

Opening of Containers in Public View and Sample Splitting

BAN's Director Jim Puckett, was in Durres port when the ship arrived and is calling on Albanian authorities to have a public opening and sampling of the containers to ensure a transparent sampling and analysis process. He is seeking a split sample so that his independent NGO can conduct a parallel analysis to determine confirm the hazardousness of the waste and will be meeting officials of the Ministry of Environment this week.



Turkish ship MOLIVA, arrives in Durres with 102 containers of dust suspected to be hazardous waste. Source: Marinetraffic, copyright Gianluca Balloni.

"We are 95% certain that this waste is precisely what the whistleblower said it was all along," said BAN's Jim Puckett. "And, we are 100% certain it should never have been exported to Thailand. Now that its back, its vital that we conduct a full and transparent analysis of the constituents of this waste, learn who generated it, and who is responsible for shipping it without proper packaging and notification, in likely violation of international law," he said.

Investigation in Thailand

Last month BAN and EARTH, a leading Thai environmental organization that together with BAN raised the alarm about the shipment, visited the Copper Metal Company Ltd. (CMC), the importer listed in the Bill of Lading as the intended destination of the waste in Lopburi Province, Thailand. While there, they found intermodal containers of imported wastes arriving at the facility. They also took soil and dust samples for analysis. [The subsequent test results](#) revealed high levels of toxic metals such as arsenic, lead, and nickel that greatly exceeded background levels as well as soil quality standards for Thailand. For example, the arsenic levels in the soil collected in one sample outside of the CMC facility was 215 times higher than a 2019 study of similar soil in a nearby area. The level was also 77 times the values permitted under the Soil Quality Standard of Thailand. The findings demonstrated that the importing facility was polluting the nearby farmland and should never have been considered an environmentally sound facility qualified for importing wastes under the terms of the Basel Convention.



Copper Metal Co. Ltd., the intended destination of Albanian waste.
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"Our government has told us they had no notification of the imported hazardous waste coming to the facility as required by the Basel Convention," said Penchom Saetang, director of EARTH. "Thus, they had no opportunity to approve the import and first ensure the process and facility were environmentally sound. We found that they clearly are not."

Next Steps

Now that the waste has returned, BAN and EARTH insist that the real work to unravel the scandal has just begun. They are calling for the following:

1. Conduct a transparent and open sampling and analysis of the wastes in line with the [second letter](#) BAN wrote to the government. This includes providing BAN and other independent bodies with a split sample of the waste.
2. Compare the "chemical fingerprint" of the waste with known sources for the waste in Albania to definitively prove who generated the waste.
3. In Albania, release the results of the intergovernmental investigation as soon as possible. The investigation should include how many shipments of steel dust has likely left the country in the last 10 years. In Thailand, a full review of all imports to CMC and similar companies must be conducted to determine whether illegal imports have been the norm, with a view to prosecuting these.
4. Take proactive steps to ensure the ports of Albania and the industry understand the Basel Convention, that they become especially well trained on the PIC procedure and their roles, and that they are able to identify commonly traded wastes such as plastics, steel dusts, and electronic waste. The EU's IMPEL organization and/or BAN can provide such training.
5. Ensure the environmentally sound management of the waste now and in future. If safe, legitimate recycling that properly manages the residues cannot be found, then such wastes should be deposited in an engineered landfill designed for such hazardous waste perhaps after being treated to prevent leaching.

END

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Attachments and links:

- [1. Results of Basel Action Network \(BAN\) and Ecological Alert and Recovery - Thailand Sampling and Analysis at Copper Metals Inc.](#)
- [2. Copy of most recent letter \(second\) to Albanian authorities.](#)

About Basel Action Network

Founded in 1997, the Basel Action Network (BAN) is a 501(c)3 charitable organization of the United States, based in Seattle, WA. BAN is the world's only organization focused on confronting the global environmental justice and economic inefficiency of toxic trade and its devastating impacts. Today, BAN serves as the information clearinghouse about waste trade for journalists, academics, and the general public. Through its investigations, BAN uncovered the tragedy of hazardous electronic waste dumping in developing countries. For more information, see www.ban.org.

About EARTH

Ecological Alert and Recovery - Thailand (EARTH) is an independent non-governmental organization striving for social and environmental sustainability and justice in Thai society. EARTH serves as a watchdog monitoring the Thai government's industrialization policy, industrial pollution and unsustainable consumption patterns. We promote climate justice, good governance and accountability of governmental and international agencies. EARTH focuses on the impacts of hazardous substances on ecosystems, local communities and workers' health.