UNITED STATES OF AMERICA NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

BEFORE THE COMMISSION

In the Matter of)	
)	Docket No. 63-001-HLW
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY)	
)	
(High-Level Waste Repository:)	
Pre-Application Matters))	
)	

JOINT MOTION BY EUREKA COUNTY, CHURCHILL COUNTY, CLARK COUNTY, ESMERALDA COUNTY, INYO COUNTY, LANDER COUNTY, LINCOLN COUNTY, MINERAL COUNTY, NYE COUNTY, AND WHITE PINE COUNTY TO IMPLEMENT AND INSTITUTIONALIZE WEBCASTING OF YUCCA MOUNTAIN-RELATED PROCEEDINGS

I. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to 10 C.F.R. § 2.323, Eureka County, Churchill County, Clark County, Esmeralda County, Lander County, Lincoln County, Mineral County, Nye County, and White Pine County, Nevada; and Inyo County, California ("Petitioners") request the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission ("NRC" or "Commission") to immediately implement and institutionalize the webcasting of all Yucca Mountain-related proceedings henceforth, including oral arguments, adjudicatory conferences, and hearings.

Petitioners previously requested the same relief before the Commission in a motion dated June 18, 2008. The Secretary of the Commission returned the motion as "premature," stating that it could be re-submitted when a proceeding is commenced on the U.S. Department of Energy's ("DOE's") application for a license for the Yucca Mountain repository. Letter from Annette L. Vietti-Cook to Diane Curran (July 9, 2008). Now that the Yucca Mountain licensing

proceeding has formally commenced with the establishment of three Atomic Safety and Licensing Board ("ASLB") panels, Petitioners are renewing their request.

In her letter to Petitioners, the Secretary stated that a webstreaming pilot program by the ASLB Panel, which was expected to commence in the summer of 2008, would provide webstreaming "for a limited number of sessions" during a one-year pilot period. She also stated that if "an event appropriate for the Panel's pilot program arise[s] in the two Yucca Mountain pre-application dockets, the Panel may elect to Web Stream that event in conjunction with that program." Given the great public importance of the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding and the particular hardship to Petitioners of attending NRC proceedings in distant locations like Maryland and Las Vegas, Petitioners respectfully submit that it is insufficient to offer the mere possibility that one or two Yucca Mountain-related proceedings may be included in a pilot project. Petitioners therefore request the Commission to order that all Yucca Mountain-related proceedings conducted by the ASLB or the Commission will be webcast.

Counsel or representatives for the State of Nevada, the State of California, the Nuclear Energy Institute, Timbisha Shoshone Tribe, and Caliente Hot Springs Resort have authorized Petitioners to state that they do not oppose this motion. Counsel for the NRC Staff have authorized Petitioners to state the following: "To the extent that the AULGs' request is limited to public Yucca Mountain related proceedings and there are sufficient agency resources to support webcasting, the Staff does not object to the request to webstream future proceedings." Counsel for the DOE stated that DOE wishes to review the motion before taking a position. As stated in the attached Certificate of Counsel Pursuant to 10 C.F.R. § 2.323(b), undersigned counsel for Petitioner Eureka County attempted to contact counsel for the Native Community Action Council, but was unsuccessful.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Description of Petitioners and Their Interest in Webcasting of Yucca Mountain-related Proceedings.

Petitioners constitute county governments in the States of Nevada and California who have been designated as affected units of local government ("AULGS") by the Secretary of Energy. All of the Petitioners have either submitted contentions challenging the adequacy of the DOE's application for a license for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository, or they have notified the NRC that they intend to participate as Interested Governmental Participants in the proceeding. Petitioners have a strong interest in monitoring and participating in the Yucca Mountain proceeding, in order to assure that the health of their citizens and the environment is protected.

To the extent possible, Petitioners wish to attend all live conferences, oral arguments, and hearings that are held in this case. However, many of the Petitioners are located thousands of miles from the NRC's headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, where the ASLB may hold some of its oral arguments and conferences. In addition, the majority of the Petitioner counties are relatively small and rural jurisdictions that have limited financial resources to send representatives to live proceedings in Maryland. Finally, members of the public who reside in Petitioners' jurisdictions have an interest in monitoring Yucca Mountain-related proceedings because the outcome of those proceedings may affect their health, economic, and environmental interests.

Although the NRC has established a hearing facility in Las Vegas, where it can hold live proceedings or to which it can broadcast proceedings from NRC headquarters, many of the Petitioners are located hundreds of miles from Las Vegas. For instance, the Eureka County seat of Eureka is located 320 miles and a five and one half hour drive from the Las Vegas facility.

Similarly, Battle Mountain, the county seat of Lander County is located 415 miles from the Las Vegas hearing facility, requiring a seven hour drive to Las Vegas. Inyo County, California's county seat, Independence, is 247 miles from Las Vegas; the oversight office in Bishop is 266 miles away from Las Vegas. Even for the situs county, Nye County's seat of government in Tonopah is 209 miles from Las Vegas. The county's repository oversight office is in Pahrump, 62 miles from Las Vegas. Thus, the large geographical distances involved in traveling from Nevada and eastern California to Las Vegas or Rockville, Maryland pose significant impediments to the ability of most AULGs to attend live NRC proceedings or to watch broadcasts at the NRC's Las Vegas facility.

B. NRC Policy and Practice Regarding Webcasting of Proceedings.

The NRC has a longstanding commitment to openness in the conduct of its proceedings.

As stated in the NRC's most recent five-year plan:

The NRC views nuclear regulation as the public's business and, as such, it should be transacted openly and candidly in order to maintain and enhance the public's confidence. Ensuring appropriate openness explicitly recognizes that the public must be informed about, and have a reasonable opportunity to participate meaningfully in, the NRC's regulatory processes.

NRC's FY 2004-2009 Strategic Plan, Section III at 16. http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1614/v4/sr1614v4.pdf.

In 1999, under instruction from the NRC Commissioners, the NRC Staff undertook a pilot project to (1) identify any limitations or technical problems associated with webstreaming technology, (2) gauge public interest in viewing live and/or archived Commission meetings via the Internet, and (3) assess the startup and ongoing costs for fully implementing webstreaming technology at the NRC. *See* SECY-01-0077, Memorandum from William D. Travers, Executive Director for Operations, to the Commissioners re: Broadcasting of Commission Meetings Over

the Internet at 1 (April 27, 2001) ("SECY-01-0077") (Agency-wide Document Access Management System ("ADAMS") Accession No. ML011580448). The NRC Staff evaluated both live and recorded broadcasts of some Commission meetings, and found that webcasts:

effectively doubled the viewing audience of Commission meetings, potentially increasing public understanding of the Commission's activities and reducing the burden on stakeholders of having to travel to the meetings. Viewers, representing all stakeholder groups, were interested in the capability to observe actual meeting discussions and provided positive feedback.

Id. at 7. The Staff estimated that live webcasting of approximately 40 meetings would cost approximately \$122,000 and require 70% of a full time equivalent ("FTE") staff member to administer. *Id.* at 8. The Staff also provided an initial cost estimate of \$33,000 and 0.7 FTE to broadcast archived meetings. *Id.*

The Staff stated that it would:

continue to monitor media streaming technology and if technological advances result in significant reductions in cost or improvements in video quality, these developments could be brought before the Commission for reconsideration at a later time.

Id. The Commission approved the broadcast of live and archived Commission meetings for viewing on the internet. SRM-0177, Memorandum from Annette Vietti-Cook, NRC Secretary to William D. Travers, NRC Executive Director for Operations, re: Staff Requirements – SECY-01-0077 – Broadcasting of Commission Meetings over the Internet (June 7, 2001)
(http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/commission/srm/2001/2001-0077srm.html).

The Commission also ordered the NRC Staff to:

continue to monitor and assess system usage and report back to the Commission on an annual basis concerning the costs and the use of the system so that the Commission can determine whether its continuation is warranted.

Id.

In 2005, the Staff provided an update to the report it had given in SECY-01-0077.

COMSECY-05-0057, Memorandum from Luis A. Reyes to NRC Commissioners, re: Fourth

Annual Report – Broadcasting of Commission Meetings Over the Internet (November 23, 2005)

("COMSECY-05-0057") (http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/commission/comm-secy/2005/2005-0057comscy.pdf). The Staff reported that between FY 2002 and FY 2005, although the number of webcast meetings increased only by seven (from 18 to 25), the number of non-NRC viewers of live NRC webcasts had grown more than four-fold, from 356 to 1,596.

Id., Enclosure 1. The Staff concluded that:

Based on the FY 2005 data, we anticipate future continued growth in the number of viewers, and no significant cost impacts with the provision of this service. Therefore, with the Commission's approval, the staff plans to eliminate future submission of this report and obtain future Commission direction on the continuation of the Webcasting program as part of the annual budget process.

COMSECY-05-0057 at 2.

In June of 2007, at an NRC licensing workshop for AULGs in Las Vegas, a number of AULGs expressed strong interest in the webstreaming of oral arguments and other pre-hearing proceedings by the PAPO Board. They were informed that the ASLB Panel had made a proposal to the Commissioners to conduct a pilot program for webstreaming of some ASLB proceedings. On August 16, 2007, Ron Damele, Public Works Director for Eureka County, wrote to the NRC Commissioners on behalf of ten AULG governments, stating the AULGs' strong support for the concept of webstreaming of case management conferences and pre-hearing conferences. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072350246). Mr. Damele did not receive a response to his letter.

In a November 7, 2007, memorandum to his fellow Commissioners, NRC Commissioner Gregory B. Jaczko requested the NRC Staff to "consider webstreaming every public meeting where the staff anticipates significant public interest unless feasibility constraints prevent them

from doing so in a particular instance." COMGBJ-07-0005, Memorandum from Gregory B. Jaczko to Chairman Klein and Commissioner Lyons re: Increasing the Transparency of NRC's Public Meetings (November 7, 2006) ("COMGBJ-07-0005") (http://www.nrc.gov/reading-mm/doc-collections/commission/comm-secy/2007/2007-0005comgbj.pdf). Commissioner Jaczko requested the Staff to provide a cost estimate to implement the proposal within 45 days. *Id.* Chairman Klein concurred in Commissioner Jaczko's request for a cost estimate, stating his belief that "webstreaming can be a means to increase transparency of NRC's public meetings, provided it can be demonstrated to be cost effective." He also proposed that the staff be given additional time to prepare the cost estimate, or until March 28, 2008. *Id.*, Chairman Klein's comments on COMGBJ-07-0005 (http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/commission/comm-secy/2007/2007-0005comgbjvtr.pdf).

In the spring of 2008, at the Commission's request, the NRC Staff prepared a cost estimate for webstreaming of public meetings. SECY-08-0056, Memorandum from Luis A. Reyes, Executive Director for Operations, to the Commissioners, re: Estimated Costs for Broadcasting Public Meetings Over the internet (Web Streaming) (April 22, 2008). The Staff presented three options and cost estimates for webstreaming of public meetings. Under Option 1, the Staff estimated that each year the NRC conducts approximately 190 meetings of significant public interest, and estimated that the cost of webstreaming those meetings would be \$979,300. Under Option 2, the NRC estimated that each year the NRC holds approximately 100 meetings in the Commission hearing room or other locations at NRC headquarters, and estimated the cost of webstreaming those meetings at \$397,700. Under option 3, the NRC Staff gave a cost estimate of \$828,300 to webstream 150 public meetings held at various locations in NRC headquarters and regional offices. In a Staff Requirements Memorandum, the Commission

approved Option 2, "which will provide the necessary equipment and staff resources to web stream meetings in two additional conference rooms in the White Flint Complex and the auditorium in White Flint North." SRM-SECY-08-0056, Memorandum from Annette L. Vietti-Cook, Secretary, to R.W. Borchardt, Executive Director for Operations (June 16, 2008). The Commission also instructed the Staff that in the spring of 2009, it should "report back to the Commission with a more detailed look at the possible expansion of web streaming agency meetings structured in phases." *Id.* at 1.

C. Limited Use of Webcasting by PAPO Board and Advisory PAPO Board to Date.

To date, the NRC has held one live Yucca Mountain-related proceeding that was webcast to the public. On December 5, 2007, in the Las Vegas hearing facility, the PAPO Board held an oral argument on the State of Nevada's motion to strike the DOE's certification of its Licensing Support Network ("LSN") document collection. By arrangement with Cox Communications, Las Vegas, the oral argument was webcast to the general public via www.cox96.net. In addition, COX Communications broadcast the proceeding on Cox Channel 96, a local access channel for customers with basic cable service; and provided a no-cost live satellite feed to local, state and national news media. Reuters, Cox Las Vegas Provides Live Broadcast, Sat Feed and Webcast of Nevada's Challenge to DOC Document Certification (November 29, 2007)¹; NRC Press Release, Hearing Set on Nevada's Challenge to DOE Documents Certification in Yucca Mountain Proceeding (November 20, 2007) (NRC Accession No. ML073240320).

Petitioners found that the webcasting of the December 5, 2007, oral argument was very effective and useful and allowed involved AULG staff, legal counsel and other interested groups

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¹ See http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS96405+29-Nov-2007+BW20071129 (last accessed on March 24, 2008).

to monitor the hearings without incurring substantial travel costs to attend live hearings. Local government officials and members of the public were able to monitor the proceeding successfully. In addition, Petitioners found that being able to hear the voices of the participants and observe their demeanor added greatly to their understanding of the relative importance of various issues and the effectiveness of the arguments.

On February 28, 2008, in the hearing room at the NRC's Rockville, Maryland, headquarters, the PAPO Board held an oral argument on the DOE's motion to strike the State of Nevada's certification of its LSN document collection. Given that the State of Nevada is a key participant in the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding, the oral argument was of significant interest and importance to Petitioners and their constituents. Unlike the December 5 oral argument, however, the February 28 oral argument was not webcast to the public. Instead, any participating AULG officials, as well as members of the public who wished to observe the proceeding, were required to come to the NRC's headquarters in Rockville. *See* Order (Scheduling and Terms for Oral Argument) at 2 (February 19, 2008).

On May 14, 2008, the Advisory PAPO Board held an all-day conference in the Las

Vegas hearing facility. The conference covered a host of topics important to the AULGs and the
general public, such as the format of contentions and framing of issues therein, the timing of the
submission of DOE's license application for Yucca Mountain, a possible opportunity for a walkthrough of the application, the timing of the NRC's hearing notice and the deadline for
submitting hearing requests, and whether the DOE will contest the standing of AULGs to
participate in the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding. While the Advisory PAPO Board
allowed members of the public to observe the proceeding from the Rockville, Maryland hearing
room and allowed two Washington, D.C.-based counsel to participate from Rockville by video

connection, webcasting of the proceeding was not offered to any party other than counsel and representatives who have filed a notice of appearance and therefore have access to the NRC's Digital Document Management System ("DDMS"). Memorandum (Logistics for Conference) (April 16, 2008); Notice and Memorandum (Opportunity to Participate by Video Conference) (April 29, 2008).²

D. Petitioners' Motions to PAPO Board, the Advisory PAPO Board, and the Commission for Webcasting of Yucca Mountain-Related Proceedings.

On March 26, 2008, and April 18, 2008, Petitioners submitted motions to the PAPO Board and the Advisory PAPO Board, seeking webcasting of all future proceedings. Both boards denied the motion, on virtually identical grounds. Noting that the Commission had previously authorized the ASLB Panel to implement a webstreaming pilot project to conduct "limited webstreaming of adjudicatory proceedings over the next several years," the boards stated that procurement had been delayed." PAPO Order at 2, Advisory PAPO Notice at 2. The boards also predicted that "the earliest date a contract could be awarded is sometime this summer, and that the earliest date a contract could be implemented is later still." *Id.* In addition, the boards stated that "when a contract is awarded and implemented, it will be initially limited to six pilot webcast sessions to be selected by the ASLB Panel and not dedicated solely to Yucca Mountain-specific proceedings." *Id.* Only after the six pilot broadcasts would the ASLB Panel make a recommendation to the Commission "on whether webstreaming of ASLB proceedings should continue."

Finally, the boards stated that even if webstreaming ultimately is approved, both the ASLB Panel and the NRC as a whole are "under fiscal constraints" for FY 2008, and likely to be

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² Both the PAPO Board and the Advisory PAPO Board placed copies of the written transcript of the February 28 and May 14 conferences on the NRC's website. Written transcripts, however,

financially constrained in FY 2009. *Id.* Given that the Commission had already approved a limited pilot program, the boards did not see any utility in referring the matter to the Commission. Id.³

On June 18, 2008, Petitioners submitted a motion to the Commission for webstreaming of future Yucca Mountain-related proceedings, including this licensing proceeding. By letter dated July 9, 2009, the motion was rejected as premature. See discussion above at pages 1-2.

III. **ARGUMENT**

One of the "cornerstones" of the NRC's approach to regulation of nuclear facilities is its commitment to ensure that its decision-making processes are "open, understandable and accessible to all interested parties." Final Rule, Changes to Adjudicatory Process, 69 Fed. Reg. 2,182 (January 14, 2004). The NRC's commitment to ensuring the accessibility of its proceedings extends to the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding, including the use of webcasting to make the proceeding accessible to the public:

It is the NRC's intent to enhance communications with the public, other Federal partners, State, local, and tribal governments, international stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, the media, and the Congress. NRC will host public meetings prior to and following submission of the license application, including workshops to assist stakeholders. The staff is exploring what can be done to make some public meetings accessible via webstreaming.

Summary of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission/U.S. Department of Energy Quarterly Management Meeting, Las Vegas, Nevada (December 19, 2007) ("Quarterly Management Meeting Summary") (ADAMS Accession No. ML080290480) (emphasis added). As the Staff recognized in its report, the webcasting of the PAPO Board's December 5, 2007, oral argument

are not an effective substitute for the opportunity to observe an argument.

³ In addition, the Advisory PAPO Board stated that it had no authority to either grant or deny the Petitioners' motion. Id.

in Las Vegas "represents another step in enhancement of public involvement in NRC's regulatory process."

Despite the NRC's alleged commitment to enhancing public participation in the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding through webcasting, however, it appears that the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding may be well under way before the ASLBP pilot project concludes, let alone the Commission makes a decision whether to implement webstreaming on a broader scale. Based on the PAPO Board's and Advisory PAPO Board's statements, it appears that the ASLBP's pilot project – which initially includes only six webcast sessions – is scheduled to take several years. PAPO Memorandum at 2, Advisory PAPO Notice at 2. And those six sessions will not necessarily include Yucca Mountain-related proceedings. Thus, much of the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding may take place without any webcasting of key meetings. For instance, the ASLB has scheduled the first prehearing conference for late March and early April of 2009, Appendix D to 10 C.F.R. Part 2 calls for the second prehearing conference to be held 548 days after the notice of hearing, and the hearing is due to begin 720 days after the notice of hearing. All three of these crucial events are scheduled to take place within the next two years, when the pilot project will still be underway. And undoubtedly there will be other conferences and arguments necessary to manage the large number of issues presented for litigation in this proceeding.

Petitioners respectfully submit that in the case of the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding, webcasting of oral arguments, conferences and hearings is not just an optional enhancement that may be occasionally offered in the course of the licensing proceeding, but a measure that is necessary to ensure full participation by parties who have limited financial resources and to ensure adequate public access to this extremely novel, complex and significant

licensing proceeding. As Commissioner Lyons has noted, the challenge faced by the NRC in reviewing the anticipated license application for the Yucca Mountain repository is "monumental." Peter B. Lyons, "Closing the Fuel Cycle – a Regulator's Perspective," speech to the First Global Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing and Recycling Conference (June 11-14, 2007) http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/commission/speeches/2007/s-07-024.html. The record that must be reviewed amounts to millions of pages of documents, accumulated over more than twenty-five years. The long-term impacts of the Yucca Mountain repository to public health and safety and the environment are also potentially monumental, including impacts to public health, the environment, and the regional economy. Therefore, in order to adequately represent the interests of their citizens, the AULGs have a strong interest in directly monitoring all hearings, arguments and conferences that are conducted by the ASLB.

Petitioners also respectfully submit that the cost of webstreaming is not an acceptable excuse for refusing to provide it. Webcasting is now a commonly used and accepted tools for providing access to a multitude of federal government proceedings, including the federal Drug Enforcement Agency, the Department of State, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Education, the Federal Elections Commission, and the Federal Communications Commission. *See* letter from Ron Damele to NRC Commissioners, cited above at page 6. In addition, webstreaming is used by the U.S. Congress and many state legislatures, including

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⁴ AULG officials who have an interest in monitoring Yucca Mountain-related proceedings include not just legal counsel and official representatives to the proceeding, who will have access to web broadcasts through DDMS, but government officials who are responsible for managing any health and safety or economic effects of the Yucca Mountain facility. Residents of AULGs, whose health and welfare may be affected by the construction and operation of the Yucca Mountain Repository also share a strong interest in monitoring all Yucca Mountain-related proceedings.

Nevada. Current webstream technology allows cities, towns, counties, and state agencies to utilize the technology to broadcast public meetings and trainings over the Internet. For example, the Granicus communications firm provides webstream technology to over 300 county and municipal governments across the United States. *See* the Granicus client list at http://www.granicus.com/clients/index.html. From Carson City, Nevada, to Loudon County, Virginia, it is now common practice to use webstream technology to enhance government transparency, inform and engage the public, and improve public communications.

Given the NRC's commitment to accessibility of its proceedings, given the proven success of webstreaming in increasing access to NRC proceedings (see COMSECY-05-0005), and given the institutionalization of webstreaming as an accepted tool for broadcasting federal agency meetings, Petitioners respectfully submit that the time has arrived when the NRC must consider the cost of webstreaming as the ordinary cost of doing business. The costs of webcasting – which are passed through to the rate payers in this case rather than a private license applicant – also should be weighed alongside the other costs that the federal government is incurring in this proceeding, including the costs to support DOE's preparation of its license application. The cost of webstreaming is very small in comparison to the total costs to prepare, defend and review the Yucca Mountain license application. The additional costs of webstreaming are further offset by the costs savings that would be incurred by AULGs and others who must travel significant distances to attend live proceedings. Given the importance of the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding to the interests of the Petitioners and other stakeholders and members of the public, webstreaming of the proceeding should not be experimental but should rather be institutionalized.

IV. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Petitioners respectfully request that the Commission immediately implement and institutionalize a policy of webstreaming all future oral arguments, conferences, and evidentiary proceedings with respect to the licensing proceeding for the Yucca Mountain repository.

Respectfully submitted,

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February 23, 2009

CERTIFICATE OF COUNSEL PURSUANT TO 10 C.F.R. § 2.323(b)

Pursuant to 10 C.F.R. § 2.323(b), I certify that on February 20, 2009, I sent an e-mail message to counsel for Native Community Action Council in a sincere attempt to resolve the issues raised in this motion. However, I did not receive a response.

(Electronically signed by)
Diane Curran

February 23, 2009

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

In the Matter of

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Docket No. 63-001-HLW

(High-Level Waste Repository)

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on February 23, 2009, I posted the foregoing JOINT MOTION . . . TO IMPLEMENT AND INSTITUTIONALIZE WEBCASTING OF YUCCA MOUNTAIN-RELATED PROCEEDINGS on the NRC's Electronic Information Exchange website. It is my understanding that as a result, the following persons were served by e-mail:

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