

June 29, 2000

The Honorable Fred Thompson, Chairman
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the statutory obligation to respond to recommendations by the General Accounting Office (GAO) within 60 days of receipt, we hereby submit our responses to the GAO recommendations in its report entitled "Nuclear Safety: Concerns with the Continuing Operation of Soviet-Designed Nuclear Power Reactors (GAO/RCED-00-97)." Specific responses to the GAO recommendations are presented in the enclosure.

Over the past year, we have taken concrete steps to centralize the nuclear safety assistance program management function. In this vein, the NRC has decided that overall responsibility for management of NRC's safety assistance activities for countries in which soviet-designed reactors are operated will now reside with the Director, Office of International Programs. We believe this important step will provide a sound foundation for further streamlining program support activities, and will enhance this important program's effectiveness.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure: Responses to GAO
Recommendations

cc: Senator Joseph I. Lieberman

June 29, 2000

The Honorable Dan Burton, Chairman
Committee on Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the statutory obligation to respond to recommendations by the General Accounting Office (GAO) within 60 days of receipt, we hereby submit our responses to the GAO recommendations in its report entitled "Nuclear Safety: Concerns with the Continuing Operation of Soviet-Designed Nuclear Power Reactors (GAO/RCED-00-97)." Specific responses to the GAO recommendations are presented in the enclosure.

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Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure: Responses to GAO
Recommendations

cc: Representative Henry Waxman

June 29, 2000

The Honorable James M. Inhofe, Chairman
Subcommittee on Clean Air, Wetlands,
Private Property and Nuclear Safety
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the statutory obligation to respond to recommendations by the General Accounting Office (GAO) within 60 days of receipt, we hereby submit our responses to the GAO recommendations in its report entitled "Nuclear Safety: Concerns with the Continuing Operation of Soviet-Designed Nuclear Power Reactors (GAO/RCED-00-97)." Specific responses to the GAO recommendations are presented in the enclosure.

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Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure: Responses to GAO
Recommendations

cc: Senator Bob Graham

June 29, 2000

The Honorable Joe Barton, Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Committee on Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the statutory obligation to respond to recommendations by the General Accounting Office (GAO) within 60 days of receipt, we hereby submit our responses to the GAO recommendations in its report entitled "Nuclear Safety: Concerns with the Continuing Operation of Soviet-Designed Nuclear Power Reactors (GAO/RCED-00-97)." Specific responses to the GAO recommendations are presented in the enclosure.

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Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure: Responses to GAO
Recommendations

cc: Representative Rick Boucher

June 29, 2000

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

In accordance with the statutory obligation to respond to recommendations by the General Accounting Office (GAO) within 60 days of receipt, we hereby submit our responses to the GAO recommendations in its report entitled "Nuclear Safety: Concerns with the Continuing Operation of Soviet-Designed Nuclear Power Reactors (GAO/RCED-00-97)." Specific responses to the GAO recommendations are presented in the enclosure.

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Richard A. Meserve

Enclosure: Responses to GAO
Recommendations

June 29, 2000

The Honorable Jacob J. Lew, Director
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Lew:

In accordance with the statutory obligation to respond to recommendations by the General Accounting Office (GAO) within 60 days of receipt, we hereby submit our responses to the GAO recommendations in its report entitled "Nuclear Safety: Concerns with the Continuing Operation of Soviet-Designed Nuclear Power Reactors (GAO/RCED-00-97)." Specific responses to the GAO recommendations are presented in the enclosure.

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GAO RECOMMENDATIONS AND NRC RESPONSES

The General Accounting Office (GAO), in its report "Nuclear Safety: Concerns with the Continuing Operation of Soviet-Designed Nuclear Power Reactors," made specific recommendations for responding to concerns about management of some Department of Energy (DOE) and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) safety assistance activities. Recommendations for the NRC, and the NRC's response to them, are provided below.

Recommendation 1:

Develop a strategic plan for the commission's nuclear safety assistance activities that, at a minimum, establishes program priorities and goals, ways to measure how well the goals are being met, and time frames for meeting the goals.

NRC Response:

Recognizing that planning horizons for nuclear safety assistance to the countries of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) have evolved, the NRC now agrees that a longer-term strategy is appropriate. Therefore, the Office of International Programs (OIP) will develop a plan that clearly identifies overall objectives, schedules, and measures to ensure that the assistance is meeting the objectives. This plan will be used to measure performance.

Recommendation 2:

Integrate the assistance activities of offices that implement nuclear safety assistance to avoid duplication and inefficiencies.

NRC Response:

NRC's management of nuclear safety assistance activities for countries in which Soviet-designed reactors are operated, until recently, was divided among different organizations within NRC. Over the past year we have taken concrete steps to centralize program management functions. In this vein, NRC decided that overall responsibility for management of NRC's safety assistance activities for countries in which Soviet-designed reactors are operated will reside with the Director, Office of International Programs. This will provide a sound foundation for further streamlining program support activities, and enhance this important program's effectiveness.

Recommendation 3:

Consistently monitor funding requirements to ensure that funds are obligated on a timely basis in accordance with the program's priorities.

NRC Response:

Integrating the assistance activities of offices that implement nuclear safety assistance to avoid duplication and inefficiencies will provide additional assurance that program funds are obligated and expended on a timely basis. OIP, with information provided by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), will monitor monthly the obligation and expenditure of funds

associated with nuclear safety assistance to the countries of the FSU. This information will be compared to financial goals and program priorities, and the results reported to the Commission annually.

Recommendation 4:

Hire in-country interpreters when feasible to do so.

NRC Response:

Most of the expenditures highlighted by the GAO occurred prior to FY 1996. The NRC currently does not expend nearly as much procuring interpreters as was spent prior to FY 1996. Nonetheless, NRC will consider when and whether it might be cost-effective to hire in-country interpreters for assistance activities that are conducted in the countries of the FSU. In addition to the cost, NRC will take into consideration the specific requirements of each individual activity and the level of certainty of the quality of interpretation services needed for successful completion of each activity.