

December 10, 2002

The Honorable John F. Kerry
United States Senator
One Bowdoin Square
Tenth Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Senator Kerry:

This letter is in response to a request we received from you to respond to issues raised by one of your constituents, Mr. Brian Kelley, regarding security at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant. Specifically, Mr. Kelley recommends the use of the U.S. military to provide security for our Nation's nuclear power plants.

The physical protection at nuclear power plants was strong before September 11, 2001, and the security requirements have been significantly augmented over the past year. The plants are surrounded by fences with continuously monitored perimeter detection and surveillance systems. They are guarded by well trained and well armed security forces. The plants also benefit from redundant and diverse safety equipment so that, if any active component becomes unavailable, another component or system will satisfy its function. Operators are trained to respond to unusual events, and carefully designed emergency plans are in place. In short, the security at power plants is very strong and the plants have an inherent capacity to withstand severe events of all types, including those that may be initiated by terrorists.

Although there have been no specific credible threats of a terrorist attack on nuclear power plants since September 11, 2001, the NRC works closely with intelligence and law enforcement personnel to assess the threats that may be directed at nuclear facilities. Although it is difficult to predict when and where terrorists may strike next, the robust security at nuclear plants should serve as a significant deterrent. Nonetheless, it is prudent to presume that terrorists may consider nuclear facilities as potential targets. As a result, NRC has put in place a five-level threat advisory and protective measures system based on the Homeland Security Advisory System that advises licensees to take specific actions in response to changes in the threat conditions.

Mr. Kelley recommends that military troops be deployed at every nuclear power plant in the Nation. The NRC believes that deployment of military troops at commercial facilities such as nuclear power plants should be part of an integrated national strategy to protect critical infrastructure of all types. Establishing and implementing an integrated national strategy will be an important task for the new Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. Kelley also requested the address of Governor Ridge, Director of the Department of Homeland Security. It is as follows:

Governor Tom Ridge, Director
Department of Homeland Security
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20502

Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

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Governor Tom Ridge, Director
Department of Homeland Security
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20502

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Sincerely,

/RA/
William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

cc:

Ms. Joan Wasser
Office of Senator John Kerry
1 Bowdoin Square
Boston, MA 02114

Mr. Robert Stephan
Department of Homeland Security
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20502

Governor Tom Ridge, Director
Department of Homeland Security
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20502

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