

November 25, 2003

Mr. Robert Gary
2211 Washington Avenue
Unit No. 301
Silver Spring, MD 20910-2620

Dear Mr. Gary:

On behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter to previous Chairman, Richard A. Meserve, dated September 16, 2003. For your information, following Chairman Meserve's leaving the NRC last spring, Commissioner Nils J. Diaz was appointed NRC Chairman. In your letter, you ask two questions:

1. Is it reasonable to believe that the military could get to a nuclear power plant in time to defend it against an airborne attack?
2. If the military could not get there on time, is it reasonable to arrange for a nuclear power plant to be able to defend itself, and in this connection, would tactical high energy laser cannons be an ideal option?

First, let me acknowledge your letters of June 17, 2002, July 17, 2002, and August 5, 2002, to the NRC on a variety of issues related to nuclear power plant security, the last of which also dealt with the laser cannon concept. The NRC continues to explore areas related to the vulnerability of our licensees and appropriate mitigating strategies in response to a possible terrorist attack. We also continue to review potential consequences of events at nuclear power plants and NRC licensed activities to provide a more realistic assessment of vulnerabilities to those activities. For example, I encourage you to review points 4-6 of the Point Paper on Current Homeland Security and Preparedness issues at the following WEB address, <http://www.nrc.gov/what-we-do/point-paper.pdf> . You may find other areas of our WEB site on nuclear security informative as well.

In order to ensure that all reasonable action is taken by our licensees to protect nuclear power facilities against those potential attacks, the NRC has and will continue to ensure that robust security programs are developed and in place at those facilities. We continue to work with our Federal partners including the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy, Department of Defense and others to address issues related to potential vulnerabilities to the Nation's infrastructure, including those related to aircraft attack and the ability of the military to respond in a timely fashion.

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As I am sure you appreciate, any findings related to the analyses of these and other protection technologies and strategies may not be made available to the public due to concerns regarding the possible use of this information by potential terrorist organizations for malevolent purposes.

R. Gray

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Thank you for your continued interest in the NRC and security at our nation's nuclear facilities.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Roy P. Zimmerman, Director
Office of Nuclear Security and
Incident Response

cc: Lee S. Longmire
Assistant Administrator for
Operations Policy
Transportation Security Administration
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
601 South 12th Street
Arlington VA 22202-4220.

The Honorable Asa Hutchinson
Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security
Department of Homeland Security
400 7th Street S.W.
Washington DC 20590

R. Gray

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Thank you for your continued interest in the NRC and security at our nation's nuclear facilities.

Sincerely,

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Roy P. Zimmerman, Director
Office of Nuclear Security and
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cc: Lee S. Longmire
Assistant Administrator for
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601 South 12th Street
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The Honorable Asa Hutchinson
Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security
Department of Homeland Security
400 7th Street S.W.
Washington DC 20590

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