

January 2, 2004

Mr. Drew Greenland
145 West 67th Street, #384
New York, NY 10023

Dear Mr. Greenland:

On behalf of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am writing in response to your letter to President Bush, dated June 12, 2002, that was recently forwarded to the NRC. In your letter, you raised concerns regarding the security at nuclear power plants. Specifically, you contend that the Indian Point nuclear station and the other reactors in the U.S. should be guarded by the military.

The NRC has required significant protection of licensed facilities against sabotage or attack since the agency's inception. Security has been an important part of the NRC's regulatory activities, with defense-in-depth as the guiding design and operating principle. NRC regulations ensure that nuclear power plants are among the most hardened and secure industrial facilities in our nation. The facilities are protected by robust plant design features, sophisticated surveillance equipment, physical security protective features, professional security forces, access authorization requirements, and emergency planning. Together, these layers of protection provide an effective deterrence against potential safety or security problems related to potential terrorist activities that could target equipment vital to nuclear safety.

Although there have been no credible threats against the nation's nuclear power plants, the NRC has taken a number of steps to further enhance the already high level of security, including requiring more training for security forces and additional security personnel at the plants. Many of these enhancements had already been put in place voluntarily by nuclear power reactor operators. However, the NRC required the enhancements to make them legally binding and ensure consistent implementation.

The NRC conducted a force-on-force exercise at Indian Point in July 2003 designed as part of an ongoing pilot program intended to identify elements of the force-on-force process that should be improved. The results from the Indian Point exercise verify that the licensee has a strong defensive strategy and capability that continues to give the NRC reasonable assurance that the facility can be adequately protected against potential terrorist attacks.

You suggested the use of military forces to guard Indian Point and other nuclear power plants in the nation. National Guard troops are being used at Indian Point and other selected facilities to augment security. However, security of nuclear facilities should be viewed as part of an overall integrated national homeland security strategy. The NRC is participating in an effort to establish and implement an integrated national strategy, along with the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal agencies.

Currently, there is no basis to shut down Indian Point or any other nuclear power plant for security concerns. As discussed above, there is reasonable assurance that the health and safety of the public are protected and the common defense and security are maintained. NRC has and will continue to ensure that robust security programs are developed and maintained at nuclear power plants. 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.

Regarding your comments about the transition to a non-nuclear alternative, the NRC does not have jurisdiction over this matter. The expeditious conversion to other sources of electrical energy would be an economic and policy decision made by the Department of Energy (DOE) and State Public Service Commissions (PSC). A copy of your letter and this response will be forwarded to DOE and New York State PSC for consideration.

I hope this letter answers your concerns. If you have any further concerns or questions, please contact Yen Chen of my staff at 301-415-5615.

Sincerely,

/RA by Michael F. Weber for/

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

cc: David K. Garman, Assistant Secretary
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
Department of Energy

James Gallagher, Director
Office of Electricity and Environment
New York State Public Service Commission

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