

From: Diane Screnci
To: Elizabeth Hayden; W. Beecher } OPA
Date: 8/11/03 3:29PM
Subject: article on Chairman's letter to NY delegation

chairman: Indian Point was 'successfully protected' in drill

By JIM FITZGERALD
Associated Press Writer

August 11, 2003, 2:16 PM EDT

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — A private security force "successfully protected" the Indian Point nuclear power station against mock intruders during last month's secretive drills, the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission says.

In a letter to several New York officials, dated Aug. 7 and made public Monday, Chairman Nils Diaz said he was on hand for two days of the drills, called a "force-on-force" exercise.

"My observations of the pilot force-on-force exercise at Indian Point indicate that the licensee has a strong defensive strategy and capability," Diaz wrote. "The Indian Point security force personnel successfully protected the plant from repeated mock-adversary attacks."

Entergy Nuclear Northeast, owner of the twin nuclear plants, said the conclusion "should reassure any reasonable person who has had concerns about security there." But a leading critic called the assessment meaningless.

"When the NRC subjects Indian Point to a 9/11-level mock attack and they do it with independent observers, only then will I believe that the drills are legitimate," said Alex Matthiessen, executive director of the environmental organization Riverkeeper. "They are not testing for a sophisticated suicidal attack."

Security at and around Indian Point has been a major issue in the lower Hudson Valley since the 2001 terrorist attacks. Hundreds of officials have called for a shutdown, but Entergy and the NRC have consistently found that the plants are safe. The Federal Emergency Management Agency ruled July 25 that emergency plans for the area surrounding the plant are adequate, despite a consultant's finding that terrorism was not taken into account.

From July 29 to Aug. 1, the security force, trained by Entergy, came under assault from a handful of intruders as part of the NRC's pilot program to stiffen security after the terrorist attacks. The exercise included face-to-face combat tactics using laser-equipped combat simulation gear borrowed from the Department of Energy, plus tabletop exercises.

Reporters were kept away from Indian Point, which is 35 miles north of midtown Manhattan, and the NRC announced in advance that no grade _ or even a pass-fail _ would be issued. Several New York leaders demanded some kind of evaluation and Diaz's letter is the first public evaluation of Entergy's performance.

NRC spokesman Neil Sheehan said it was "probably as close as you're going to get" to a detailed evaluation of the exercise.

Entergy had expressed confidence in the results and spokesman Jim Steets said Monday, "This exercise was the most rigorous and realistic test ever of security at Indian Point. This letter should reassure any

B/3

reasonable person who has had concerns about security there."

In his letter, Diaz said the next drill of emergency preparedness at Indian Point would include "a simulated terrorist scenario." No date was given for that drill.

Copyright © 2003, The Associated Press

CC: Betsy Keeling; Brian Holian; David McIntyre; Gregory Smith; Hubert J. Miller; James Wiggins; Neil Sheehan; Scott Burnell; Sue Gagner; Todd Jackson; Wayne Lanning; William Cook