From: Cindy Nance <cl_nance@yahoo.com>
To: <SECY@nrc.gov>
Date: Thu, Jan 20, 2005 6:31 PM
Subject: Re: Demand for Stricter Nuclear Safety Standards

---> Protect the Public from Nuclear Power Disaster
> Following an Attack
> Nuclear Regulatory Commission Petitioned to Upgrade
> Safety Requirements:
> Comments Needed by January 24, 2005
>
> If a nuclear plant's containment shell and reactor
> core, or spent fuel pools, are ever breached, a
> terrible explosion of radioactivity, on a par with
> the Chernobyl accident, would ensue. Millions of
> Americans would be placed in harm's way.
> Unfortunately, America's nuclear plants are highly
> vulnerable to attack. Fortunately, such a cataclysm
> is preventable. We ask for your support of a new
> petition before the Nuclear Regulatory Agency.
>
> Harvard professor and Clinton Administration arms
> control expert, Graham Allison, soberly discusses
> the problem of nuclear power plant vulnerabilities:
>
> The American Airlines flight that struck the North
> Tower of the World Trade Center could just as
> readily have hit the Indian Point nuclear power
> plant, forth miles north of Times Square . . .. The
> consequences of an attack on a nuclear plant would
> depend largely on where the plane hit. If the
> aircraft penetrated the containment dome, the attack
> could cause the reactor to melt down, releasing
> hundreds of millions of curies of radioactivity into
> the surrounding environment, hundreds of times that
> released by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. We
> already know what such an incident would look like.
> In April 1986, an accident explosion inside the
> Soviet nuclear reactor at Chernobyl ignited a
> powerful fire that raged for ten days. The resulting
> radiation forced the evacuation and resettlement of
> over 350,000 people and caused an estimated $300
> billion of economic damage, and is likely to lead
> ultimately to tens of thousands of excess cancer
> deaths among those exposed to the fallout.
>
> An even more vulnerable target at a nuclear plant is
> the building that houses the spent fuel rods, which
> are stored in pools of water to prevent the heat
> from their residual radioactivity from melting them.
> Designed to remain intact in case of an earthquake,
> these structures are open to the air in some
> instances and housed in only light-duty buildings in
> others, which means that a plane attacking from
> above might drain the pool, destroy backup safety

> systems, and ignite the fuel. The resulting fire
> would spew radioactivity into the environment in
> amounts that could reach three or four Chernobyls.
>
> Such threats are real possibilities. In November
> 1972, three Americans with pistols and hand grenades
> commandeered a Southern Airlines Flight 49, and
> ordered the plane to fly to Oak Ridge, Tennessee,
> and threatened to plow the plane into a reactor
> unless their ransom was met. And on February 7,
> 1993, a distraught intruder drove his station wagon
> onto Three Mile Island nuclear power station
> property, crashing through gates in the "protected"
> area of the nuclear facility before wrecking the
> vehicle into the turbine building. He evaded
> security for several hours before being arrested.
> Fortunately, he carried no explosives.
>
> Last year, our friends at Committee to Bridge the
> Gap (CBG) filed a Petition for Rulemaking to the
> U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (posted in the
> Federal Register on November 8, 2004, Volume 69,
> Number 215) for "Upgrading the Design Basis Threat
> Regulations for Protection Against Terrorist Attacks
> on Nuclear Reactors."
>
> The nuclear agency has now opened the petition for
> public comment.
> The petition most crucially requests that NRC
> upgrade the Design Basis Threat (DBT) for U.S.
> nuclear power stations revising DBT regulations to
> require NRC and the nuclear power industry to
> contemplate and prepare for an attack of nuclear
> power stations by air by constructing shields
> consisting of (inexpensive and quick-to-assemble)
> steel I-beams and steel cabling to obstruct the
> angle of air attack at stand-off distances from the
> reactor building, fuel pool and other safety-related
> assets so that hijacked, rented or private aircraft
> (potentially carrying explosives) attempting to
> deliberately crash into a reactor site would be torn
> up in the "Beamhenge" shield effectively reducing
> the impact and penetration force on safety-related
> structures. The shield effort is focused on
> reasonably reducing the public's risk of terrorists
> successfully using nuclear power stations for
> radiological-enhanced sabotage.
>
> In 1998, at the behest of industry, NRC management
> zeroed out the budget for the OSRE program only to
> be restored through media exposure by an agency
> whistleblower, CBG, and action by President Clinton.
> However, the nuclear industry continued to stonewall
> security upgrades as unnecessarily sophisticated and
> overly expensive, culminating in a draft NRC policy
> to turn over security testing to an industry self

> assessment program to begin its pilot phase in
> September 2001.
>
> In the aftermath of the September 11 attack, the
> Nuclear Regulatory Commission has attempted some
> reforms but they are far from protective. In
> September 2004, a Government Accountability Office
> (GAO) report concluded that NRC's new security
> initiatives were "largely a paper review." The NRC
> did not visit sites to verify compliance nor request
> facilities to submit documents that supported
> security upgrades. In fact, GAO concluded it will be
> at least three more years before NRC will have data
> to validate whether site-specific upgraded security
> plans are adequate.
>
COMMENTS:
In light of the continued and ever escalating threat of new terror attacks, our nuclear power plant vulnerabilities cannot be ignored any longer and must be among the highest of our immediate priorities.

Please give your support to the Petition submitted by the Committee to Bridge the Gap (CBG), Petition for Rulemaking to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (posted in the Federal Register on November 8, 2004, Volume 69,Number 215) for "Upgrading the Design Basis Threat Regulations for Protection Against Terrorist Attacks on Nuclear Reactors."

We must address this danger now, BEFORE it becomes reality!

Thank you,

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