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ACTION OFFICE: EDO

To: Zimmerman, NSIR

AUTHOR: Herschel Specter

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AFFILIATION:

ADDRESSEE: Comr. Edward McGaffigan

SUBJECT: Terrorist attacks on reactor pools

ACTION: Appropriate

DISTRIBUTION: Chairman, Comrs

LETTER DATE: 04/10/2005

ACKNOWLEDGED No

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NOTES:

FILE LOCATION: ADAMS

DATE DUE:

DATE SIGNED:

From: "Herschel Specter" <h.specter@worldnet.att.net>
To: "Commissioner Edward McGaffigan" <EXM@nrc.gov>
Date: 4/10/05 11:21PM
Subject: FW: Re:Terrorist Attacks on Reactor Pools

Dear Commissioner McGaffigan,

Enclosed for your information is a letter to the editor of the N.Y. Times that I just sent in, responding to their April 9, 2005 editorial. I will be giving two papers this September at the PSA'05 conference in San Francisco. One of these papers will be on the subject of terrorist attacks on spent fuel pools and will present the whole sad story of my interactions with Professor von Hippel, Dr. Feiveson and others. It has been quite an interesting experience. Science and Global Security, after promising to publish just some of my comments has balked again and now has postponed it an additional 12 months. I'm tempted to write back to them, suggesting that they wait until Yucca Mountain is finally opened and then they could bury it forever.

Sincerely,

Herschel Specter

From: Herschel Specter [mailto:h.specter@worldnet.att.net]
Sent: Sunday, April 10, 2005 3:32 PM
To: 'nytnews@nytimes.com'
Subject: Re:Terrorist Attacks on Reactor Pools

The Time's editorial on Nuclear Regulatory Commission and National Academy of Sciences squabbles missed other important stories in the NAS report. People in the New York area will welcome the news that plants like Indian Point, with pools largely below grade, have the most secure designs. Also missed by the Times was that the original fearsome consequences reported by Professor Frank von Hippel, et al, were seriously in error. The authors have now reduced their worst case health consequences by a factor of 44. The Times mischaracterized as glib the NRC's recommendation to use fire hoses to reduce these terrorist threats. The NAS itself made two major recommendations to reduce consequences, one of which was to use water sprays, e.g., fire hoses and/or fixed spray systems. This is consistent with the conclusions reached by the National Research Council in 2002 which recommended the use of "low tech" measures. The second NAS recommendation was the "low tech" fix of rearranging the spent fuel in a more optimum configuration. Professor von Hippel now supports this improved spent fuel arrangement, subject to his review of the NRC's heat up analysis. The NAS did not endorse the use of an enlarged cask program suggested by von Hippel, but suggested that first a cost/benefit analyses be made. Justifying an enlarged cask program is doubtful once these two NAS recommendations are implemented.

With far smaller consequences, with little justification for an enlarged cask program, with a different set of fixes, there is little left of the original von Hippel proposal which has been shown to be unsafe, untimely, and expensive. The Times accuses the NRC and the nuclear industry of perpetuating a myth about extremely low risks from spent fuel pools. Where is this statement supported in the NAS report or has the Times mixed facts and opinion together? Rather than just attacking the NRC, the Times should ask itself how it became the vehicle of a story that overstated consequences and suggested fixes that would, if implemented, given a false sense of safety.

Herschel Specter, President

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Mr. Specter participated in the NAS deliberations and gave written and oral testimony.

