



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

August 11, 2004

The Honorable John McCain
United States Senator
4450 S. Rural Road
Suite B-130
Tempe, AZ 85282

Dear Senator McCain:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter, dated July 14, 2004, which was addressed to the Department of Energy. Your letter forwarded a request for information from your constituent, Seth Campbell, regarding the security forces protecting the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station.

The NRC's primary responsibility is to protect public health and safety and the environment by regulating the civilian use of nuclear materials, like those used at nuclear power plants. We are the federal agency responsible for overseeing the physical security of commercial nuclear power plants. The NRC requires all nuclear power plants in the U.S. to have a comprehensive physical security program to protect these facilities from radiological sabotage, and from theft or diversion of nuclear materials from these sites. The elements of these security programs include site access controls, intruder detection systems, central alarm stations, physical barriers, armed guard forces and detailed response strategies, among others.

Security measures at all nuclear power plants in the U.S., including the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, are very extensive. All nuclear plants are required to have a security program, which includes a well-trained and heavily-armed security force, capable of protecting the facility from different types of ground attacks that are specified by NRC regulations. To develop these regulations, NRC works closely with the national intelligence community and law enforcement agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Additionally, the NRC constantly coordinates with other federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Department of Defense (DOD) in matters related to threats from airborne attacks. The combination of all these efforts makes nuclear power plants among the most robust and well-protected civilian facilities in the country.

If you have further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis K. Rathbun".

Dennis K. Rathbun, Director
Office of Congressional Affairs

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