

NRC FOREIGN TRIP REPORT

Subject

This serves as the Final Report for the trip to Egypt and Saudi Arabia as part of the U.S. State Department Delegation to discuss civil nuclear power.

Dates of Travel and Countries/Organizations Visited

January 18-23, 2010
Egypt, Ministry of Electricity and Energy
Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Energy

Author, Title, and Agency Affiliation

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Background/Purpose

The meeting was organized by Department of State through the office of Alex Burkhart to visit 5 nations interested in establishing a civilian nuclear power program. Countries to be visited were Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman. Mickey Freeland, representing the NRC, visited Egypt and Saudi Arabia for the purpose of identifying assistance programs available through the NRC and determining what level of support might be appropriate. A list of participants is attached.

Summary of Pertinent Points/Issues

Our first stop was in Egypt where we met with a variety of agencies to include the Nuclear Power Plants Authority (NPPA) and Egyptian Atomic Energy Authority (EAEA). The first day's meetings consisted of a series of briefings on both sides identifying various assistance programs offered by US Government Agencies (State, NNSA and NRC) and the status of Egypt's plans for the development of its nuclear power program. The US programs focused on providing training assistance in regulatory framework, security and safeguards. The second day was composed of development of an action plan and identifying each agency's responsibilities to provide assistance. The NRC was specifically asked to provide a workshop on Site Licensing Procedures and to provide safety codes relative to site licensing.

The next stop was in Saudi Arabia where initial meetings were cancelled, but after intervention of the US Embassy with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a meeting was conducted in the late afternoon. The Saudi representative clearly stated that there was no near term need for nuclear power that it would be included in Saudi Arabia's national energy strategy, but that first there would be a significant study on the feasibility of solar power. The senior Saudi representative did pose several questions to the NRC representative specifically about the nature of the NRC, how it was formed, and how we maintain ourselves as an independent body.

Discussion

The key portion of the visit was with Egypt where the NRC was requested to support an in country workshop on Site Licensing Procedures. Numerous meetings on the margins were held to emphasize the importance of this support to the Egyptians. There was also significant discussion on the provision of computer safety codes. I identified that, although NRC might be able to facilitate a workshop (funding dependent), we would need to renew an information exchange arrangement with the appropriate authority within the Egyptian government. I suggested that this should be with their new independent regulatory body. Although this was thought appropriate in the long term, senior Egyptian representatives indicated that it would be up to 9 months before the regulatory body was fully operational and asked if an existing body could sign an interim arrangement that would transfer to the new body once it was fully operational. That question is under consideration. While in Egypt, I contacted Jack Ramsey and requested his assistance in developing the type of workshop the Egyptians were requesting. Before departing Egypt, it was made clear that the information regarding the workshop would be forwarded and that the computer codes would be considered once NRC determined how the arrangement would be handled. These items were added to the DOS action plan.

In Saudi Arabia a single meeting was held in which no action was taken. The senior Saudi representative had numerous questions for the NRC representative, but wanted no assistance at this time. He refused to hear any of the prepared briefings and the meeting was confined to a series of questions and answers. There were no actions from this meeting for the NRC.

Pending Actions/Planned Next Steps for NRC Provide a workshop outline to the Egyptian designated point of contact with proposed dates. Also, determine if an information exchange arrangement can be signed with an existing agency and then transferred to the new regulatory body once it is fully operational.

Points for Commission Consideration/Items of Interest None