

NRC Response to GAO Inquiry Regarding Implementation of GAO-08-403 Recommendations

The NRC conducted research and test reactor (RTR) security assessments and radiological consequence analyses that considered the full range of credible adversary characteristics based on a logical, well-defined threat assessment process. These assessments and analyses used report results from several national laboratories, which were peer-reviewed and fully vetted. Using these technically sound and credible inputs, the NRC assessed RTR security using the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Risk Analysis and Management for Critical Asset Protection guidance. The results were presented to the Commission who found that the security at RTR facilities provides adequate protection of the public health and safety and the common defense and security. Based on the results of security and radiological assessments, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission decided that no further actions were necessary with regards to the GAO-08-403 report recommendations. The NRC informed Congress of the Commission's decision in a March 28, 2008, letter from NRC Chairman Dale E. Klein to the Honorable John F. Tierney.

Four years later, the NRC continues to implement the Agency's well-defined threat assessment process through cooperation with the Nation's intelligence community and routinely inspects and evaluates RTR security, safety, and emergency preparedness capabilities. Additionally, the NRC has implemented fingerprinting requirements as required by the 2005 Energy Policy Act and has participated in the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between the NRC and the National Nuclear Security Agency, Department of Homeland Security, and the RTR community to facilitate the voluntary implementation of security enhancements base on best practices at RTRs.

Based on the assessment of the current threat environment and the inspection-based evaluation of research and test reactor security, safety, and emergency preparedness, the NRC is confident that the results of the security assessments and radiological consequence analyses remain valid. As such, the NRC has not taken nor plans to take any actions in direct response to the GAO-08-403 recommendations. The NRC will continue to assess the threat environment and compare it to the current research and test reactor security, safety, and emergency preparedness regulatory requirements. Should the threat environment change, the NRC will take additional actions as necessary at that time.