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Why isn't the storage of nuclear waste, military and commercial, as secret as the Manhattan Project? Isn't it a matter of national security that we put all this deadly waste in a few inland caverns as soon as possible and do so without informing our enemies and without any public debate?

This week the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is holding a regional meeting in Orlando to solicit public comment on a rule change that would make it possible for power plants that have been decommissioned to continue storing their dangerous waste on site.

For years we have been counting on a depository in Yucca Mountain, Nevada, to solve this problem, but public protest and political infighting prevailed over scientific consensus. This rule is a sleeping pill to help us forget Yucca Mountain.

However, the experience of the Japanese disaster at Fukushima Daiichi makes it clear that on-site storage of large accumulations of nuclear waste greatly worsens the dangers of natural disaster, attack, or accident that can fracture containment, destroy backup systems, or hinder repairs.

This is true for all nuclear reactor sites, over a hundred in the United States. Many of those are clustered near coastal waters and centers of population, like all five of Florida's nuclear plants, and hence vulnerable to colossal storm surges.

Furthermore, all storage sites are potential targets for terrorists who want to launch or detonate a nitrogen explosive, effectively creating a dirty bomb. The subsequent air and water pollution could cripple Florida's tourist industry and freeze snowbirds in their tracks. Removing the waste will not spare an operating reactor from terrorist attack, but it would reduce the problem of recovery and the extent of the damage.

Every power plant will be safer from its own accident if the waste is carried to a secret national depository, more or less immediately. There it can be retrieved whenever Bill Gates and his foundation have figured out a way to make more energy out of it and reduce its toxicity.

The more sites for waste, the more danger. Why not make one broader rule to say that the military will take control of the commercial waste and find a few safe inland caves and salt mines, like their own site near Carlsbad, NM, in the interest of national security.

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