

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 20, 1987

Honorable Lando W. Zech, Jr., Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Mr. Zech:

Enclosed please a copy of a Jack Anderson column which has been sent to me by a concerned constituent. Can you give me and him any reassurance that these counterfeit bolts have not been and will not be used at the Shearon Harris nuclear plant in North Carolina?

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



H. Martin Lancaster
Member of Congress

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THE DURHAM SUN

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Opinion

PAGE 4-A DURHAM, N.C., THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 1987

Substandard bolts discovered at one U.S. nuclear power plant

WASHINGTON — Substandard bolts have been found at one U.S. nuclear power plant and may well be in place at others, ready to give way at the first serious vibration or ultra-high temperature.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, however, is alarmingly relaxed about the danger that the faulty fastener could cause a Chernobyl-like disaster.

The bolts are counterfeits, mostly from Taiwan, Korea and Japan. They look like high-grade bolts and bear false industry markings designating top-quality



Jack Anderson
Merry-Go-Round

manufacture. They, however, are made of substandard metals or are inade-

quately tempered to withstand the stress that they may be subjected to in an emergency.

A quality-control official at the commission told our associate Stewart Harris he was reasonably certain that there were no counterfeits in nuclear power plants, because a recent random test had turned up none. Asked how many bolts were actually tested, the official replied: "13."

Further tests will be made on perhaps 30 more bolts taken from three to five power plants, the official said. This will complete the testing, he said, unless some

counterfeits are discovered.

WE HAVE NEWS for the commission: Counterfeit bolts have already been found in storage at a nuclear power plant.

Bill Windt of Texas Bolt conducted laboratory tests on bolts taken from a plant that he said had bought "tons" of substandard steel fasteners. He was told he'd be sued if he revealed the name of the plant, but he was able to tell us the nuts and bolts he tested at his Houston lab did not meet specifications and could fall under such conditions as the extreme temperatures that are common in nuclear cooling systems.

The bolts subsequently were removed from storage and discarded.

The substandard fasteners discovered by Windt aren't the only ones that have been palmed off on the nuclear industry. We have also learned that bogus bolts were purchased by PosiSeal International, a Connecticut firm that makes butterfly valves for nuclear plants.

MANY SUPPOSEDLY high-grade bolts sold to PosiSeal twisted off during installation. The company ran chemical tests to find out why, and discovered that some of the bolts were made of low-carbon steel that turns to sludge at high temperatures.

Another sample tested was susceptible to shattering because it hadn't been properly heat-treated.

We spent weeks poring over Nuclear Regulatory Commission documents for any mention of counterfeit bolts, and found absolutely nothing.

We also were told that commission inspectors might not recognize a spurious bolt if they tripped over one. An industry source had this biting comment on the commission's approach to the problem: "It's like asking your friendly neighborhood home builder to put together a Boeing 747."

We presented our evidence to a number of experts in the industry.

THEIR RESPONSES were chilling. Tommy Grant of Grant Fasteners in Houston, made a one-word assessment: "Frightening."

Frank Akstens, an engineer and editor of *Fastener Technology International* magazine, said: "The documented evidence you send is appalling testimony on the behavior and shortcomings within the nuclear power industry." John Cole of Product Risk Reduction Inc. of Westlake, Ohio, said, "I see many of the assumptions and decisions indicated in the (commission's) reports as basic ignorance of the products and the world fastener base."

Charles Wilson of the Industrial Fastener Institute in Cleveland agreed. Some of the engineers who wrote the reports appeared unaware, for example, that bolts that are too hard can be as dangerous as ones that are too soft.

If they're too hard, Wilson explained, they won't break loose under extremely high pressure as they're intended to; lacking this safety feature, the entire cooling system could explode.

Wilson also faulted the commission for allowing unmarked bolts to be installed in nuclear plants. "Why doesn't the manufacturer put his mark on it? Because he doesn't want you to know that he made the bolt," Wilson said.

IGNORANCE ON IRAN: An internal memo of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has some trenchant criticism of the presidential advisers who miscalculated the Iran arms fiasco.

"It is unclear whether the most involved in the initiative — notably former National Security Council advisers (Robert McFarlane and (John) Poindexter) and former NSC staffer (O. Ver) North — had a very substantial knowledge of the intricacies of Near East politics," the memo observes with diplomat's circumspection.

Then it comes right out and accuses the terrific trio of having only "a superficial appreciation of the situation within Iran."

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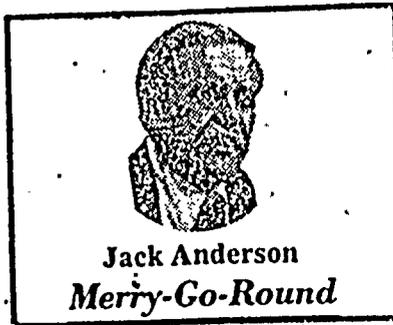
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