Evidentiary Rep. Ex. # 12

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 2, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JACK WATSON

SUBJECT: Status Report - Three Mile Nuclear Facility Report #4

Current Status Contingency Plans

The level of cooperation across the Federal government and between the state and Federal governments remains high. Contingency plans for evacuation are in place and in a state of operational readiness. You have reason to be proud of the extraordinary efforts of a lot of people in the federal agencies who have been working 18-20 hour days for the last four days.

I thought it would be helpful for you to have some general sense of the kinds of actions I have authorized over the past 72 hours. The following are illustrative:

-- the manufacture and delivery of supplies of potassium iodide which can be administered to the general population as a prophylactic to radioactive iodine;

-- establishment of a forward Emergency Operations Center at the U.S. Fire Administration's Emmitsburg, Md. facility in case federal officials are required to be evacuated from the Harrisburg area;

-- the establishment at Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania of an NRC operations center if NRC personnel are required to be moved from the reactor site;

-- the collection and staging of cots, blankets, ambulances, neo-natal care incubators, medical and other support supplies in the event of an evacuation;

-- the placing on alert status certain military support units to transport invalids, new-born babies and other incapacitated individuals in the event of evacuation;

-- the transport and delivery by Air Force personnel of lead bricks to the reactor site;

-- special deliveries of gasoline to service stations along evacuation routes to insure adequate supplies (e.g., Exxon has delivered 150,000 gallons to Pennsylvania Turnpike stations, and AMOCO has provided advanced loads to dealers in the area);

-- U.S. Public Health Service has trained 30 people to further train local personnel in handling decontamination work;

-- sending of FDAA, Defense Civil Preparedness, medical and technical personnel, and other federal officials into the area to work directly with state and local officials.

In every case, my authorization was contingent on assurances that the federal support was for a critical, unmet need that could not be provided by the state and local governments.

The Reactor Situation

From your twice daily conversations with Harold Denton, I believe you have a complete picture of his view of the immediate situation at the reactor site. I met today with Chairman Hendrie of the NRC for a briefing on the views of NRC experts here in Washington. Hendrie believes that by tomorrow evening we will be able to confirm that the bubble has been virtually or completely evacuated; that the temperature of the last remaining hot spot in the core is coming down; and that the hydrogen recombiners are working, so that the potential for a fire in the containment is significantly less. At that point, he believes that we will have passed through the "acute" phase of this incident and will be entering a chronic phase of reduced -- but still serious -- risk. The risk derives primarily from the huge amounts of radioactivity in the reactor vessel and the containment (which is now reading 30,000R) and from the damaged condition of the core.

Hendrie believes that the transition to the Residual Heat Removal (RHR) cooling system will not be made before four or seven days from now at the earliest, and probably close to two weeks. The experts are quite concerned about the operating dangers of the RHR mode and will use the intervening time to install all possible back-up systems and additional storage tanks. Since the RHR system is currently designed to handle water that is quite low in radioactivity, several steps will have to be taken to modify it in order to handle the extremely radioactive water that will be flowing through it. For example, they will cover the pit into which leakage from this system normally flows and install Iodine filters on all the effluent drains. There is also a good deal of concern that debris of various kinds (e.g., chunks of the core, broken valves, etc.) could come loose and clog the RHR pipes, thereby allowing the temperature in the core to rise. In short, the feeling is that some level of potential risk to the population will stay relatively constant for four to six weeks after the RHR operation is begun.

Next Phase Contingency Plans

I have been in touch with the Governor's staff this evening to discuss their perception of the situation and to assess what next steps are indicated in protecting the public health and safety under these changing conditions.

We have agreement that state officials will immediately review their contingency plans and identify changes that should be made to enable the state to maintain appropriate readiness under "chronic" rather than "acute" conditions.

I have also asked the Administrator of the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration to conduct the same review and analysis from the federal perspective. After these reviews are completed in the next day or so, the Governor's people and I will meet to formulate some judgment as to what recommendations to make to the Governor and you.

It is clear that we cannot, and should not, keep the current "high alert" status indefinitely. It is equally clear to me that we should not simply return to the status quo ante. We need to define and recommend a maintenance mode of emergency preparedness that will meet the conditions we anticipate to last over the next weeks and perhaps months.