

Bob Graham
Florida

United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Date 12/12/90

Mr. Carlton Kammerer, Director
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Congressional Affairs
Washington, DC 20555

Enclosed is a letter from one of my constituents who has concerns which come under the jurisdiction of your agency.

I would appreciate your reviewing this situation and providing me with an appropriate response. Please direct your reply to:

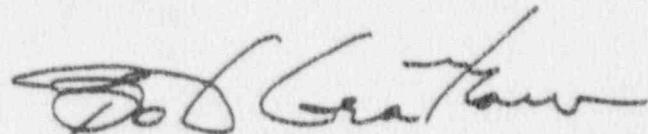
Becky Liner
Office of Senator Bob Graham
P.O. Box 3050
Tallahassee, FL 32315

904/681-7726

Your cooperation and assistance are appreciated.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,



United States Senator

Constituent's Name:

John R. Chafin

9102130067 910117
PDR ORG NRPZ PDR

10/12/90

Tallahassee
ATTN: Betty
- Jimmy

Sir:

Recently I wrote you a letter and stated it was not necessary to respond to my letter. (WASTE OF TIME & \$)

Please read the attached article, and this time I would appreciate an explanation as to what these "nit-wits" at NRC are thinking. It is iten such as this that really "blows my mind" and make me feel that Congress is not supervising agencies such as this.

Thank you for your explnate

Sincerely,
John R. Chafin
7 ISLAND DR.

33706

TREASURER ISLAND, FL
33706

DECOMMISSIONING OF NUKEM FUEL PLANT BLOCKED BY POLITICAL WASTE PROBLEM

Decommissioning of Nukem GmbH's fuel fabrication plant at Hanau, West Germany, the Nukem-Alt facility, is being held up by lack of political acceptance of plans to send uranium- and thorium-contaminated wastes abroad for milling and disposal, officials say.

Last year, Nukem and Envirocare, Inc., a Utah-based firm, had discussed a plan to take wastes from Nukem to the U.S. The U.S. NRC agreed to allow Envirocare to take the waste, but, Nukem officials said, this year Envirocare said that while there are no technical problems blocking the deal, bringing the German waste to the U.S. is "politically unacceptable."

Nukem's research reactor fuel fabrication facility was ordered decommissioned after Nukem left the business of handling uranium fuels as part of a restructuring of the company in 1988. Since then, Nukem's materials test reactor (MTR) has been transferred to France's Cern, and the fuel fabrication facility at Hanau has been idle and awaiting dismantling.

According to regulatory officials, however, the plant cannot be dismantled until Nukem has an agreement to process and dispose of the wastes slightly contaminated with uranium and thorium which will result from tearing down the facility.

To that end, Nukem has been discussing transferring those wastes to Envirocare in the U.S., and in parallel has been talking to parties in Canada, the USSR, and Czechoslovakia. Treatment of the wastes in Germany was rendered impossible last year by a regulatory order to decommission the Ellweiler uranium mill, the only one in Germany, for radiation health reasons.

One German official said that Nukem "has discussed taking the wastes with every U mill in the world." While there are no technical problems expected, political opposition to international transfer of wastes is preventing agreement with potential partners and, as a result, is blocking decommissioning and dismantling of the plant. Prior to political changes which occurred last year in eastern Europe, it might have been possible to transfer the waste to Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union, one Nukem official said. But growing political awareness of radiation health issues and opposition to nuclear power in these countries is preventing agreement.

Eastern European organizations which have discussed the matter with Nukem, one official said, "are very mistrustful" of making a waste transfer deal with the German firm.

Meanwhile, delays in dismantling the facility are costing money. About 30 personnel, including radiation protection officials, are on the plant site. Although the trace high-enriched uranium (HEU) and thorium in the plant have already been "booked out" of safeguarding inventory at the plant, the facility must be safeguarded by Euratom. A complete reload of fresh fuel assemblies for a reactor at the Karlsruhe Nuclear Research Center (KFK), containing fuel enriched to 60% U-235, is still inside, along with the next reload for the BER-2 research reactor in Berlin, and cannot be removed until a waste plan is agreed on. Transfer of those fuel assemblies to the Hahn-Meitner Institute in Berlin has been blocked by a political battle in the West Berlin government over restart of the BER-2 reactor.

In an unrelated matter, Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk AG (RWE) has become 100% owner of Nukem through purchase of the 10% of Nukem shares controlled by Metallgesellschaft AG, a Frankfurt-based trading giant. Earlier this year, chemical and metals firm Degussa AG sold its 35% of Nukem to RWE.

Well-placed sources said that Metallgesellschaft wanted to sell its share of Nukem to RWE because Metallgesellschaft is a member of the Lurgi group which directly competes with Nukem and RWE in the fields of nuclear engineering and environmental technology.

—Mark Hibbs, Lyon