



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

February 4, 1991

The Honorable Robert S. Walker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Walker:

I am responding to your letter of January 11, 1991, in which you forwarded a constituent's inquiry concerning security at nuclear power plants for the prevention of terrorist attacks.

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) regulations require nuclear power plant licensees to provide safeguards designed to protect against a threat from insider and external sabotage with characteristics typical of those employed by terrorists. The external threat characteristics include several well-trained and dedicated individuals with weapons up to and including hand-held automatic weapons having effective long-range accuracy, incapacitating agents, and explosives. Some of the measures required by the NRC to protect against these threats include: a security guard organization which contains a specific number of dedicated responders, physical barriers, alarm sensors, and closed circuit television at the perimeter. In addition, nuclear power plant licensees must have contingency plans for various event scenarios including protecting against a truck bomb. The public health and safety is also enhanced by the thick, reinforced concrete walls typical at most plants and by the diversity and redundancy of safety equipment which is able to maintain a plant in a safe condition.

The NRC staff performs a number of tasks to assess the threat environment around the world. The staff maintains close and continuing contact with other Federal agencies concerned with counterterrorism, including regular interagency meetings. These contacts with other Federal agencies would also be exercised during an emergency response to a terrorist incident. Also, on a daily basis, the staff reviews and evaluates intelligence reports on terrorists' activities and incidents, and assesses all reported threats against NRC licensees, materials, or activities. Once every 6 months, the staff formally documents its analysis of the threat environment and provides this analysis to the Commission and senior NRC management. To date, no significant change in the threat environment to U.S. licensed nuclear facilities has occurred which would require a change to NRC safeguards regulations.

In the event of a terrorist threat or incident, a number of Federal, State, and local agencies would respond. Local law enforcement would respond immediately to an incident at a site. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) would also respond and would have primary jurisdiction for law enforcement. The FBI can call upon the Department of Defense for support as needed. Other agencies, in addition to the NRC, that could become involved include the U.S. Department of Energy and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

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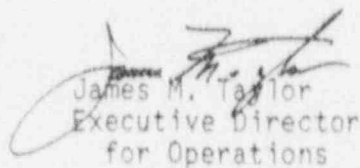
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The Honorable Robert S. Walker

- 2 -

I trust this response adequately addresses your constituent's inquiry.

Sincerely,

  
James M. Taylor  
Executive Director  
for Operations



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