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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

July 12, 1984

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Nunzio J. Palladino
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Palladino:

Please find enclosed a copy of the Washington Post article of July 12, 1984. I have received several inquiries from my constituents regarding Diablo Canyon and the NRC's role in the safety investigations. Any information you could provide me with which would aid me in my reply to this matter would be much appreciated. Your promptness in replying would also be appreciated as I understand that the final hearing by the NRC on Diablo Canyon is scheduled for July 26, 1984.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Barnes

MDB/mshm
Enclosure

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NRC Engineer Resigns From Diablo Task Force

By Dale Russakoff
Washington Post Staff Writer

A veteran Nuclear Regulatory Commission engineer has resigned from a special federal investigation of the controversial Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, complaining that his superiors obstructed his inquiry into extensive alleged design flaws in the \$4.1 billion California facility.

The resignation of Isa Yin, a mechanical engineer who has received several NRC awards, is significant because his findings of design problems at Diablo prompted the commission in April to call for the special investigation as a precondition to licensing the plant.

"The crux of it is I wasn't allowed to follow up the questions I had," Yin said in a telephone interview.

Yin told an NRC technical panel yesterday that the investigative team spent only three days reviewing records even though they needed "a few weeks." He said he was denied the time he needed to review design records.

"The investigation has never really been carried out," Yin said.

Richard Volmer, the NRC official in charge of the investigation, yesterday defended the proceedings and denied interfering with Yin's inquiry. He said Yin was unable to review records because of his own schedule conflicts.

Volmer said all other members of the investigative team, engineers from NRC and the Energy Department, have concluded the plant is safe and ready for full-power operation. The NRC is scheduled to vote on the matter on July 26.

Diablo has been one of the nation's most controversial nuclear plants since the NRC discovered in 1981 that its builders accidentally had reversed the blueprints for the plant's two units. The foul-up meant that the plant, located on the central California coast 2.5 miles from an earthquake fault, was vulnerable to seismic stresses. Diablo's owners agreed to a major design overhaul.

Earlier this year, the NRC staff recommended that the commission issue a start-up license for Diablo. But in a surprise dissent on the day that the commission was scheduled to vote on the license, Yin announced that he had documented a "breakdown" in plant design procedures involving structural supports for miles of pipes essential to safety and cooling systems.

As a result, the commission created a special investigative team to review Yin's concerns, and assigned him to take part in the case.

However, according to an affidavit filed yesterday at the NRC, Yin said it would "compromise his integrity" to remain on the case. He said that he was not allowed to follow up employee allegations of design errors, and that Volmer allowed him only one and a half days to review key design records.

The affidavit was filed by Thomas Devine, attorney for the Government Accountability Project, which represents several "whistle blowers" at the plant who had given Yin evidence of several hundred alleged design problems. It recounts a conversation between Devine and Yin following Yin's resignation two weeks ago. Devine said Yin approved the affidavit as accurate.

Volmer confirmed that the investigative team had spent only three days reviewing design records, but he said this was enough time to determine that the plant's design was sound.

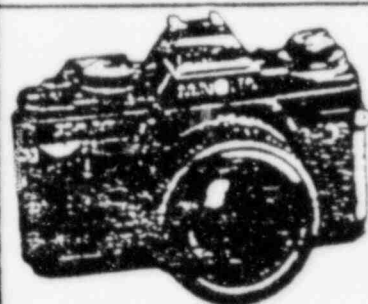
"I don't view our activity as giving the matter short shrift," Volmer said. "If we had found something that led us to believe there were inadequacies in the plant, we would have raised these, but we didn't find them."

Devine called Yin's concerns "evidence of an agency-wide cover-up" of problems at Diablo, asserting that "the integrity of the government is the issue." He said that he and other groups will press the NRC to reopen licensing hearings based on Yin's concerns.

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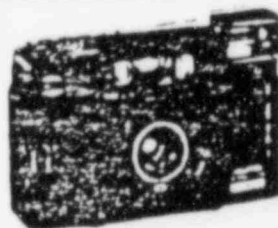
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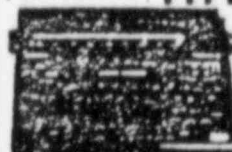
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