



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

May 20, 1997

PDR
per: D. Messberg

Mr. Brian E. Thurgood
Managing Director
TRIGA Group
P.O. Box 269025
San Diego, California 92126

Dear Mr. Thurgood:

This responds to your letter of May 1, 1997, which requested clarification of earlier information the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) had provided on the limits of our participation in foreign research reactor safety reviews.

As indicated in our letter of August 16, 1996, the NRC does not perform safety reviews of either power or research reactors to be sited outside the United States. This is an NRC policy of long standing. We consider a country's decision to commit to a nuclear program, including the choice of the technology to be used and the infrastructure to both support and regulate it, to be a sovereign responsibility of that country. Technical assistance is available through the International Atomic Energy Agency, and elsewhere, to countries inexperienced in performing reactor safety reviews. The USNRC has itself provided some training and assistance of this nature to countries embarking on nuclear power programs and carrying out their first reactor safety reviews or enhancing their research reactor safety and regulatory skills.

We have no jurisdiction over licensees or operators in other countries. Our focus is primarily domestic. An NRC export license is issued to a U.S. reactor supplier after appropriate nonproliferation and common defense and security findings are made. The Commission also is required to consider the environmental impact of nuclear exports upon the United States and, as a matter of discretion, it sometimes considers potential environmental impacts upon the "global commons".

I am aware that General Atomics has supplied 65 research reactors around the world (over 30 of these in the U.S.) and has most recently been awarded the contract for Thailand's new 10 MW research reactor. The NRC reviewed the Safety Analysis Reports for the General Atomics research reactors located in the U.S., all of which have achieved successful safety records. However, the NRC does not have the responsibility or the resources to perform safety reviews for reactors intended for construction and operation in other countries.

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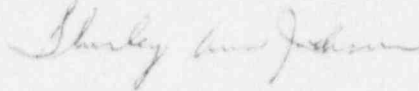
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I hope the above provides the clarification you need. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shirley Ann Jackson".

Shirley Ann Jackson