



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

ENCLOSURE OF QUESTION 5  
4 of 5

OCT 25 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman Zech  
Commissioner Roberts  
Commissioner Carr  
Commissioner Rogers  
Commissioner Curtiss

FROM: Victor Stello, Jr., Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH DOE ON MHTGR CONTAINMENT

In my October 3, 1988 memorandum to you on the Modular High Temperature Gas-Cooled Reactor (MHTGR) containment issue I indicated that Mr. Beckford and I were planning to meeting with representatives from DOE to discuss the apparently contradictory position taken by the Department on containment for two very similar designs (the commercial MHTGR and the production reactor version of the MHTGR).

We had the subject meeting on October 18, 1988 and the key points and action items are summarized below:

- 1) It was clear that the decision to put a containment on the new production reactor (NPR) version of the MHTGR was based upon policy considerations. In fact, the NPR containment decision was made prior to DOE's technical evaluation of the candidate technologies and irrespective of the remote site location.
- 2) If, in the future, the NPR-MHTGR designers were to make a case on technical grounds for no containment, it is very unlikely that DOE Defense Programs would seriously consider it.
- 3) It is not clear that the technical differences between the two MHTGR concepts are sufficient to support the differing positions on containment. No DOE technical evaluation was available or planned, beyond that provided in Mr. Garrish's September 16, 1988 letter, to document the rationale for the differing positions. I requested that DOE prepare such an evaluation, but it is not clear that they will. Mr. D. Bunch of DOE indicated he will call me in 2-3 weeks with their plans in this area.

In summary, I believe that we should not take action on the MHTGR containment question until we fully understand and have documented the Department's rationale for their differing positions. I do not want to put the Commission in a position of having to explain the difference. If and when such a

rationale is provided, we can resume action on the containment question. If such a rationale is not provided, we could continue to withhold action on the containment question or indicate to DOE that the commercial version of the MHTGR should have a containment until sufficient testing and operational experience is gained to justify its removal.

I will keep you informed of DOE's response.

~~Victor Stello, Jr.~~  
Victor Stello, Jr.  
Executive Director  
for Operations

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[MEMO TO CHAIRMAN ZECH]

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