

November 13, 2001

The Honorable George W. Gekas
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-3817

Dear Congressman Gekas:

I am responding, on behalf of the Commission, to your letter of October 4, 2001, concerning security at nuclear power plants. While nuclear power plants are among the most hardened and secure civilian facilities in the United States, the recent terrorist attacks have focused attention on the need to review policies and practices related to the protection of civilian nuclear facilities.

Immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) advised nuclear power plant licensees to go to the highest level of security, and all promptly did so. With continued uncertainty about the possibility of additional terrorist activities, the Nation's nuclear power plants remain at the highest level of security and the NRC continues to closely monitor the situation closely. As you may know, State and local defensive assets are also deployed at most nuclear power plants to strengthen perimeter defense.

I, with the full support of the Commission, have also directed the NRC staff to conduct a thorough reevaluation of NRC's safeguards and physical security programs. This reevaluation is a top-to-bottom analysis of all aspects of the agency's safeguards and physical security programs, including the programs for assessing the performance of the licensees' security organization. Given the nature of the attacks on September 11, the identification of any necessary adjustments to the safeguards and physical security measures for civilian nuclear facilities must involve consultation and coordination with other U.S. national security organizations. The NRC is currently interacting with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the newly established Office of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and other intelligence and law enforcement agencies to ensure any changes to the NRC's programs are informed by input from other relevant U.S. agencies.

The NRC staff is proceeding expeditiously with its review efforts. In accordance with your request, I would be pleased to keep you advised of the progress the staff makes in this important matter. The Commission appreciates your concern regarding security at NRC-licensed facilities. If you have additional comments or questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Richard A. Meserve