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Release



CHAIRMAN

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

February 6, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR: Commissioner Rogers
FROM: Shirley Ann Jackson *Shirley Ann Jackson*
SUBJECT: REPORT ON GCC-6 MEETINGS

The sixth meeting of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission (GCC-VI) was held January 29-30, 1996 in Washington. I attended the various meetings associated with the GCC's Energy Committee, including an Energy Committee pre-meeting with Vice President Gore on January 25, the Energy Committee's negotiating session with our Russian counterparts (including Minister Mikhailov) on January 26, the Energy Committee's report to the Vice President and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin on January 29, and the wrap-up signing on January 30. The theme of GCC-VI was to highlight the successes achieved in the almost three year process. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints on both sides, finding the money needed to undertake either new projects or to finance ongoing cooperation has become increasingly difficult, and will impact on the GCC's ability to build on these successes.

As in previous GCC meetings held in Washington, and contrary to Russian Government assurances at the highest levels, the Russian delegation did not include a representative from our counterpart regulatory agency GOSATOMNADZOR, the Federal Nuclear and Radiation Safety Authority (GAN). I underscored NRC's disappointment at this fact, particularly in light of the successful and mutually beneficial relationship which has developed between NRC and GAN. I also noted that, in addition to language NRC and GAN inserted in the "Cooperation on Nuclear Safety" section in the Energy Committee's report specifying our cooperation, NRC and GAN signed a statement reaffirming our joint program of work to be conducted over the next 12 to 18 months (attachment 1).

In addition to NRC's involvement in the Energy Committee's nuclear safety topic (see attachment 2), NRC participated in developing the U.S. approach to alternatives for closure of Russia's plutonium production reactors. This approach has included a three-track effort to develop sources of heat and electric power needed to allow the shutdown of three aged reactors at Tomsk and Krasnoyarsk. The three options are (1) a U.S. Trade and Development Agency-sponsored feasibility study to jointly assess possible fossil fuel replacement power sources; (2) an assessment of possible nuclear replacement power sources; and (3) an assessment of the technical feasibility of converting the cores of the production reactors to an operational mode eliminating further production of weapons-grade plutonium. Preliminary findings for the first option will be completed by the third quarter of 1996. The first phase of the second option has now been completed, identifying four suitable Russian new-generation nuclear reactors (AST-500, NP-500, ATEC-200

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and VK-300) which could be built within ten years at a cost of approximately \$1 billion apiece.

The third option has also completed its first phase analysis, concluding that "core conversion is technically feasible, that it would lead to a significant reduction in the volume of spent fuel generated annually, that after conversion there would be an insignificant amount of reactor-grade plutonium in the spent fuel, that certain inherent improvements in the safety of the reactor's operation would be achieved, and that conversion could be carried out over...a two year period" at an estimated cost of \$80 million. In correspondence with Department of Energy Secretary O'Leary (attachment 3), as well as in working group sessions leading up to GCC-VI, NRC made clear its concerns that, should the core conversion option be chosen, that (a) safety remain at the heart of the project, in tandem with nuclear nonproliferation goals; (b) that the U.S. seek a commitment from Russia for an objective and rigorous safety assessment; (c) that agreement be reached on what fundamental safety features are to be engineered into the design; and that (d) Russia devote appropriate levels of resources, including financial support and strong technical personnel at the sites, and place increased emphasis on safe nuclear power plant operation.

From the discussions at the January 29 Energy Committee report to the Vice President and Prime Minister, it seems clear that the core conversion option will be selected. We have been informed by DOE that the \$10 million needed for phase two of the core conversion study is being sought in various assistance accounts administered by AID (and perhaps Nunn-Lugar). The Administration sees no likelihood of obtaining funding for the other two high cost options, although they will continue to be evaluated as alternatives for the converted reactors at the end of their service life (about ten years after conversion). I believe the NRC emphasis on technical and cultural safety was well received. NRC will assist, to the extent resources permit, in helping our Russian counterparts enhance their capabilities to conduct the required safety review for the conversion option.

On the afternoon of January 29, just before the beginning of the GCC Energy Committee session, the Vice President, Prime Minister, Secretary O'Leary, myself and others toured a special DOE and NRC joint exhibit on U.S.-Russian cooperation in nuclear safety and materials protection and control set up at the Department of State (attachment 4). At the close of the walkthrough the Vice President suggested, and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin agreed, that the exhibit be taken to Moscow for the April 1996 Nuclear Summit. The exhibit will be moved to the Department of Energy for a special viewing by press and invited U.S. Government dignitaries on February 1, 1996. After the April Nuclear Summit, NRC's panels will be placed on display in the lobby of TWFN.

The Vice President and Prime Minister committed to hold a seventh GCC meeting in June, in the week following the Russian Presidential elections. Further,

the issues being negotiated in each of the committees are at the stage that tough choices will need to be made, and long-term financial obligations will be incurred.

Attachments:

- IS 1. Text of NRC-GAN statement
NIS 2. Final Report of the Energy Committee
Part IS 3. NRC 1/18/96 letter to DOE and DOE response letter of Jan. 24
IS 4. Text of NRC exhibit
NIS 5. NRC Press statement

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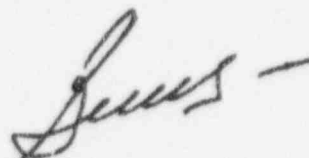
JOINT STATEMENT BY DR. SHIRLEY ANN JACKSON, CHAIRMAN
OF THE U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION AND
YURI GEORGEVICH VISHNEVSKY, CHAIRMAN OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERAL
NUCLEAR AND RADIATION SAFETY AUTHORITY

Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and Yuri Georgeovich Vishnevsky, Chairman of the Russian Federal Nuclear and Radiation Safety Authority (GOSATOMNAZDOR) are utilizing the occasion of the Gore/Chernomyrdin Commission VI meetings in Washington to reaffirm the mutually beneficial and constructive relationship that has been established and maintained between their two agencies over the past several years.

Dr. Jackson and Y. G. Vishnevsky also reaffirmed the program of work that will be conducted by their two agencies over the next 12 to 18 months, as defined in the Memorandum of Meeting between Mr. James Taylor, NRC's Executive Director for Operations and Alexander Timofeevich Gutsalov, GOSATOMNAZDOR's First Deputy Chairman, dated December 15, 1995.



Shirley Ann Jackson
Chairman
United States Nuclear
Regulatory Commission



Y. G. Vishnevsky
Chairman
Russian Federal Nuclear and
Radiation Safety Authority



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

February 7, 1996

Dr. Juan Manuel Kindelán
Chairman
Consejo de Seguridad Nuclear
Justo Dorado, 11
28040 Madrid
Spain

Dear Dr. Kindelán:

Thank you for your letter of December 19, 1995, in which you indicate the CSN's desire to continue the long-standing collaboration with NRC on nuclear safety research programs of mutual interest. I agree with you that we need to continue and strengthen our cooperative activities in the area of nuclear regulatory research. Since Dr. David Morrison, NRC's Director of Nuclear Regulatory Research, visited Spain in December 1995, our research staff has started discussions with your technical staff to revise and adapt the content of the agreement so that the renewed agreement will meet the current needs of both organizations.

Since I expect that all necessary administrative arrangements to renew our agreement can be completed within the next few months, I would like to accept your gracious invitation to visit the CSN's headquarters to sign the renewal of our research agreement, to hold discussions on matters of mutual interest, and then perhaps to visit a reactor site. I would propose to do so prior to the IAEA General Conference. If this is acceptable, I will ask a member of the NRC's Office of International Programs staff to coordinate with your staff in working out the detailed arrangements for the visit. In the meantime, I want to assure you that the CSN and the NRC can continue to collaborate under the present agreement until a new agreement is signed.

Sincerely,

Shirley Ann Jackson

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