STUDY: U.S. NUCLEAR REACTORS VULNERABLE TO TERRORIST ATTACK

None of 107 U.S. Reactors in Study is Adequately Protected, But Among Most Vulnerable are 11 Reactors in CA, CT, FL, MD, MA, MO, NY, NC, TX, VA, … Including 1 Within 25 Miles of White House.

AUSTIN, TX – August 15, 2013 – More than 10 years after the 9/11 hijackers considered flying a fully loaded passenger jet into a Manhattan area nuclear reactor, U.S. commercial and research nuclear facilities remain inadequately protected against two credible terrorist threats – the theft of bomb-grade material to make a nuclear weapon, and sabotage attacks intended to cause a reactor meltdown – according to a new report prepared under a contract for the Pentagon by the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Project (NPPP) at the University of Texas at Austin's LBJ School of Public Affairs, and released today.

Available online at www.NPPP.org, the report, titled ***"Protecting U.S. Nuclear Facilities from Terrorist Attack: Re-assessing the Current 'Design Basis Threat' Approach,"*** finds that none of the 104 commercial nuclear power reactors in the United States is protected against a maximum credible terrorist attack, such as the one perpetrated on September 11, 2001. More than a decade after the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history, operators of existing nuclear facilities are still not required to defend against the number of terrorist teams or attackers associated with 9/11, nor against airplane attacks, nor even against readily available weapons such as high-power sniper rifles.

Of particular concern, the NPPP report finds:

- Some U.S. nuclear power plants are vulnerable to terrorist attack from the sea, but they are not required to protect against such ship-borne attacks. Reactors in this category include Diablo Canyon in California, St. Lucie in Florida, Brunswick in North Carolina, Surry in Virginia, Indian Point in New York, Millstone in Connecticut, Pilgrim in Massachusetts, and the South Texas Project.

- Another serious terrorism danger is posed by three civilian research reactors that are fueled with bomb-grade uranium, which is vulnerable to theft to make nuclear weapons. These facilities are not defended against a posited terrorist threat, unlike military facilities that hold the same material. The three reactors are at the University of Missouri in Columbia, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which is located just two dozen miles from the White House in the Washington, D.C./Baltimore suburb of Gaithersburg. The facilities are supposed to convert to non-weapons-grade, low-enriched uranium fuel. But they will continue to use bomb-grade uranium, and remain vulnerable to terrorist theft, for at least another decade, according to the latest schedule.

Report co-author Professor Alan J. Kuperman, the coordinator of the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Project, recently alerted nuclear security specialists to these dangers in a presentation at the annual meeting of the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management.

Commenting on the new NPPP report, Prof. Kuperman said: **"More than 10 years have come and gone since the events of September 2001, and America's civilian nuclear facilities remain unprotected against a terrorist attack of that scale. Instead, our civilian reactors prepare only against a much smaller-scale attack, known as the "design basis threat," while the government fails to provide supplementary protection against a realistic 9/11-type attack. It would be a tragedy if the United States had to look back after such an attack on a nuclear reactor and say that we could have and should have done more to prevent the catastrophe."**

Kuperman added: **"Less than two dozen miles from the White House and Capitol Hill, a nuclear reactor contains bomb-grade uranium but it is not required to protect against even the lesser 'design basis threat' of terrorism. We know where the weak spots are when it comes to nuclear facilities, so it would be the height of irresponsibility to fail to take action now."**

The NPPP report also notes that some U.S. government nuclear facilities – operated by the Pentagon and Department of Energy – are protected against most or all of the above threats. But other U.S. government nuclear sites remain unprotected against such credible threats because security officials claim that terrorists do not value the sites or that the consequences would not be catastrophic. To the

contrary, the NPPP's report argues, it is impossible to know which high-value nuclear targets are preferred by terrorists, or which attacks would have the gravest consequences.

Accordingly, the NPPP recommends that Washington require a level of protection at all potentially high-consequence U.S. nuclear targets – including both nuclear power reactors and civilian research facilities with bomb-grade material – sufficient to defend against a maximum credible terrorist attack.

To meet this standard at commercial facilities, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission should upgrade its "design basis threat," and the U.S. government should provide the requisite additional security that is not supplied by private-sector licensees.

MEDIA CONTACT: Alex Frank, (703) 276-3264 or afrank@hastingsgroup.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio replay of this NPPP news event will be available by 5 p.m. EDT/4 p.m. CDT on August 15, 2013 at http://www.nppp.org.