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Report: Site cannot defend against an act of terrorism

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An internal investigation of security at Indian Point completed earlier this year found that the on-site security force did not believe it could defend the nuclear power plant against a terrorist attack.

In addition, the security analysis found the plant's 59 guards did not believe their training, their weapons, and the existing security defense plan was sufficient to protect the plant from a realistic terrorist threat, despite public statements by plant and state officials to the contrary. A copy of the report, written in January, was obtained by The Journal News.

The shortcomings cited in the report contrast sharply with statements by the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the plant's owner, the Entergy Corp., in the months following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, that security was not an issue at the Indian Point nuclear plant.

The analysis was prepared by a consultant hired by Entergy in December 2001 to evaluate security defenses at Indian Point 2 and to develop a new single-site security plan. Entergy Nuclear Northeast had purchased Indian Point 2 from Con Edison a week before the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Indian Point 3 was purchased from the New York Power Authority in January 2001.

Many of the security guards, the report states, feared that some of their members were temperamentally unsuited to carry loaded weapons. They also said the qualifying exams for carrying weapons had been rigged, in some cases, to ensure guards could pass.

Officers were allowed to take the qualifying exams three times, the report states, while procedures only allow a guard to fail two such tests before they are relieved of duty. They must be retrained in order to take the test again.

The report was unusually blunt in its assessment of the problems facing plant security and the consensus of 59 guards and officers who were interviewed.

"Do the security officers/guards believe that they can adequately defend the plant without additional resources?" the report asked. "Conclusion: No."

Keith Logan, the report's author, is a former investigator with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's office of investigations and a licensed attorney.

Entergy has declined to discuss specifics of their security upgrades except to say they have spent millions of dollars in improvements. Entergy spokesman James Steets couldn't be reached last night.

Last month, federal regulators said Indian Point's security and safety systems, as well as emergency-evacuation plans are sufficient to protect the public in the event of a terrorist attack, and denied a petition from an environmental group and several elected officials to close the nuclear plant.

That November decision formally ended a year-long legal effort by the environmental organization, Riverkeeper, and several officials, including Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef and state Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, D-Greenburgh. The group had petitioned the agency in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and asked that the plants be shut down until Entergy proved it could protect the plant against a similar assault.

The petitioners had sought security upgrades at the plant, with sufficient weaponry to protect it against an aerial assault with a commercial jetliner.

The NRC's assessment followed a year of extensive upgrades in security practices at all the nation's power plants. Neither the NRC nor Entergy has ever disclosed the kind of improvements that have been made.

One year ago this month, the director of the state Office of Public Security declared security at Indian Point to be even more robust than before the Sept. 11 terrorist strikes.

"My feeling after this whole process is this is an extremely safe place," James Kallstrom, who used to head the FBI's New York office, said at a news conference that was held at Indian Point.

"I could tell you that it's (security's) robust enough. Let 'em try. That may be one way to flush them out," he said of potential terrorists.

Kallstrom declined to release an FBI report recommending more than 20 improvements at the plants.

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