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supra news by [unclear]*

U.S. -- NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION: FEAR BRINGS ACTION ON THE HILL F-6

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WA 4 WASHINGTON, SEPT. 5 (SPECIAL)-- THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY ROBERTA HORNING APPEARS IN THE SATURDAY WASHINGTON STAR:

1976

THE FORD ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS ARE CONTEMPLATING DRASTIC CHANGES IN U.S. POLICY ON FOREIGN SALES OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS ON GROUNDS THEY ARE INCREASING WORLDWIDE CAPACITY FOR MAKING BOMBS.

A SPECIAL TASK FORCE ESTABLISHED BY PRESIDENT FORD, FOR EXAMPLE, IS RECOMMENDING A WHOLE NEW SERIES OF SAFEGUARDS ON "PEACEFUL" NUCLEAR MATERIALS ALREADY IN OTHER COUNTRIES, A TIGHTENING OF PRESENT SALES AGREEMENTS AND DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE ON ALLIES ALSO IN THE NUCLEAR-PLANT-SELLING BUSINESS.

SOME OF THE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS IN A 36-PAGE DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT CIRCULATING THROUGH SEVERAL FEDERAL AGENCIES, THE WASHINGTON STAR HAS LEARNED, INCLUDE:

-- SETTING UP AN INTERNATIONAL POLICE FORCE TO MONITOR EXCESS NUCLEAR FUEL THAT CAN BE CONVERTED INTO BOMBS. THIS SPECIAL FORCE WOULD COME UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY WHICH NOW HAS ONLY SURVEILLANCE POWERS.

-- MAKING PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS WITH AMERICAN ALLIES, SUCH AS FRANCE AND GERMANY, WHO ARE ALSO SELLING PLANTS. THE HOPE HERE, PRESUMABLY, IS TO SWAY PUBLIC OPINION IN THE COUNTRIES TO FORCE THEM TO CUT DOWN NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND SHARE U.S. CONCERN.

-- COMMUNICATING "MORE CONVINCING SIGNALS" TO THE BUYERS AND SELLERS OF NUCLEAR PLANTS THROUGH THE USE OF STRONG DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE, SUCH AS "GRAVE DEVELOPMENT."

-- REAFFIRMING, IN STRONG TERMS, THE U.S. POSITION THAT REPROCESSING OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS SHOULD BE HANDLED ONLY BY PLANT SELLERS, NOT BUYERS.

-- REDRAFTING ALL U.S. AGREEMENTS WITH PURCHASERS TO REFLECT STRICTER SAFEGUARDS. THE REASON FOR THIS IS THAT THE AGREEMENTS NORMALLY LAST THE LIFETIME OF A POWER PLANT -- USUALLY AROUND 40 YEARS -- AND THOSE AGREED TO IN THE 1960'S ARE NOT AS "TIGHT" AS THOSE WRITTEN NOW. MANY AGREEMENTS NOW IN EXISTENCE STRETCH INTO THE NEXT CENTURY.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE DRAFTED BY A SPECIAL TASK FORCE HEADED BY ROBERT FRI, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY.

BESIDES THE WHITE HOUSE WORKING GROUP, OTHERS INVOLVED INCLUDE THE DEPARTMENTS OF STATE, COMMERCE, DEFENSE, INTERIOR AND TREASURY; THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION, ERDA, THE ARMS CONTROL AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, THE FEDERAL ENERGY ADMINISTRATION, THE COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY.

THE TASK FORCE APPARENTLY TURNED DOWN ONE OF THE OPTIONS IT WAS CONSIDERING -- HALTING NUCLEAR PLANT SALES ALTOGETHER.

ITS WORK ALSO WAS COMPLETED EARLIER THAN SCHEDULED, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE NON-PROLIFERATION LEGISLATION IS EXPECTED TO EMERGE SHORTLY FROM CONGRESS.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE STRICTLY THAT UNTIL PRESIDENT FORD DECIDES WHICH ONES, IF ANY, HE WISHES TO ADOPT AS POLICY.

THE ISSUE HAS GENERATED ENOUGH INTEREST ON CAPITOL HILL TO LEAD CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TO PREDICT THAT LEGISLATION AIMED AT EASING THE DANGER OF THE NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY SPREAD WILL BE ONE OF THE FEW NEW BILLS TO COME UP FOR VOTE IN BOTH THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE IN THE FEW REMAINING WORKING DAYS OF CONGRESS.

(PTO)

"MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE RESTLESS ON THIS SUBJECT," REP. MIKE MCCORMACK, D-WASH., ONE OF THE LEADING PROPONENTS OF NUCLEAR POWER, SAID THE OTHER DAY.

CURRENTLY, THERE IS FLOATING LEGISLATION ON THE SENATE SIDE. ANTIPROLIFERATION BILLS ARE BEING WORKED ON BY STAFF MEMBERS OF THE JOINT ATOMIC, THE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEES. THE HOPE IS TO HAVE A BILL READY BY SEPT. 16.

ON THE HOUSE SIDE, THE BALL IS MOSTLY BEING CARRIED BY REP. JOHN ANDERSON, R-ILL. AS A MEMBER OF THE RULES COMMITTEE, HE IS EXPECTED TO GET LEGISLATION TO THE FLOOR.

THE FLURRY OF ACTIVITY IN CONGRESS -- WHICH PREDATED WHITE HOUSE INTEREST -- COMES IN THE WAKE OF A SERIES OF DISQUIETING EVENTS THAT FEW PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO FOR YEARS: THE GROWING SALES OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS AND THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY OF GENERATING ELECTRICITY WITH ATOMIC FUEL THAT COULD BE DIVERTED INTO THE MAKING OF BOMBS.

THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT DANGER SIGNAL CAME IN MAY 1974 WHEN INDIA PROVED WHAT DETRACTORS OF "PEACEFUL USES" HAD LONG BEEN WARNING. SHE EXPLODED A NUCLEAR BOMB MADE FROM MATERIALS GATHERED FROM A POWER PLANT.

IN RECENT MONTHS, NEW DEVELOPMENTS HAVE ADDED FEARS AND A NAGGING CONCERN THAT UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY ARMED TO COPE WITH THE PANDORA'S BOX IT INADVERTENTLY OPENED:

-- IN JUNE 1975 WEST GERMANY SIGNED AN AGREEMENT TO SUPPLY BRAZIL WITH A COMPLETE NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE, INCLUDING A REPROCESSING PLANT WHICH EXTRACTS PLUTONIUM, THE NECESSARY ELEMENTS FOR BOMB-MAKING.

-- AN OFFER BY FRANCE -- AFTER A TURNDOWN BY THE UNITED STATES -- TO SELL A REPROCESSING SYSTEM TO PAKISTAN WHICH DECIDED IT WANTED A PLANT PRESUMABLY BECAUSE INDIA HAS A BOMB.

-- FORMER PRESIDENT RICHARD M. NIXON'S PROMISE TO SUPPLY LARGE NUCLEAR REACTORS TO BOTH EGYPT AND ISRAEL.

-- REQUESTS TO THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION, WHICH LICENSES EXPORTS, FOR REACTOR AND FUEL SALES TO SOUTH AFRICA AS WELL AS A STEAM GENERATOR TO SPAIN.

-- REPORTS, THOUGH OFFICIALLY UNCONFIRMED, LAST WEEK THAT TAIWAN HAS BEEN SECRETELY REPROCESSING FUEL AND HAS THE CAPACITY TO MANUFACTURE BOMBS.

THE UNITED STATES APPARENTLY HAD SEEN THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH HAPPENINGS. IT LOOK THE LEAD IN GETTING THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (NPT) THAT CAME INTO EFFECT IN 1970. THE TREATY HAS NOT DONE ALL THAT MUCH, THOUGH. AND, AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, THIS COUNTRY HAS SOLD PLANTS TO NATIONS REFUSING TO SIGN IT.

THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS AROUND THE WORLD HAD INNOCENT BEGINNINGS AND GOOD INTENTIONS.

THE IDEA SEEMED A GOOD ONE AT THE TIME. THE COUNTRY THAT HAD USED THE ATOMIC BOMB DURING WORLD WAR II, KILLING TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, WAS WILLING TO SHARE THE DANGEROUS TECHNOLOGY, BUT SOLELY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES -- NOTABLY SUPPLYING ELECTRIC POWER AROUND THE WORLD.

SO IN 1954 THE UNITED STATES INITIATED A RATHER REMARKABLE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM CALLED "ATOMS FOR PEACE."

IRONICALLY, NEARLY 23 YEARS LATER, "ATOMS FOR PEACE" HAS COME FULL CIRCLE. FROM BOMBS TO PEACEFUL USES TO BOMBS. WHAT WAS CONVEIVED AS "PEACEFUL PURPOSES," IT TURNS OUT, HAS BECOME A POTENTIAL FOR DISASTER, FOR A HOLOCAUST.

NOW THE WORLD IS FACED WITH THE SPECTRE OF "PEACEFUL BOMBS" -- THE PROSPECT, ALREADY A PROVEN POSSIBILITY AS IN INDIA, OR MATERIALS USED IN NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS BEING READILY CONVERTIBLE INTO WEAPONS.

AS OF MAY 1976 THE WORLD'S NUCLEAR CLUB INCLUDED, BESIDES THE UNITED STATES, THE SOVIET UNION, BRITAIN, FRANCE, THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND INDIA. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT ISRAEL, TOO, HAS THE BOMB.

MORE SIGNIFICANT, ACCORDING TO STUDIES DONE FOR THE ARMS CONTROL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND THE JOINT COMMISSION, AN INCREASING NUMBER OF NATIONS ARE IN THE RANKS OF "NUCLEAR POTENTIALS."

FOR EXAMPLE, COUNTRIES BELIEVED CAPABLE OF JOINING THE NUCLEAR CLUB WITHIN THE NEXT THREE YEARS INCLUDE CANADA, TAIWAN, ISRAEL, ITALY, JAPAN, SOUTH AFRICA, SPAIN, SWEDEN AND SWITZERLAND.

COUNTRIES APPEARING TECHNICALLY CAPABLE OF JOINING THE LIST IN THE NEXT FOUR TO SIX YEARS INCLUDE ARGENTINA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, BRAZIL, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, DENMARK, EAST GERMANY, THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA (SOUTH KOREA), THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY AND POLAND.

FINALLY, THE STUDIES CONCLUDE, COUNTRIES CAPABLE OF DETONATING A BOMB WITHIN THE NEXT 10 YEARS INCLUDE EGYPT, FINLAND, IRAN, MEXICO, PAKISTAN, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, TURKEY AND YUGOSLAVIA.

IT IS THESE KINDS OF CHILLING STATISTICS THAT LED KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS -- ESPECIALLY SENS. STUART SYMINGTON AND ABRAHAM RIBICOFF -- TO BEGIN MOVING ON LEGISLATION AND SENDING OUT DIRE SIGNALS.

RIBICOFF WARNS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT "TO GIVE A SENSE OF THE QUANTITATIVE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM, BY 1990 NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS IN THE LESS-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES MAY BE GENERATING 30,000 POUNDS OF PLUTONIUM A YEAR -- THE EQUIVALENT OF 3,000 ATOMIC BOMBS."

A SYMINGTON BILL PASSED CONGRESS THIS YEAR AS AN AMENDMENT TO THE FOREIGN AID PACKAGE. IT APPLIES SANCTIONS, SPECIFICALLY THE WITHHOLDING OF VARIOUS KINDS OF AID, FROM COUNTRIES MISUSING "PEACEFUL" NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY.

IT WAS THIS BILL THAT SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER TRIED TO USE AS A STICK WHEN HE VISITED PAKISTAN TO TRY TO DISSUADE IT FROM BUYING A REPROCESSING PLANT.

ONE OF THE MAJOR PROLIFERATION BILLS IN CONGRESS IS RIBICOFF'S. IN EFFECT, HE WOULD GIVE THE PRESIDENT 18-MONTHS TO WORK OUT CONDITIONS WITH U.S. ALLIES INTENT ON SELLING PLANTS. HIS BILL WOULD THEN IMPOSE STRICT CRITERIA UNDER WHICH POWER PLANTS COULD BE SOLD, INCLUDING PLEDGES OF "NO EXPLOSIONS."

IT IS NOT CLEAR EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF BILL WILL COME OUT OF CONGRESS IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. THE ONLY THING REALLY CLEAR IS THE MOOD ON CAPITOL HILL. AS SEN. JOHN PASTORE, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT ATOMIC COMMITTEE SAID THE OTHER DAY: "THIS PROLIFERATION THING IS A THING THAT'S APPEARED ON THE HORIZON AND IT'S SCARING PEOPLE TO DEATH."