

February 27, 2002

The Paul Revere Forum: National Security Whistleblowers Speak, Canon House Office Building, Room 402

Statement of Randy Robarge

Thank you for inviting me to this forum. After working over twenty years in the nuclear power industry I became aware of many security issues at nuclear power plants. The last plant I worked is located in Zion, Illinois - a town where I attended the local high school and personally know hundreds of the local residents. The plant sits on the shores of Lake Michigan, just 35 miles from downtown Chicago.

Working as a radiation protection supervisor I had responsibilities for work performed in all of the hot areas of the plant. I knew that on the shores of Lake Michigan over 1100 metric tons of radioactive waste was stored in the spent fuel pool at plant Zion. I also knew the health risks posed by these materials - especially if their storage area was breached and contaminated materials leaked into the local environment.

In 1998 I learned that Commonwealth Edison Company, the owner of plant Zion, asked permission to reduce the number of security personnel at the plant. I was shocked. Even before this request, the public was not protected from the potential catastrophic consequences of a terrorist attack at Zion. The spent fuel pool was located only 50 feet from a unguarded road and housed outside of the containment vessel, in a building easily subject to terrorist breach from either a small aircraft or a car bomb.

Myself and one other former Zion employee opposed the security reductions. No one listened, and the NRC approved the cut back.

Then came September 11th 2001. I knew that if such an attack happened at Zion, the Great Lake water system and the surrounding environment could have been at risk. I also knew from working directly in reactor containments at nuclear plants throughout the United States, that these containments could not withstand the level of impact I witnessed on TV. I knew the risks our nation faced and I knew I had to act.

I called attorneys at the National Whistleblower Center and informed them of the risk. I informed them that the public statements being issued by the NRC that nuclear plants were designed to withstand airborne assaults was not true. Our government was not telling the truth, and hundreds of thousands of lives were at stake - not to mention the long term environmental impact any such assault would cause.

I provided the Center with information regarding the NRC's failure to adopt reasonable security measures at both operating and non-operating facilities. The Center was able to access detailed engineering analysis - which was publicly available - which demonstrated that nuclear plants would be destroyed if a September 11th level of attack

was targeted any of the plants across the United States. We exposed this security lapse to the news media, and the Associated Press reported on our findings. We then filed a formal petition with Homeland Security and the NRC. Within a week of our exposures, I learned that “no fly zones” had finally been ordered around nuclear plants. However, without getting into detail in this forum, I know that the security risks at these plants are far from resolved.

I would like to again thank Senator Charles Grassley and all of the other members of Congress who came today to show support for national security related whistleblowers. I would also like specially thank the National Whistleblower Center, which has provided extraordinary support to me during my very difficult days as a “whistleblower.”

In closing, I hope and pray that our meeting today will help provide more pressure on the NRC and the nuclear power industry to adequately protect the public.