



NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION
PREVENTION PROJECT

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Trump Era Dawns with Largest Bomb-Grade Uranium Export in Five Years
U.S. to Supply Belgian Reactor that ISIS Terrorists Targeted
In Response to NPPP Petition, NRC Truncates License Duration

WASHINGTON – On the Friday before a holiday weekend, near the end of President Donald Trump’s first month in office, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) quietly approved the largest bomb-grade uranium export in five years. Adding controversy, the weapons-usable material is destined for a Belgian nuclear facility that ISIS terrorists recently targeted.

The NRC’s [order](#) approves the export of 144 kilograms (317 pounds) of highly enriched uranium – sufficient for at least five nuclear weapons if stolen by terrorists – to fuel the BR-2 research reactor at the [Belgian Nuclear Research Centre](#). ISIS terrorists had conducted video surveillance of a senior official at the Belgian facility, [according to European investigators](#).

“How ironic,” noted Prof. Alan J. Kuperman, coordinator of the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Project (NPPP) at the University of Texas. “Last week, President Trump [falsely accused](#) Hillary Clinton of giving Russia unenriched uranium, which in any case is unsuitable for nuclear weapons. Now his NRC Chairman has approved export of bomb-grade uranium to a facility targeted by ISIS terrorists. As the President might Tweet: if something terrible happens, we know whom to blame: @realDonaldTrump.”

Last August, Kuperman filed a [petition](#) against the export application, claiming two aspects were illegal: the six-year supply of HEU fuel, and the 10-year license duration. The petition cited a 1992 U.S. law authored by Senate Minority Leader, Charles Schumer (D-NY), prohibiting export of HEU unless the recipient is converting to safer low enriched uranium (LEU) that is unsuitable for nuclear weapons. Kuperman claimed the Belgians could convert to an existing LEU “silicide” fuel much sooner than 10 years, and his petition urged the NRC not to approve a license longer than three years.

In its decision, the NRC partially granted Kuperman’s request, truncating the license duration from ten to six years, until 2023. Consistent with the petition, the Commission acknowledged “it is also possible that the BR2 could convert to using LEU-silicide fuel in its reactor core,” which the NRC said “could allow for the BR2’s conversion around 2022-2023.” The order concluded that “Shortening the license duration, therefore, allows us to increase our confidence that the Schumer Amendment criteria will remain satisfied through the entire license term.”

While rejecting Kuperman’s call to limit the license to three years, the Commission responded to his concern by declaring that “We request that a status update be provided to the NRC at least once every three years and that the update discuss the status of conversion, LEU qualification efforts, fuel consumption rates at the BR2, and whether the projections of the BR2’s needs for HEU have changed.”

Kuperman said today: “I urge the NRC to demand a status update every three years, at minimum, and to immediately suspend the license if it detects violation of U.S. legal requirements for HEU exports.”

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