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January 27, 2002

# Indian Point Reactor

To the Editor:

Re "Nuclear Reactors as Terrorist Targets" (editorial, Jan. 21):

You acknowledge that nuclear plants were not designed to withstand Sept. 11-type attacks, but call the movement to shut down the Indian Point reactor pending security upgrades "an overreaction." This is inconsistent.

Although Indian Point's owner asserts that its 3.5-foot-thick concrete containment domes could survive a jumbo jet attack, the engines could penetrate up to six feet of reinforced concrete. The test you cite of a much smaller aircraft that did not damage a concrete wall on impact proves nothing, since the wall was not attached to the ground and was displaced nearly six feet. The test report said "the major portion of the impact energy went into movement of the target and not in producing structural damage."

You also did not note the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's recent confirmation that 46 percent of nuclear plants have exhibited security weaknesses that could have enabled terrorists to gain access and cause a meltdown.

EDWIN S. LYMAN  
Scientific Director  
Nuclear Control Institute  
Washington, Jan. 24, 2002

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