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N-Plant Attacks Feared

Feds warn of new jet suicide hijack

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WASHINGTON

The country's nuclear plants have been warned that they may be targeted for an attack by suicidal terrorists who plan to crash a hijacked jetliner into a facility, officials said yesterday.

<http://www.nci.org>

The alert, issued Jan. 23, became public yesterday as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told the country to be prepared for surprise attacks that will be "vastly more deadly" than the Sept. 11 catastrophe.

Last week's warning by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stressed that the threat of a kamikaze plane attack was not corroborated but said "the attack was already planned" by three suspected Al Qaeda operatives "already on the ground" who were trying to recruit non-Arabs for the terror mission.



Chernin AP

Could this Con Ed nuclear plant in Peeksville be the next Al Qaeda target?

In New York, James Kallstrom, Gov. Pataki's new security chief, said the Indian Point nuclear complex in Buchanan, Westchester County, could withstand a World Trade Center-type assault without damage to its nuclear cores.

"What I care about is the security of this plant — the ability of a terrorist organization to take it over," said Kallstrom, a former FBI regional director.

Gordon Johndroe, spokesman for U.S. Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge, said the threats to nuclear plants were "uncorroborated and nonspecific to date, time or particular location."

"We remain on alert because the threat remains" to nuclear power plants, other energy facilities and national landmarks, he said.

But a government source said, "There's a lot of concern in the Northwest" about a possible attack on the Space Needle in Seattle.

Warnings about the possibility of even deadlier terror attacks were issued yesterday by the heads of the FBI, CIA and Pentagon, who said intelligence gained in Afghanistan pointed to the need for more security against cyberattacks and ballistic missiles.

Terrorists Did Research Online

Rumsfeld and CIA Director George Tenet described potential threats to energy plants, dams and other facilities.

FBI Director Robert Mueller said laptop computers confiscated in Afghanistan showed that terrorists used the Internet to study the construction of dams and get information on pesticides.

"Our job is to close off as many of those avenues of potential attack as is possible," Rumsfeld said in a speech at the National Defense University outlining the administration's case for a \$48 billion increase in the defense budget next year.

Despite the wide-ranging FBI investigation, Mueller also said, "We know half as much as we'd like" about the terrorists who destroyed the Trade Center.

He warned that "sleeper cells" loyal to terror mastermind Osama Bin Laden may be in the U.S., requiring the nation to remain on high alert indefinitely.

The vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said yesterday that soldiers will be sent to U.S. borders to work with the other federal agencies that guard them.

Marine Gen. Peter Pace said such operations eventually will be overseen by a new military commander for operations protecting the United States.

With Timothy J. Burger

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