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# Close airspace over reactors, Specter says

FAA says some airports would lose private aviation

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By Dennis B. Roddy, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

Six months after the terrorist attacks on America, U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., toured a nuclear power plant in Beaver County and openly worried that it and plants like it are vulnerable to aerial assaults.

"What I intend to do is take the matter up with the FAA," Specter told reporters at a news conference at the Beaver Valley Power Station near Shippingport yesterday morning.

Specter said that the Federal Aviation Administration had lifted a ban on private airplane overflights of nuclear power plants and that pilots are now permitted to cross as low as 1,000 feet above such plants.

The FAA, acting on a request from national security agencies, closed off airspace over 86 nuclear sites around the country between Oct. 30 and Nov. 6.

Noncommercial airplanes were required to keep outside a 10-mile radius around power plants and nuclear laboratories, and at an altitude of 18,000 feet or more. Commercial airliners were not affected by the ban.

The ban was later lifted, although the agency has continued to advise private pilots not to circle such facilities.

Closing the plant to overflights could prove difficult, said William Shumann, an FAA spokesman.

Shumann said the October-November ban closed several airports, notably in Albuquerque, N.M., and Lynchburg, Va., to all private aviation.

Beaver County Airport also was affected by the ban, according to county Commissioner Dan Donatella, who holds a private pilot's license.

Shumann yesterday said the FAA would close airspace over nuclear facilities if asked to do so by executive branch agencies, including the Office of Homeland Security or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

"We would respectfully suggest that Sen. Specter talk to those agencies as well," he said.

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