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Nuclear Power Plant Guards Continue to Raise Concerns

▼ Recently, the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) released "[Nuclear Power Plant Security: Voices from Inside the Fences](#)," a report concluding that our nation's nuclear plant security guards are under-manned, under-trained, and under-equipped. After the release of the report, accounts from other guards around the nation came flooding in. Below are excerpts of what they had to say:

"I have read your 'Voices from Inside' and could not agree more. In one year we have done basically nothing to upgrade our security, no new weapons and a [security] plan that is just not workable. Yet the public is lied to, to believe we are state of the art security and they should feel very safe."

"I was recently introduced to a report regarding security at nuclear power facilities and was astonished at just how familiar it all sounded to me. I am currently employed by [a security subcontractor at a nuclear power plant] and am appalled with the security measures at the plant. I am not alone in feeling this way, and we have made several attempts to get things changed. When I was first hired at [the plant], myself and my classmates all agreed that the training provided in radiological fields and most security areas were extremely basic. The initial training in Nuclear Security was extremely insufficient. The events of September 11, 2001 put us into a heightened state of alert, and called for many extra security measures, especially on this past Independence Day and the one year anniversary of 9/11. The newspaper had an article on our 'added security.' We security officers were surprised at this, and wondered where they got their information, being that security didn't change a bit other than a couple of added weapons."

"On the anniversary of 9/11, security was considered a 'joke' around the plant. We had the same amount of officers, all the same posts, just a couple more weapons at certain locations. Approximately once every two months or so we have employee meetings which are attended by most security officers, the deputy chief and chief of security and the security director. At these meetings, we are asked for opinions, new ideas, complaints, etc. During every meeting I have attended, more security measures, better equipment and better procedures are all brought up. Security measures and procedure ideas are always thrown aside and disregarded as well as most equipment comments and ideas. When terrorism and security issues have been discussed, the reply is 'It won't happen here at [this facility].' Most all security force members including myself have heard this come straight from the security director himself, as well as the chief of security."

"I do this work every day, and from hands on experience I can tell you that our security at [the facility] is only a fraction of what it should be. Not only is it taken very lightly, it is done to barely meet NRC requirements per order of the security director. If an actual organized terrorist attack were to happen, we would not prevail, plain and simple."

"I have worked as a Security Officer for over 10 yrs. I have been informed from a member of management that we were not allowed to participate in your survey about Nuclear Security. I would like to tell you that the conditions here mirror exactly what was stated in your report. The hours spent on training would be a gift if we came anywhere near the numbers you stated!"

"I've worked at this plant for more than ten years and nothing has changed in the time I've been there, not even after 9/11. Since September they have only added one post."

"We only shoot once or twice a year for a few minutes, turnover and morale are appallingly bad, the utility treats us like third class citizens, and the contractor we work for is even worse to us. We do the best we can with what we have, but our weapons are no match for modern, state of the art equipment, and we are so grossly understaffed and overworked (12 hours 5 or 6 days a week)."

"I feel that both parties [the governor and NRC] have been intentionally misled to believe that there is a strong security presence, tactical training is high, and procedures are very thorough. I have even witnessed a false security post created temporarily due to an expected visit from the governor. When the Nuclear Regulatory Commission or the governor comes for a visit and/or inspection, they meet with [the security director and the chief of security], and their information stops there. Neither party speaks with security officers or security lieutenants to find out what is really going on.

The State Police recently came to [the facility] to learn of security practices, and to participate in a force on force drill with security officers. All I can say is that security failed dramatically, and the state troopers were very surprised at the lack of training and equipment. Another issue is the turnover rate of security officers. Lack of pay, too much overtime, and unsatisfactory training procedures has caused many security officers to resign, causing yet even more overtime.

Our attempts at making changes at [the facility] have been unsuccessful so far, and we all sincerely hope that perhaps you can do something to help."

"I am a security officer at [a nuclear power plant] and everything that I have read in your report [is] 100% true. We are under paid and poorly trained to the fact that we do not get enough range time to be as good as we could possibly be. We also have some of the worst medical benefits that I have ever seen in my life. Worst of all, [the utility] is lying to the public about how secure we are with the National Guard, local and state police in place. The truth is that most of the time we only have three National Guardsmen in place - that is, if all of them show up. There have been times when there are only one or two of them working."

"I have been a nuclear security officer for over 10 years. The industry is focused on meeting the bare minimum requirement from the NRC and not physical security.

Does [the utility] put money over security? We have been told often times that we are not vital to producing electricity and I believe that is why security is looked down upon."

"I find the report to be extremely accurate. I know that a surprise on-site inspection and interview of security would prove all your findings to be true."

The probability is that the findings would actually be much worse. It's scary when you think of the results which would occur should an attack on a nuclear power plant be successful."

"You are absolutely 10,000% right about nuclear plants not being adequately guarded."

"Hopefully someone will listen. The Nuclear Power Plants are not safe and secure from attack."

"We aren't highly trained like they say."

"Let's do something!!!"

"Voices from Behind the Fences' hit home. But this only scratches the surface with the problems concerning Nuclear Plant Security. The Nuclear lobby is so big and strong that over the years NRC has bowed to the demands of the Nuclear lobby. I feel the only safe way to resolve this problem is to let NRC be concerned about the safe operation of the Nuclear Plants and let another Agency be concerned with the security of the Nuclear Plants, such as the Office of Homeland Security. The Nuclear Plant Managers will only meet the minimum security requirements requested by the NRC.

Profit is the bottom line and security is only a necessary evil required to operate a Nuclear Plant."

"Your report was so true that everyone at [this facility] thought your were there!"

"Please continue to sound the alarm. If a group organized of 10 highly trained para military terrorists decided to attack our plant, they could take us out in less than five minutes. The stupifying shock of actually being attacked would allow most attackers to run right past the guards.

The OSRE is a joke. It is all preplanned and the attacking force is told how they can attack. Would it not make more sense to allow an attacking force to act and think freely? Would a terrorist follow the rules of an OSRE drill? Come on! You've got to be kidding me! And of course, the Design Basis Threat is a pathetic document which must be rewritten to allow flexibility in how we would be attacked and how we would RESPOND."

"I am a security guard at [a nuclear power plant] in [the Northeast], working for [a security contractor]. We make several dollars an hour less than the people who cut the grass and shovel the snow. Our duties have increased since 9-11-01, the stress level has increased and the respect and appreciation from our bosses and clients have DECREASED. Your article on nuclear security is very accurate. Under paid, over worked and under trained for the new threats that are very real. We put our lives on the line every day. The real problem is that we are undermanned and no one in authority wants to admit that is where the problem lies."

"The nation's nuclear plants are not safe. Unqualified officers and budget blinded management have hindered nuclear security for as long as it has existed. One thing is for sure - WE ARE NOT SAFE.

If a violation is brought t o a security supervisor's attention they are often ignored/rationalized. It is my belief that it would take half the number of 9/11 hijackers to overtake a nuclear plant."

"As long as the power companies are able to make comment to the public about security and the security force can't for fear of losing their jobs nothing will change, the public will remain at risk."

"The security at this particular plant would scare the hell out of the local citizens."

"It seems that nuclear management is really not thinking of the safety of the public!"

"I am a guard at a plant which I do not wish to name. It's all about MONEY!! Many good suggestions have been presented by guards on operations as well as training and staffing. All have been scoffed at with the reply of 'Are YOU going to pay for it?'

It's nonsense and nothing will be done at Nuclear plants until something actually happens to one and tens of thousands of innocent people are dead."

"I just read your report on nuclear security and you could not have hit the nail more squarely on the head if you tried. I am a guard at a nuclear power plant. IT'S ALL TRUE!!! As for the guards who would run rather than fight? Why make your wife a widow and your children father/motherless when any resistance would be futile."

If you are a security guard who would like to add a comment, please email us at pogo@pogo.org.

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