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Nonproliferation of highly enriched uranium - German Research Reactor in Munich

Dear Ms. Dedik,

in the wake of the speech of President Bush to the German Parliament on May 23rd, we are sending you a letter concerning a very serious issue of the U.S.-German partnership: the proliferation of highly enriched uranium (HEU). In Berlin, President Bush said: "The authors of terror are seeking nuclear, chemical and biological weapons." And he also admitted: "Those who seek missiles and terrible weapons are also familiar with the map of Europe." Nonproliferation will be on top of the agenda of the NATO-Russia Council. The proliferation of HEU does not fit into the policy of disarmament between the U.S. and Russia. The German Research Reactor in Munich (FRM-II) has not been on the U.S. radar screen, in part because the Technical University of Munich, operating authority of the reactor, will get HEU from Russia and not from the U.S. To our mind this makes the issue even more important. The U.S. should be discouraging all such unnecessary global commerce in HEU because of the threat of terrorism in the wake of September 11th.

As you may know, the FRM-II during its lifetime is scheduled to use 1.2 metric tons of HEU fuel, sufficient for dozens of nuclear weapons if stolen by terrorists. In addition, under current plans, the reactor site will always have enough HEU stored on site for at least one nuclear weapon. Moreover, the reactor is located on a university campus, which cannot provide the level of security required for such nuclear weapons material. According to the U.S. Argonne National Laboratory, the reactor's core could be converted prior to start up to use low enriched uranium (LEU) fuel, which is unsuitable for weapons and would eliminate this terrorist threat. Yet, the German government is poised to grant the final operating license to start operations using HEU fuel within the next few months.

Since the question of the start-up of the reactor is on the agenda now, it is important to influence German politics as soon as possible, even before the national election on September 22nd. We know that the topic is highly sensitive. The Bush Administration is very much concerned about good relationships with their partners in Europe. We are very glad that you take this into consideration. But we should take the danger of terrorism also into account. The discussion of FRM-II is controversial. We are sure that it would be very helpful in the long run for all of us, if you could send a letter concerning your worries about FRM-II. If you do so, you can be sure that your critique will not play a negative role in U.S.-German partnership. To the contrary, the U.S. plays an important role on this issue. It is crucial that you speak frankly about the danger of proliferation of HEU with your German partners. We should stop the use of HEU before the reactor starts running. As members of the ruling



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parties, the Socialdemocratic Party and the Green Party, we urge the U.S. to provide all possible technical assistance to enable the FRM-II to convert to low-enriched uranium (LEU) prior to start-up and offer to share research facilities with German scientists in the meantime.

Please find enclosed an article by Alexander Glaser in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists March/April 2002 concerning the FRM-II case and an article by Joby Warrick in the International Herald Tribune concerning two studies that call for rapidly phasing out the use of bomb-grade nuclear material at research reactors around the world. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

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