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August 18, 1981

Dear Friend:

Knowing of your concern about the problems of nuclear proliferation and nuclear technology, I want to let you know of my current actions to confront this urgent issue.

When nuclear proliferation is discussed today, it is usually in the context of the massive and truly awesome stockpiling of elaborate nuclear weapons between the superpowers. This is indeed a development which deserves urgent attention and must be stopped.

But even more alarming, and much less widely-known, is the rapid proliferation of nuclear weapons technology throughout the many other countries of the world--horizontal proliferation. What is most unsettling about this spread of nuclear armaments from country to country is that it is made possible and, in fact, encouraged by the very nations who say they wish to keep it under control. These include the United States, France, West Germany, Italy and other western industrialized nations.

To a large extent, the ability of a nation to build nuclear weapons is a direct result of the export policies of leading western nations. For more than a decade, these nations have been hawking what is claimed to be the "peaceful atom" to anyone who would buy it. We have shipped commercial and research nuclear reactors to more than 25 nations throughout the world. I believe that wherever there is the so-called peaceful atom, there is also a potential bomb factory. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that it takes little skill and relatively few resources to concoct an effective nuclear weapon.

Because of this, I believe that it is impossible for anyone who truly believes in containing the perilous spread of nuclear weapons to also advocate continued commerce in nuclear technology on an unrestricted international level. There are no guarantees offered by any international watchdog group or any nation that can effectively prevent the diversion of nuclear technology to a weapons use by a despotic leader or terrorist group.

Sadly, the United States government is far from formulating the sort of effective nuclear non-proliferation policy which can adequately protect the world from the threat of a terrorist or a misguided leader who has the nuclear bomb. Recently, President Reagan announced the Administration's position on this issue. Unfortunately this policy is a "non-policy." It lacks the strength and the force we desperately need to reverse this perilous spiral towards disaster. It also fails to outline any specific steps toward blocking the continued spread of nuclear weapons.

In the House, I have taken a lead role in sponsoring and supporting efforts which seek to end the horizontal proliferation of dangerous nuclear technology. Following the destruction of the nuclear reactor in Iraq, I introduced a resolution in the House and Senate (H.Con.Res. 150) which urged bold and swift action to deal with nuclear proliferation. I also spoke on the floor of the House in support of a resolution asking for strong nuclear non-proliferation policy introduced by Representative Dennis Eckart (D-OH). This resolution passed without a dissenting vote.

When the House of Representatives resumes its activities this Fall, I plan to introduce an amendment which would deny funds to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the purpose of approving the export of uranium fuel (U-235) which has been enriched to a level higher than 20 percent. I feel this is a necessary step because the United States is currently exporting enriched uranium as high as 90 percent pure which can -- without further reprocessing -- be used to build an atomic weapon. The problem is enormous. Since 1954, the U.S. has shipped more than 9,640 kilograms of this highly-enriched uranium to 27 nations, including South Africa, Taiwan, Pakistan and Argentina.

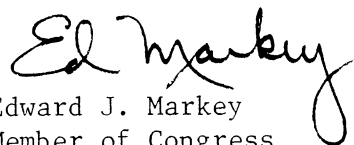
I believe these shipments must stop. Such highly-enriched fuel is not required by commercial nuclear plants and even research reactors can be adapted to operate on fuel enriched 20 percent or less. Furthermore, it is difficult to use 20 percent enriched fuel to manufacture a weapon. This is the nuclear material we should be trading to other nations -- not the weapons-grade material we presently offer.

I will offer my amendment in the hope of closing one avenue of access to nuclear materials which might be used to create the ultimate weapon of destruction.

Still, more action is urgently needed. If we do not seize the opportunity to solve this problem now, we will no longer be asking ourselves who has the bomb, but who does not. I hope you will continue to work with me in this effort.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress

EJM/wd

City of Cambridge

Comm. from Congressman Edward J. Markey
re: problems of nuclear proliferation &
nuclear technology.

In City Council,

Sept. 14, 1981

Placed on file