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NPEC Criticizes Obama’s Unwillingness to Back High Nonproliferation Standards

The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center (NPEC) just received an official non-reply to letter signed by 16 nuclear experts to the President asking that the US uphold new nuclear nonproliferation conditions for sharing US civilian nuclear technology. “Why is President Obama ashamed of backing the higher nuclear nonproliferation benchmarks that he himself set?” asked Nonproliferation Policy Education Center Executive Director Henry Sokolski.

Sokolski spearheaded an appeal to President Barak Obama not to subsidize the expansion of foreign nuclear supplier states' businesses in the US unless they first upheld the nonproliferation standards the US secured in its nuclear cooperative agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Under this deal, the UAE is required to ratify a new, tough international nuclear inspection understanding known as the Additional Protocol and to forswear making nuclear fuel, a process that can bring states within days or weeks of acquiring nuclear weapons. The Obama Administration secured Congressional consent to the deal in 2009 arguing that it established a new “Gold Standard” for US civilian nuclear cooperation and nonproliferation.

NPEC asked that the President to support this new standard by demanding that other nuclear suppliers doing business in the US back this standard in a November 15th letter co signed by 16 of the nation’s top nonproliferation experts (for a copy, click here). The Department of Energy’s (DoE) reply, dated December 28, though, made no commitment to uphold the UAE nonproliferation standards in ongoing US nuclear cooperative agreement negotiations the US is currently conducting with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, South Korea, and Vietnam. “This non-answer from a low-level Department of Energy (DoE) official,” Sokolski noted, “is not just insulting, it’s scary (for a copy of DoE’s reply click here).” “If the US refuses to back its own nonproliferation standards, certainly nobody else will” Sokolski noted.

DoE’s official reply comes on heels of a separate Congressional letter to the President urging him to insist on the UAE nonproliferation conditions in the civilian nuclear cooperative agreements the US is negotiating with Vietnam and Jordan (for this letter, click here). “We know where all of this leads – a nuclear technology sales free for all,” Sokolski said. “This is no way to reduce the nuclear threats we already face from Iran and North Korea,” Sokolski concluded. “Instead, it’s only likely to create more Irans and North Koreas 20 years hence.”