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Export of A-Reactor to Spain OKd

Washington

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission overrode the objections of one of its four commissioners and approved yesterday the export of a nuclear reactor to Spain.

Revealing its first split over the increasingly controversial subject of nuclear exports, the commission allowed dissenting Commissioner Victor Gilinsky to air his view that more safeguards were needed to prevent nuclear proliferation.

The commission was set up 18 months ago as a successor to the Atomic Energy Commission. It is responsible for monitoring the export of U.S. nuclear plant and materials.

Under review was the sale of a reactor by Westinghouse Electric Corp. It is to be known as Asco II and will be built next to an existing plant, Asco I, on the Ebro river about 35 miles west of Barcelona.

A major concern by some in the United States centers around the use of "recycled" plutonium.

Spain has not yet signed the nuclear non-proliferation pact. But through a bilateral treaty signed in 1974 and a 1966 trilateral treaty among Spain, the United States and the International Atomic Energy Agency, it has accepted limits on the use of plutonium produced from fuel supplied by the United States.

The plutonium, if separated

from the spent reactor fuel in a "reprocessing plant," could be used as a nuclear explosive.

Gilinsky asked the commission to attach to the sale a proviso that only U.S. fuel be used in the Asco II reactor.

This would ensure that the United States, the world's biggest and most advanced supplier of nuclear goods, was doing the maximum to contribute to the goal of non-proliferation.

Reuters
