

PRESS RELEASE

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Damning Fukushima Report Released

Japanese Diet releases scathing report re-writing the “official story” on Fukushima disaster causes

CHICAGO—The Japanese National Diet (parliament) Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission released a scathing report today which lays primary responsibility for the Fukushima disaster on the government, the regulators and the nuclear industry; and which seriously challenges the popular explanation for the three meltdowns and explosions at the reactor site in March, 2011.

The Report -- *The Official Report of The Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission* -- calls the Fukushima disaster: “...a profoundly man-made disaster – that could and should have been foreseen and prevented,” according to Kiyoshi Kurokawa, chair of the Commission.

The astonishingly blunt Report released today in Japan not only labels the 2011 Fukushima nuclear plant disaster as “man-made” in its root causes, but lays out a pattern of “errors and willful negligence” as well as collusion that existed in 2011 and continues to exist among the government, the regulatory bodies and the nuclear industry to ignore safety concerns.

The Report “names names” – individuals and organizations -- but the writers claim its importance is to learn from the disastrous mistakes, and implement recommendations for reform that the Committee put forth.

The Report notes that after the Oil Embargo of the early 1970s,

“...nuclear power became an unstoppable force, immune to scrutiny by civil society. Its regulation was entrusted to the same government bureaucracy responsible for its promotion. At a time when Japan’s self-confidence was soaring, a tightly knit elite with enormous financial resources had diminishing regard for anything ‘not invented here.’

“This conceit was reinforced by the collective mindset of Japanese bureaucracy, by which the first duty of any individual bureaucrat is to defend the interests of his organization. Carried to an extreme, this led bureaucrats to put organizational interests ahead of their paramount duty to protect public safety”

“If this sounds a little too familiar, it should,” says David Kraft, director of the Chicago-based Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS), a nuclear power watchdog organization. “Before we get a little too smug here in the U.S., it should be pointed out that the exact same type of collusion currently exists in the United States among the nuclear industry lobbyists, a Congress still trying to evolve a backbone, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, recently described by one Congressional aide as a ‘complete and total captive of the nuclear industry,’ Kraft points out. [SOURCE: Huffington Post, May 21, 2012, “Gregory Jaczko Resigns: Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chair Steps Down”]

“Last year’s character assassination of then-NRC Chair Greg Jaczko for trying to quickly implement safety lessons from Fukushima by the other four political hack Commissioners demonstrates the dangerous stranglehold the nuclear industry and its Congressional allies have over nuclear safety,” Kraft asserts. “It also demonstrates why newly re-appointed NRC Commissioner Kristine Svinicki is not competent to serve on the NRC,” he says. “She and Commissioner William Magwood should be impeached for thwarting post-Fukushima safety improvements,” Kraft maintains.

"The frightening thing is that, if you were to substitute 'U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission' for 'NISA,' 'Obama Administration' for 'Kantei,' and almost any U.S. nuclear utility's name for TEPCo, the Diet's report would be just as accurate and lose none of its meaning in English in the U.S.," Kraft maintains. "This is clearly not solely a 'Made in Japan' issue; it is an epidemic worldwide throughout the entire nuclear establishment."

The Diet Commission continues by calling for not mere window-dressing and band-aid changes, but deep and system-wide “transformational reform” of the Japanese regulatory agencies, the reactor operators, and the laws pertaining to nuclear safety and operation.

“The underlying issue is the social structure that results in “regulatory capture,” and the organizational, institutional, and legal framework that allows individuals to justify their own actions, hide them when inconvenient, and leave no records in order to avoid responsibility.... We found a disregard for global trends and a disregard for public safety. We found a habit of adherence to conditions based on conventional procedures and prior practices, with a priority on avoiding risk to the organization. We found an organization-driven mindset that prioritized benefits to the organization at the expense of the public.” [SOURCE: NAIIC Report, p. 21]

“It will be interesting to see what ‘lessons learned’ the U.S. nuclear corporate and regulatory structures glean from this recommendation,” notes Kraft

The Report further states that the earthquake — not just the tsunami — must be considered to have done some of the damage leading to the subsequent meltdowns and explosions at the reactors:

We conclude that TEPCO was too quick to cite the tsunami as the cause of the nuclear accident and deny that the earthquake caused any damage. We believe there is a possibility that the earthquake damaged equipment necessary for ensuring safety, and that there is also a possibility that a small-scale LOCA occurred (sic) in Unit 1. We hope these points will be examined further by a third party. (see Recommendation 7) [SOURCE: NAIIC Report, p. 17]

“This is a major change of narrative for the causes of the Fukushima disaster, and they have safety significance for U.S. reactors,” Kraft points out.

According to the “popular narrative” of the disaster promoted by TEPCO, the Japanese government, and the various nuclear industry groups, the tsunami is attributed with knocking out first offsite and then the emergency backup power systems, which resulted in the reactors and spent fuel pools overheating for lack of power to run the water circulation and emergency water supply systems. As a result the disaster has been labeled a “loss of offsite power accident.” And as a result of that, most post-Fukushima improvements have aimed at securing longer and more secure backup power supplies onsite, both at the 23 GE Mark-I reactors in the U.S., and internationally.

“The industry has totally ignored the other half of the problem – meaning, that second half which is the Mark-I’s vulnerability to earthquake damage has not yet been addressed, leaving these reactors as dangerous a design as they were before Fukushima,” Kraft explains.

The notion that reactor damage had occurred to Fukushima reactors prior to the tsunami hitting is not new. Three separate and credible sources have stated this since last year’s disaster – including a report released by TEPCo itself in May, 2011 - - yet the significance of this oversight has continuously been ignored by the nuclear industry, and gone unchallenged by the media.

“It means that all the Mark-I’s – including the four in Illinois at Dresden and Quad Cities -- are still as unsafe as before,” Kraft points out. “The magnitude 6.0 earthquake in Virginia in August 2011 near the North Anna reactors came just a little short of taking out those reactors. Yet, NRC drags its feet on requiring seismic upgrading at GE Mark-I reactors in spite of this. It will be interesting to see how the NRC will attempt to pencil-whip away this damning conclusion and recommendation of the NAIIC Report now,” Kraft observes.

In April 2011 a coalition of organizations spearheaded by Beyond Nuclear of Takoma Park, Maryland, and including NEIS, submitted [a petition](#) to the NRC, challenging the operational safety and design of the 23 Fukushima-type GE Mark-I reactors in the U.S. Predictably, the NRC dismissed most of the safety concerns raised.

A copy of the Executive Summary of the NAIIC Report in English is available on the NEIS website, www.neis.org