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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
AMBASSADOR AT LARGE  
WASHINGTON

November 20, 1991

To the Editor of the New York Times:

On November 15th, the Times front page contained a story - "Algerian Reactor: A Chinese Export" - which if allowed to stand uncorrected misinforms your readers about the way in which significant nuclear non-proliferation activities are conducted and have been handled by my office.

Allegations were carried in the story to the effect that I or my office withheld certain information which we received concerning a Chinese reactor export to Algeria. These allegations were totally false.

At any time there is information reaching the U.S. Government suggesting sales of nuclear-related equipment and material. This information is promptly turned over to the intelligence agencies for translation into English, checking for accuracy, and general verification.

This is precisely what was done with information which came to my attention covering a possible Chinese reactor sale to Algeria. The information was put in the hands of the proper intelligence office without delay. My office invariably follows this practice of promptly referring any reports of nuclear development which may come to us to the intelligence community for evaluation. Contrary to the suggestion in the November 15th article, this system insures accuracy and timely alert, not "inaction."

I was amazed also at the alleged quote from an anonymous Japanese official describing me as not speaking up at the IAEA about the North Korean nuclear problem.

Japan and the United States, along with a growing number of other countries, share the same evaluation of the North Korean nuclear problem and agree on a common goal - to get North Korea to fulfill its unconditional Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty obligation to have all its nuclear activities safeguarded by the IAEA.

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The history of our discussions of this matter suggest that Japanese officials have more often thought me forward than laggard in this effort. Indeed, I have been viewed consistently as a "hard liner" in regard to North Korea in my activities as US Governor to the IAEA.

I regret that your reporter did not see fit to discuss any aspect of her article with me. In a piece where my name is mentioned five times, I would have thought a conversation with me would have been consistent with New York Times policy. At a minimum, it could have assisted her to achieve accuracy.

Sincerely,

Richard T. Kennedy  
Ambassador-at-Large  
and Special Advisor to the  
Secretary of State on  
Nonproliferation Policy and  
Nuclear Energy Affairs

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