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23Jun91 CUBA: CUBA MIGHT AGREE TO MUTUAL NUCLEAR PLANT INSPECTION WITH U.S.

By Lionel Martin

HAVANA, June 22, Reuter - Cuba's chief nuclear security inspector Alejandro Bilbao said on Saturday that Cuba would be willing to allow U.S. experts to inspect his nation's first nuclear energy plant but only under terms of reciprocity.

"We would be ready to receive specialists to carry out an inspection as long as it is channelled in an official way and on the basis of strict reciprocity," Bilbao told Reuters.

He said reciprocity meant that Cuban experts would be permitted to inspect U.S. nuclear energy plants.

At an earlier press conference another Cuban nuclear energy official announced that the plant's first reactor should go into operation in late 1993. At full capacity, he said, it will produce 417 megawatts of electricity. A second reactor of the same kind should go on line two years later, he added.

Last month, U.S. Senator Connie Mack of Florida called Cuba's first nuclear energy plant a major threat to U.S. lives.

The Soviet-designed and -equipped nuclear energy plant is near Cienfuegos Bay on the Caribbean Sea on Cuba's south coast.

Bilbao said that the reactors will be topped by containment domes that are designed to withstand the crash of an aeroplane. He said that safety has been a prime consideration.

In 1989 Cuban President Fidel Castro said that additional safety features for the nuclear energy plant would set back completion of the plant for at least two years.

Bilbao said that Cuba was negotiating with a big West European company to buy an automation system for the plant.

Cuba's nuclear security chief said he was invited to the annual meeting of the World Association of Nuclear Operators in Atlanta in April but was denied a visa by the State Department.

The nuclear energy plant is Cuba's single largest development project. According to a Cuban official, it will cost almost 2.5 billion dollars.

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