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Select Committee on
Energy Independence and Global Warming
U.S. House of Representatives

May 19, 2008

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mr. President:

It is with great alarm that I write you concerning your recent agreement with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia regarding nuclear energy cooperation. Your decision to assist Saudi Arabia with the development of nuclear technology is inexplicable given that country's bountiful energy reserves, but more disturbingly, it is deeply flawed given the extraordinary tension in the Middle East today over Iran's nuclear program. I urge you to reconsider this decision and to not begin or continue any discussion or negotiations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on a formal Agreement for Nuclear Cooperation.

As you know, Saudi Arabia possesses the world's largest proven oil reserves. It remains a mystery to me why a country with such vast and inexpensive energy resources would be interested in nuclear energy, which is a far more technically challenging, expensive, and dangerous energy source. I do not believe that Saudi Arabia has made or could make a cogent case for why nuclear energy is in its economic interests, given its other energy resources.

Another country in the region with enormous oil and gas resources, Iran, has argued that nuclear energy is a cost-effective and necessary investment for domestic energy production. But that argument has proven unpersuasive both to our allies and here in the United States. On October 25, 2004, Vice President Dick Cheney said, "[Iran is] already sitting on an awful lot of oil and gas. Nobody can figure why they need nuclear, as well, too, to generate energy." Vice President Cheney was right in saying that Iran has no need for nuclear power, and the same can be said regarding Saudi Arabia today.

If Saudi Arabia is truly interested in diversifying its energy portfolio, I am puzzled that your administration would not have offered technologies and expertise in the renewable energy area, especially solar energy. A square kilometer of desert typically receives solar energy equivalent to 1.5 million barrels of oil. Under the previous administration, the U.S. Department of Energy joined with the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology in Riyadh on a comprehensive joint solar radiation resource project to assess the solar energy capability of the Saudi Kingdom. Further engagement on both solar energy research and deployment would help both the United States and Saudi Arabia move towards a more sustainable energy and economic future.

I am concerned that Saudi Arabia's interest in acquiring U.S. nuclear assistance has nothing to do with energy and everything to do with Middle East politics. By receiving a pledge of support from the United States on nuclear technology, Saudi Arabia is sending a signal to the leaders of Iran that if Tehran continues down the nuclear path Riyadh will do so as well. It would be folly for the United States to enable and encourage such a dangerous cycle. I urge you to reconsider this decision, and to immediately halt any further discussions or negotiations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the development of nuclear technology.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "E" and "M".

Edward J. Markey
Chairman

cc: Mr. James Sensenbrenner
Ranking Member