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The program was created after 9/11 in response to fears that terrorists could obtain Pakistan’s nuclear weapons. The Bush administration debated whether or not to provide Pakistan with nuclear protection technology called permissive action links or “PALS.” This technology prevents the use of a nuclear weapon without using security codes. Also, Pakistanis were fearful that the US would be able to put a “kill-switch” on the weapons, rendering them useless.

While the New York Times has been aware of this program for more than three years, they have delayed publication of an article on it at the Bush administration’s request. Given the recent political turmoil in Pakistan, questions over the security of Pakistan’s nuclear stockpile have once again come up.


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Of those testifying at the hearing, Dr. Matthew Bunn from the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs was the most opposed to GNEP, primarily because building a reprocessing facility would be a proliferation risk. He also said that only certain countries would be allowed to reprocess under GNEP, which would send a mixed message that “reprocessing is essential for nuclear energy, but only certain countries can do it.” Instead of GNEP, Dr. Bunn supported the use of secure onsite dry cask storage at nuclear power plants.

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