

January 26, 2006

A.J. Eggenberger, Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Ave, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Eggenberger:

As arms control, public health, environmental and consumer advocacy organizations from across the United States, we are alarmed by the findings of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research (IEER) in its recent report, "Weapons Plutonium in Los Alamos Soil and Waste: Environmental, Health, and Security Implications." IEER found that, according to the Department of Energy's own documents, there is at a minimum 300 kilograms of plutonium that is not accounted for in the nuclear materials safeguards account of Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Given that this large amount of unaccounted plutonium could present national security, public health and environmental threats, we are writing to request that you open an immediate investigation into plutonium accounting at LANL.

It is imperative that the discrepancy be resolved and that the location of any missing plutonium be determined. If the unaccounted plutonium was disposed of in unlined landfills at LANL or shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP) in New Mexico without proper records, then it may pose a serious threat to groundwater and to public health. Until the location of the plutonium is determined, the possibility also exists that it was stolen or diverted—a risk that has grave national security implications.

The Department of Energy has known about the discrepancy in plutonium accounts at LANL since 1996 (please see enclosed DOE memo). DOE even set up a "working group" to address plutonium accounting discrepancies at all of its sites (LANL has by far the largest discrepancy), which achieved no apparent results. In August 2004, IEER and other organizations wrote to LANL Director Pete Nanos urging him to address the issue, but there was no substantive response. While the DOE promised a response when the IEER report was released in late November 2005, the subsequent public statement was similar to the prior dismissive ones. Whether or not DOE and LANL address this vital issue, we believe it is essential that the DNFSB undertake an immediate, independent investigation of the unaccounted plutonium, given the large quantity involved.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this vital matter. Please contact Arjun Makhijani, President of IEER, at 301.270.5500 <arjun@ieer.org>; Jay Coghlan, Director of Nuclear Watch of New Mexico, at 505.989.7342 <jcoghlan@nukewatch.org>; or Michele Boyd, Public Citizen Energy Programs Legislative Director, at 202.454.5134 <mboyd@citizen.org>, should you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

Joni Arends, Executive Director
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Mavis Belisle, Director
Peace Farm
Panhandle TX

Jay Coghlan, Executive Director
Nuclear Watch of New Mexico
Santa Fe, NM

Vina Colley President
Portsmouth/Piketon Residents for Environmental Safety and Security
McDermott, Ohio

Lisa Crawford, President
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Janet Greenwald,
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Erin Hamby, Program Co-Ordinator
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Boulder, Colorado

Don Hancock, Nuclear Waste Program Director
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Tyson Slocum, Director, Energy Program
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Washington, D.C.

Jaya Tiwari, Research Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Washington, D.C.

Enclosures to DNFSB:

See Guimond-Beckner memo, "Plutonium in Waste Inventories," U.S. DOE, January 30,

1996, with inventory attachments, at

<http://www.ieer.org/offdocs/Guimond1996Memo.pdf> (1MB)

IEER Letter to LANL Director Pete Nanos, August 10, 2004

(<http://www.ieer.org/comments/pu/nanosltr.html>)

CC: U.S. Senator Pete Domenici
U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman
U.S. Representative Tom Udall
New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson
New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry
DOE Secretary Samuel Bodman
NNSA Administrator Linton Brooks
NNSA Los Alamos Site Office Manager Ed Wilmot