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December 19, 2005

Ambassador Linton Brooks
Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Administrator Brooks,

Please find enclosed an IEER report entitled *Weapons Plutonium in Los Alamos Soil and Waste: Environmental, Health and Security Implications*. This report details a weapons plutonium accounting discrepancy at LANL of at least 300 kilograms – that is, the Nuclear Materials Management Safeguards System appears to have over-reported Pu losses by at least 300 kg. Evidently, this raises a question of the causes of such a large discrepancy. It also raises questions about how plutonium accounts have been kept historically. If all or most of the excess plutonium was discharged to the waste, it implies a grave disregard for security, efficiency, and safety in the process of pit production at LANL over a period of time that ran into decades. If it was not, the security implications would appear to be even more grave.

A statement of your spokesman, Don Ami, to the press, as cited in the enclosed clipping, indicates that NNSA has been looking into the discrepancy, and now thinks that there is a discrepancy. I appreciate that the NNSA is paying some attention to this issue. However, I am dismayed at the rest of the response, at least as reported in the press. It's simply not enough to say "we don't think anything is missing," which is what Don Ami was quoted as saying after acknowledging the discrepancy. A discrepancy of this magnitude requires a serious and careful revisiting of the plutonium accounts, rather than a guess or a speculation. Further, Mr. Ami's explanation that this was the same issue as a year ago is misleading at best. A year ago, I called on LANL Director Nanos to investigate the discrepancy described in the 1996 Guimond-Beckner memorandum, which is reproduced in Appendix A of the enclosed IEER report. Having received no response, I did the investigation myself, to the extent possible with public records. The

conclusion that the NMMSS accounts appears to be incorrect and seems to have over-reported losses by at least 300 kilograms is new and is the result of the investigation that I have done this year.

The main focus now should be on the 610 kg figure reported as "Normal Operating Losses" in the NMMSS account – and not the 1,375 kg 1996 waste estimate, which is likely to be wrong. (That is the reason that the enclosed report states that any discrepancy associated with that figure is “very unlikely”. However, some attention should be given to the origin of the 1375 kg. figure.) It is the NMMSS account that is now in question so far as LANL plutonium is concerned. That is a much more serious matter, since the NMMSS is supposed to be the master account to ensure full accountability for security purposes. The status of the 300 or more kilograms of weapons plutonium surely deserves a serious investigation, not speculative statements to the press. I request you to issue a statement that the serious investigation that was promised by John Ordaz at the press event on November 30, 2005 is actually proceeding. I have also asked the Chairman of the DNFSB to look into this matter. I am enclosing a copy of my letter to him.

Thanking you in anticipation of a positive response to my request for an urgent, serious and thorough investigation.

Sincerely,



Arjun Makhijani, Ph.D.
President, Institute for Energy and Environmental Research

cc: A.J.Eggenberger, Chairman, DNFSB
John Ordaz, U.S. DOE-LAAO
Don Ami, NNSA

Enclosures: *Weapons Plutonium in Los Alamos Soil and Waste: Environmental, Health and Security Implications*, Letter to A.J. Eggenberger (December 13, 2005), 12/3/05 clip from *The New Mexican*.