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NEW HAMPSHIRE

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2903

December 21, 2001

The Honorable Spencer Abraham  
Secretary of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As you know, for some time I have been concerned about security vulnerabilities at our nuclear weapons labs and production facilities. I have recently read a disturbing report by the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) which alleges that these facilities are not adequately protected from terrorist attack. The events of September 11 make these allegations even more disturbing, particularly in the face of al Qaeda's interest in nuclear materials and nuclear weapons.

It seems only logical that one major solution to this problem is the consolidation of excess weapons grade plutonium and highly-enriched uranium at fewer and more secure facilities. As you know, there have been a number of DOE Commissions and Committees over the last decade that have strongly recommended consolidation. I understand that as recently as 1999, there was an "Internal Report to the Secretary: Special Security Review," often referred to as the Hagengruber Report, which recommended the consolidation of weapons-grade material at fewer sites, in order to provide better security and to lower substantially its cost. I am concerned that nothing appears to have been done to implement this recommendation.

As you know, U.S. taxpayers are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to construct secure underground storage facilities in Russia. Meanwhile, in the United States our nuclear materials are stored at sites that may not be adequately protected against terrorist attacks.

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As I understand, the Hagengruber Report recommended the construction of an underground storage facility at the Savannah River Site for the consolidation of weapons grade plutonium. I would appreciate an update on the progress on this facility. Please provide the original and current cost estimates for this site in addition to the original and current schedule for its completion.

Both POGO and Hagengruber also recommended using the Device Assembly Facility (DAF) at the Nevada Test Site as a special nuclear materials storage facility. It is not only new, and partially underground, but also highly secure and virtually empty. I understand that Defense Programs over the last six years has refused to use this facility for storage of special nuclear materials (SNM). I would like to know why this secure site has not been used, at least for interim storage of excess SNM.

I understand that in early 2000, there were discussions between the Air Force and the DOE about the possibility of transferring ownership of the Kirtland Underground Munitions Storage Complex (KUMSC) at Kirtland Air Force Base for the storage of SNM. The Air Force was reportedly cutting back on nuclear weapons storage capacity, and viewed KUMSC as excess storage space. KUMSC, as you know, is a highly secure underground weapons storage facility with over 300,000 square feet of storage space. Has the DOE followed up on utilizing this facility?

As you know, the issue of consolidation crosses DOE program lines, and is unlikely to be popular with any particular program. The ten Category I nuclear storage sites are owned by three different DOE program offices - NNSA, Environmental Management and Nuclear Energy. Therefore, your leadership is vital to accomplish this important mission.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Bob Smith, U.S.S.

*Hope to hear your thoughts on this issue.*