

# U.S. Steps Up Security Plan For Warheads

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

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The Government has put into effect a sweeping new program to improve the security of Federal facilities where nuclear warheads are designed and made.

The program has come about because of a new perception of the threat of terrorism and because Congressional investigations have disclosed serious lapses of nuclear security, according to Federal officials.

"We have an aggressive program that has improved our security dramatically," said William W. Hoover, a retired Air Force major general who was recently confirmed by the Senate as Assistant Secretary for defense programs at the Department of Energy, which runs the nuclear facilities.

#### 'Terrorists Will Be Deterred'

"We still have vulnerabilities to correct," General Hoover said, "but we have created an overall environment in which terrorists will be deterred. Their chance of success is minimal and their risk quite high."

Federal officials say that in the past year the department has added more than 400 guards, opened an academy for security forces, held more mock raids, expanded its teams of inspectors, erected new barriers and established crisis units at dozens of Federal facilities that design and make nuclear weapons.

There has been a multiplication of vaults, alarms, fences and locks, the officials say. There are also plans for additional measures such as restrict-

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# Security Is Being Tightened at Plants Where Nuclear Weapons Are Made

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ing flights over key facilities to prevent air attacks.

Funds for nuclear security have been quadrupled since 1980, General Hoover said, to \$600 million a year.

There are several reasons for the new programs, Federal officials said, the most important being a heightened awareness of the terrorist threat after the bomb blast in the Capitol last November and the terrorist bombing that killed 241 American servicemen in Beirut last October.

Moreover, they said, secret investigations and public hearings by Congress have exposed flaws in security at nuclear facilities. Representative John D. Dingell, Democrat of Michigan, who began the investigations in 1982, has charged that nuclear security was "a shambles."

For instance, Congressional investigators say, last spring at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, which designs nuclear weapons, a Federal exercise disclosed that a high-security weapon assembly site could have been entered by terrorists intent on stealing a nuclear bomb. The site was subsequently closed.

"In our first hearing we were told that everything was fine," said Peter Stockton, a researcher with the investigations subcommittee of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, of which Mr. Dingell is chairman. "But we found just the opposite. There wasn't a single facility could withstand a terrorist threat."

"They've come a long way," he added, noting the changes in security programs at the Energy Department, "but at certain facilities they still have a long way to go."

## Security Lapses Cited

Last year, in an irate letter to Energy Secretary Donald P. Hodel, Mr. Dingell cited a series of discoveries by investigators, including these:

¶ Vaults that held tons of plutonium, the key ingredient of nuclear bombs, were defenseless against assault.

¶ Sensors and alarms failed to work.

¶ In one exercise, guards fired on each other rather than on attackers.

¶ Guards responded to a mock raid 16 minutes after "attackers" had "stolen" plutonium.

¶ A Japanese helicopter crew filmed a nuclear weapon production plant without challenge.

¶ Supervisors of one force refused to allow guards to respond to a mock attack.

¶ A disgruntled former employee drove through the main gate of one facility and threatened to blow it up.

## 59 Nuclear Facilities

In an interview, Mr. Stockton noted that guard forces always knew of mock raids in advance in order to avert accidental death or injury. If rigorously done, he said, the raids nonetheless tested the security systems and helped evaluate ways to improve them. He said mock assaults could reveal the level of quickness, strength and coordination of a guard force and its skill in fending off attacks.

Not long after the lapses in nuclear security were brought to Mr. Hodel's attention, the former assistant secretary for defense programs, Herman Roser, resigned, and Mr. Hoover was appointed.

"I want to give Dingell credit," Mr. Hoover said in an interview. "He brought lots of problems to our attention. But the other side of the story is that we are correcting them."

According to Federal officials, 59 facilities around the nation design or make nuclear weapons and their components. A dozen of them are quite extensive and are considered critical to national security. These include the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, whose researchers design bombs; the Savannah River Laboratory in South Carolina, whose reactors make bomb-grade plutonium, and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, whose Y-12 plant makes weapons.

The Energy Department's security measures are separate from those of the military, which has its own programs for protecting the nuclear weapons already in the nation's stockpile.

To increase security at all facilities, Mr. Hoover said, the Energy Department in January 1983 drew up a more detailed "baseline threat scenario" that allows, for the first time, a systematic testing of guard forces and security measures.

Recruitment from top military commando units has strengthened the department's roving teams of investiga-

tors, General Hoover said, while better training programs were in place for guards.

A school, the Central Training Academy, was opened this year at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, N.M., he said. He added that it would train 800 guards a year and become a central repository for information on ways to improve the security of nuclear facilities, with a budget of \$1.5 million a year.

"I'm not trying to deny that we've had vulnerabilities or that in hindsight we wouldn't have done things differently," General Hoover said. "But we have an upbeat program in place and it's going to get better."

He said one plan is to demand better physical fitness of guards. Another is to restrict air travel over nine key Federal facilities.

## General Threat of Terrorism

General Hoover added that he knew of no terrorist groups that had threatened to attack any nuclear weapon facility of the Energy Department.

At Lawrence Livermore laboratory in California, which has more than 7,000 employees, there has been increased emphasis on security for several years, according to Norris Smith, a laboratory spokesman. Mock raids and drills have improved in realism and frequency, he said, and alarms, fences and outside lighting have been much improved.

This new emphasis on security was apparent in a recent visit.

"Attention all laboratory person-

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U.S. Department of Energy  
In the Southwest desert, a special security group prepares to repel a mock terrorist attack on a nuclear site. The Government has instituted new measures to improve security at plants where nuclear arms are designed or made.



William W. Hoover

nel," came over a loudspeaker. "The security department will be holding exercises in a limited area using blank ammunition. These exercises will last until approximately midnight."

Not long after this announcement, shots rang out. Guns drawn, knives strapped to their sides, men in combat

uniforms dashed across a dark road toward the heart of the lab. What looked like a raid by terrorists was, in fact, a drill by a team of commandos.

## Buffer Zone Added

"We're pretty pleased with our record," Mr. Smith said in an interview, "and we plan to keep it that way. A few weeks ago we bought a series of tracts of land around the lab, about 75 acres, and we plan to add a total of 350. It's a buffer zone that is especially needed because of the light industry moving into the valley."

The weapons lab sits at one end of the Livermore valley, a dry stretch of ranch land about 40 miles east of San Francisco. Pieces of experimental weapons made at the lab are transported over the Sierra Nevada mountains and assembled into bombs at the Government's nuclear test site in the Nevada desert, where they are detonated underground.

According to Bonnie Barringer, a Livermore spokesman, a special group, the Site Emergency Response Team, has been established for special situations, such as ones in which an assailant takes hostages. "It's more negotiation-oriented than a SWAT team," she said. "There's a lot of psychology involved."

According to Congressional investigators, much work remains to be done to improve nuclear security, despite the new programs. Flaws in security are especially important, they noted, because of the Administration's expansion of the design, testing and production of nuclear weapons.

## Teams Are 'Quite Good'

"Before our first hearing the Energy Department's inspection and evaluation teams were a disaster," said Mr. Stockton, the Congressional investigator. "Now they're quite good. Even helicopter attacks have been simulated."

"The defenders go in there with battle fatigues, M-16's and armored personnel carriers," he said. "But we believe there should also be standing military units at some of these sites so they have the offensive capability to deter and fight off attacks."

Mr. Stockton said the Energy Department officials are using recent terrorist attacks as an excuse for taking action that should have been taken a decade ago, after Israeli athletes were seized and killed at the Olympic Games in Munich, West Germany, in 1972.

Mr. Stockton said that Mr. Dingell planned to hold a hearing in about a month on the security situation at Los Alamos. Another issue to be discussed, he said, is Mr. Dingell's proposal for a new independent office to monitor nuclear security.

This hearing, Mr. Stockton noted, will be the first chance for the new assistant secretary for defense affairs to testify about nuclear security.

## Criticism of New Policies

Problems with nuclear security are not new, having been publicly addressed almost a decade ago. "The Curve of Binding Energy," a book by John McPhee, described security lapses at many nuclear sites around

the country. It disclosed how civilians in some cases were able to walk unchallenged into restricted areas.

Some critics have said the recent emphasis on improving nuclear security has gone too far, especially in areas related to information rather than production. Last January it was disclosed that the Administration had broken a longstanding policy of announcing all nuclear tests and had started keeping small ones secret.

"Why hand the Russians everything on the front page of The Washington Post or The New York Times?" asked David F. Miller, a spokesman for the Energy Department.

But Greenpeace, the environmental group, asserted that the Soviet Union was able to monitor all nuclear tests and that only the American public was being kept in the dark. The Greenpeace Examiner, the group's newsletter, called the new policy "curious and chilling."