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NNSA to Appoint Senior Official to Oversee Sandia Security Improvements

WASHINGTON, D.C. – National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Administrator Linton F. Brooks announced today that he will appoint a senior official to oversee security management improvements at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, NM. The executive will report to the administrator through NNSA’s acting chief of defense nuclear security in Washington.

Brooks said that retired Air Force Major General Thomas Neary, who has extensive experience with the nuclear weapons program, has agreed to take on the temporary assignment.

Brooks established the position – which will expire in six months – to jumpstart efforts by NNSA’s Sandia Site Office and the laboratory to implement new recommendations by the Department of Energy’s Office of Independent Oversight and Assessments. A classified review by the oversight office found that, while security management at Sandia has improved in recent months, additional steps are required to ensure that security at the nuclear weapons laboratory meets departmental standards. Neary will also work to strengthen security oversight by the site office, located in Albuquerque.

“The best way to achieve our objective in a timely fashion is to bring in a topflight manager whose sole responsibility is to make sure this important job is done well and completely,” Brooks said. He noted that the laboratory has made significant management changes to strengthen security in recent months, and that both the site office and the laboratory have prepared action plans to implement security recommendations. “Over time, the improved laboratory focus on security management will yield dividends,” Brooks said. “In the near term, however, it is important to have someone on board whose principal responsibility is to make certain that security improvements at Sandia are achieved in the most effective, efficient and rapid manner possible.”

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham endorsed the decision to bring in an executive with unique experience to oversee Sandia security management. “We must ensure that the laboratory focuses on implementing the necessary security improvements promptly even as it works to fulfill its national security mission,” Abraham said.

Neary has more than 30 years experience in nuclear operations, planning and policy. His last assignment in the Air Force included command of the 20th Air Force Element of the U.S. Strategic Command, and he previously had commanded two ICBM wings. Neary played a major role in the Scowcroft End-to-End Review of the U.S. Nuclear Command and Control System, a comprehensive review of nuclear weapons security.

Neary’s role will be to oversee the immediate implementation of security improvements at Sandia Laboratories. Earlier this year Brooks established two groups to assess long-range security issues in the nuclear weapons complex. The first panel, led by retired Admiral Richard Mies, will assess potential improvements in physical security at NNSA laboratories and plants. The second group, led by retired Admiral Hank Chiles, will address challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified security managers and personnel.

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