



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

July 8, 2003

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, N.W.
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The purpose of this letter is to report on the status of Commitment 4.1.1 in the Implementation Plan for Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board Recommendation 2002-2, U.S. Department of Energy Plan to Address and Resolve Weapons Laboratory Support of Defense Nuclear Complex.

Commitment 4.1.1 was completed by issuance of a Secretarial Memorandum, Priority of the Nuclear Weapons Program at the National Laboratories, that re-emphasized the nuclear weapons program is the Department of Energy's top priority for the Laboratories in supporting the nuclear weapons complex.

If you have any further questions, please call me at (202) 586-1730.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Schoenbauer".

M. Schoenbauer
Director, Office of Nuclear
Weapons Stockpile
Defense Programs

Enclosure

M. Whitaker

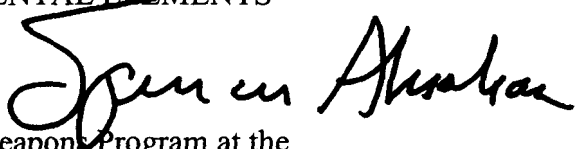




The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

July 8, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTAL ELEMENTS

FROM: SPENCER ABRAHAM 

SUBJECT: Priority of the Nuclear Weapons Program at the
National Laboratories

Of all the activities that the Department conducts at its weapons National Laboratories (Los Alamos National Laboratory, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and Sandia National Laboratories), my highest priority has been and remains the work that directly supports our Nation's nuclear weapon stockpile. Recent years have seen reductions in the size of our stockpile; the stockpile is aging, and further reductions may come. At the same time, new challenges on the cutting edge of technology have arisen that our scientists and engineers have been called upon to address, including commitments to Homeland Security. However, neither the changes in our stockpile nor the many challenges we are addressing at the National Laboratories change the Department's highest priority for its National Laboratories. It has been, and remains, supporting our Nation's stockpile.

Ensuring the quality of that support well into the future will be an increasing challenge that we must not fail. As our work force continues to age, senior technical personnel will continue to leave the program. We must continue to aggressively capture their expertise before it is lost. At the same time, junior personnel will increasingly be attracted to our programs that work on cutting edge technologies. We must ensure that the best and brightest are encouraged to devote adequate time and effort to addressing stockpile issues. Our best and brightest must be prepared to take over the roles of those experts who will soon retire. The fraction of their time that they devote to directly support the stockpile must remain an essential part of a highly successful career in the nuclear weapon complex.

Within the next few months, the Department will also update its current published policy to communicate this priority for the nuclear weapons program. The priority of our stockpile means more than ensuring adequate funding. The priority is an environment that we create. It is a challenge we must continue to address. I am confident that it is a challenge we will continue to meet and to overcome.

