



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

February 28, 2006

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Arjun Makhijani
President
Institute for Energy and Environmental Research
6935 Laurel Avenue, Suite 201
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Dear Dr. Makhijani:

I received your December 19, 2005, letter concerning the apparent accounting discrepancy of plutonium at the Los Alamos National Laboratory and perceived inaccuracy in the Nuclear Materials Management and Safeguards System (NMMSS). In response, you should be aware that the National Nuclear Security Administration takes very seriously its stewardship responsibility for special nuclear material.

The Los Alamos National Laboratory and Los Alamos Site Office (LASO) reviewed the apparent accounting discrepancy and their response is enclosed. In short, there are stringent procedures for the control and accountability of special nuclear material (SNM). Only forms and quantities of SNM that meet documented waste criteria are removed from the safeguards organization and put under the control of a waste management organization. Because these two organizations track and account for SNM content using technologies and procedures optimized for different purposes, it is recognized that the two systems will have different information. However, this does not mean that there is a loss of control of the materials in either the safeguards or waste organizations.

With respect to the perceived inaccuracy of information contained in the NMMSS, the NMMSS does not contain information at the necessary level of detail to ensure "full accountability for security purposes" nor is it used for this purpose. The systems used to ensure full accountability for security purposes are the facility accountability systems. These systems and accompanying procedures provide a high level of assurance in our control and accountability of SNM. Any potential losses of SNM detected by these systems are investigated immediately and resolved. Therefore, the Department of Energy has the utmost confidence in the information contained in the facility accountability systems and the NMMSS.



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It is my hope that this response satisfies your concerns with the control and accountability of plutonium at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. If you have any questions or concerns or require additional details, please contact Michael Ray Ferry, Assistant Manager of the LASO Office of Security Management. Mr. Ferry can be reached at (505) 665-4940.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linton F. Brooks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Linton F. Brooks
Administrator

Enclosure



DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
National Nuclear Security Administration
Los Alamos Site Office
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544



FEB 12 2006

Arun Makhijani, Ph.D.
President
Institute for Energy and Environmental Research
6935 Laurel Avenue, Suite 201
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Dear Dr. Makhijani:

Los Alamos Site Office Security Management has reviewed the apparent accounting discrepancy of "300 or more kgs of weapons plutonium" noted in your December 19, 2005 letter to Ambassador Brooks. The review confirmed the discrepancy does not relate to a loss of control of nuclear material. This was determined by reviewing the results of a Los Alamos National Laboratory assessment of the waste transfers made during the period noted in your letter and ongoing Federal oversight of physical inventories of weapons plutonium.

The apparent discrepancy is related to the different tracking and reporting procedures for site security and waste management organizations. Materials determined to be of a low attractiveness from a programmatic perspective may be released to the waste management program for disposition. If these materials meet stringent criteria, they are transferred to the waste management organization where it is no longer necessary to track the material from a security perspective. The mission of the waste management program is to manage waste while protecting the environment, the public, and worker safety and health. To this end, radiation measurements are performed and the materials controlled to protect against radiation exposure.

Because of the differences between the tracking and reporting of the site security and waste management organizations, comparisons of the information contained in these two systems cannot be used to draw conclusions concerning the control and accountability of special nuclear material. Additionally, the Nuclear Materials Management and Safeguards System (NMMSS) is populated directly with information derived from the site's security accounting system, not the waste management organization. As a result, comparisons of NMMSS data and waste management data cannot be used in drawing conclusions concerning the control and accountability of special nuclear material.

It is my hope that this response satisfies your concerns with the control and accountability of plutonium at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. If you have any questions or concerns or require additional detail, you can reach me by calling (505) 665-4940.

Sincerely,

Michael Ray Ferry
Assistant Manager
Office of Security Management

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