

Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

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JAN 06 1997

January 2, 1997

Ms. Marilyn Reeves
Chairwoman
Technical Resources International Inc.
723 The Parkway, Suite 200
Richland, WA 99352

Dear Chairwoman Reeves:

Your letter to Under Secretary Grumbly dated November 8, 1996, concerning the Department of Energy's (DOE) Nonproliferation and Arms Control Assessment of Weapons-Usable Fissile Material Storage and Plutonium Disposition has been referred to my office for a response. DOE values your input into the entire process leading up to a decision on whether and how the United States will dispose of fissile material the President has declared excess to defense needs.

I understand your concern regarding the public process related to the Nonproliferation and Arms Control Assessment prepared by the Office of Arms Control and Nonproliferation in support of the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on the Storage and Disposal of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials. Unfortunately, it is simply not possible for DOE or the U.S. Government to delay the decision-making process on this issue any further. The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1997 requires that the President submit, with the fiscal year 1998 budget, his Administration's plan for the disposal of excess weapons-usable fissile materials. In order to meet this deadline, DOE is moving forward to issue a record of decision in the next few months.

The Department has attempted at every opportunity to fully engage the public on all issues related to the storage and disposition of these materials. Since the decision-making process began in mid 1994, the Department has held over 50 public meetings on over twenty locations around the country, received thousands of comments from citizens and organizations on the environmental, cost, technical feasibility and nonproliferation aspects of the storage and disposition alternatives available to the Department.

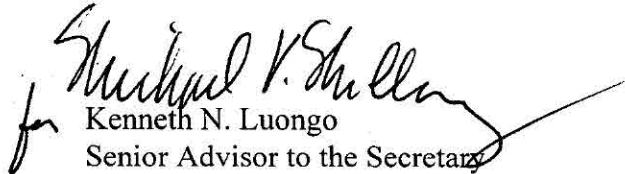


At the request of Secretary O'Leary and based on public input, the Department prepared a thorough Assessment of the nonproliferation and arms control implications of the alternatives under consideration. This analysis was reviewed by a task force of the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board, which certified that the report is "accurate, complete and objective." In addition, since the Assessment was launched on July 1, 1996, the Department has used every means to solicit and receive public input on the assessment. Fifteen public meetings in ten cities, including Richland, Washington, were held to answer questions and receive comments. The Assessment was made available on the Internet on October 1, 1996, and public comments, received during the 40 day comment period, have been received through the U.S. mail, electronic mail, and a toll free phone line. The Office of Arms Control and Nonproliferation has received well over 150 detailed comments which are now being reviewed for reflection in the final Assessment, which will contain a comment response document.

The need to move forward on an issue as pressing as the control of weapons-usable nuclear materials is clear and widely supported. DOE has studied and reviewed these issues for almost three years and has complied with the requirements of the law and its obligation to serve the public interests. Our record of over 60 public meetings is evidence of this process.

I hope that the Hanford Advisory Board will continue to make its views and suggestions known to the Department on this and other important issues. Please contact me if you have any further thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,



Kenneth N. Luongo
Senior Advisor to the Secretary
for Nonproliferation Policy and
Director of the Office of Arms Control
and Nonproliferation