



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

MAY 12 2004

Ms. Danielle Brian
Executive Director
Project on Government Oversight
666 11th Street, N.W., Suite 500
Washington, DC. 20001

Dear Ms Brian:

I read with interest your recent testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing on April 27, 2004. I was greatly disappointed with the misrepresentations presented by your organization to a committee of Congress about the actions that the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is taking to further improve the security of nuclear materials across the complex while simultaneously performing our vitally important national security work.

As I stated at our meeting on April 16, our plan for TA-18 at the Los Alamos National Laboratory is to ultimately close this facility. The first step to closure is the removal of half of the Category I and II Special Nuclear Material (SNM) out of that facility beginning September 2004. This campaign will last approximately 18 months. In parallel, the design modifications to the Device Assembly Facility to assume program responsibilities from TA-18 will continue, with the modifications to be made in the next several years to receive the additional SNM to support the national security activities carried out by a host of Federal agencies. At that point, all the category I/II material will be removed from TA-18. NNSA Administrator Brooks has testified before the Congress on our approach and the Secretary of Energy highlighted our efforts on TA-18 in his speech on May 7 at the Savannah River Site.

You stated that the Secretary, "will need to fight the weapons complex bureaucracy, its contractors, and its handmaiden, the National Nuclear Security Administration, which wants to protect the status quo at all costs. Frankly, the NNSA has repeatedly proven itself eager to place the lab's interests over the Nation's security interests." This statement is both inaccurate in that the weapons complex has been reduced by more than 50 per cent, and is a disservice to the men and women who toil every day to preserve this Nation's freedom.



I hope this clarifies any misunderstandings you have related to the closure plan for TA-18 and that further discussions about this facility or any others accurately reflect the balanced approach taken by the Administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Everet H. Beckner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Everet H. Beckner
Deputy Administrator
for Defense Programs