



October 3, 2001

The Honorable Spencer Abraham
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Abraham,

Researchers at the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) have been working for months on an unclassified report highlighting the ongoing security failures at DOE nuclear weapons facilities around the country. In the course of this research, we discovered on the DOE website detailed maps and descriptions of all ten nuclear facilities with weapons-grade plutonium and highly-enriched uranium. Having these maps on a website, particularly in the aftermath of September 11, appears to be irresponsible. They seem to contain virtual target information for terrorists.

For example, at Rocky Flats, the website describes the location of the consolidation of tens of tons of Special Nuclear Materials (SNM). "Rocky Flats has [REDACTED] of plutonium [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] of highly enriched uranium in nuclear weapons parts. . . Consolidation of Special Nuclear Materials into Building [REDACTED] is expected to be completed in FY 2000." This information is accompanied by a detailed map of the facility including access roads and fence lines.

In another example, at TA-18 at Los Alamos, a detailed map identifies the location of [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED], along with the location of the access control gates and internal fence lines. The text explains that "Assemblies or critical assemblies (3) consist of machines plus special nuclear material. . . The various materials used to support the operations of the critical assemblies are stored in [REDACTED]. . . Additional structures consists of the [REDACTED] that is also used for special nuclear material storage. . ."

In a final example, there is a series of detailed maps of Pantex identifying the layout of [REDACTED]. The website also includes a 1993 analysis of the possible ways an aircraft accident could breach the walls of [REDACTED].

We have not performed an exhaustive search through DOE websites, but these initial findings were enough to alarm us. POGO strongly recommends this information be immediately removed from the internet and public reading rooms.

The Department of Energy has proven itself to be institutionally unable to address its failures to provide adequate security at the nuclear weapons complex. However, removing this information from public view should be a step your office can achieve immediately with relative ease.

We don't take the removal of information from public view lightly. As a public interest organization, POGO has consistently worked to promote public access to government information. Several of our reports in recent years have focused on broadening the public's access to information and we will continue to work for government openness. In over 20 years, we have never recommended the withdrawal of any information from the public. Furthermore, we are greatly concerned that some other government agencies have used the recent events to take important public information off their website in the name of national security.

Yet POGO's goal is not indiscriminate public disclosure, but access to that information which could help the public without genuinely endangering national security. The disclosure of the information on the DOE website may threaten national security and yet offers relatively little practical use to the American public. Although POGO usually supports broadening public awareness, in this particular case we believe the public will be best served by the immediate removal of this information from DOE's website.

I would be glad to meet with you on this issue to further discuss our concerns regarding DOE's failure to protect the nation's nuclear inventories.

Sincerely,

Danielle Brian
Executive Director

cc
Representative Chris Shays
Representative Dennis Kucinich
Colonel Ed Bolton, National Security Counsel
Roger Cressey, National Security Counsel
Colonel Bill Coleman, Director of DOD Security Support Center

Attachments enclosed