



January 24, 2002

General John A. Gordon
Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Via Facsimile: (202) 586-4892

Dear General Gordon,

I have seen your statements in the media that security at the DOE nuclear weapons facilities is “tested to failure.” You are clearly being misled. The managers running security who are briefing you on these matters are the very people responsible for the ongoing problems.

The tests to which you are referring have no element of surprise – giving the protective forces months to practice the specific scenario in advance. The scenarios are dictated by the facilities themselves. The adversarial forces’ tactics, weapons, and communications are below the realistic capabilities of terrorist organizations. Any unscripted element during a mock attack causes the test to be thrown out. This is not testing to failure.

The tragedy is that DOE does, in fact, test to failure, but it doesn’t intend to.

POGO is not the only organization critical of DOE nuclear security. In the past five years, there have been over 50 reports, commissions, and testimonies concluding that DOE’s security at the nuclear weapons facilities is inadequate. These criticisms have come from a wide range of government institutions including: the General Accounting Office, the DOE Inspector General, the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and even internal DOE studies such as the \$1 million Hagengruber Report.

After September 11th you issued a Department-wide order to upgrade the security posture at most of the Class A sites (those with weapons quantities of materials). You ordered the protective forces to be able to prevent a terrorist from entering a facility or vault containing plutonium or highly-enriched uranium, rather than simply containing the terrorist inside the facility – the previous standard at most sites. We applaud that step as it would address the threat of a suicidal terrorist

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creating a dirty bomb or homemade nuclear bomb. The problem is that most of these facilities are simply not capable of doing so with their current resources. Your protective forces are undermanned, inadequately trained and out-gunned. We also know you do not have a posture for dealing with the tactical use of chemical and biological weapons by terrorists during an attack on a nuclear facility, despite two Presidential Decision Directives requiring you to do so.

You have dismissed our assertion that, in more than 50% of the tests, the government fails to protect nuclear weapons facilities against mock attacks conducted by military Special Forces. In fact, the Special Forces who plan and participate in these tests tell us the failure rate is significantly higher. It is curious that you can dismiss our finding when you currently have a working group trying to define what a protective force “win” is. We define a protective force “win” as when the Special Nuclear Materials stay in the facility and not in the hands of the terrorists.

I have contacted your office twice requesting a meeting, but have been rebuffed. In comparison, the National Security Council, the Scowcroft Commission and the Office of Homeland Security, all of which are currently evaluating DOE security, have met with us to discuss our findings. As you know, the Scowcroft “End-to-End” Review team is highly critical of DOE’s methods of testing and evaluating security at the facilities, and is concerned about existing vulnerabilities. The Office of Homeland Security is also greatly concerned with the artificialities and inadequacies of DOE’s testing and in fact are considering alternatives to having DOE evaluate its own security.

I again offer to meet with you to brief you on these important matters.

Sincerely,

Danielle Brian
Executive Director