Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials Final PEIS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, LAS VEGAS, NV, LORRAINE HUNT
PAGE 1 OF 2

LORRAINE HUNT
Commissioner

Board of County Commissioners
CLARK COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
500 S GRAND CENTRAL PKY
PO BOX 554001
LAS VEGAS NV 89155-1001
(702) 455-3500 FAX (702) 383-6041

U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585
Attention: Ms. Hazel O'Leary, Secretary

May 7, 1996

SUBJECT: STORAGE AND DISPOSITION OF WEAPONS-USABLE FISSILE MATERIALS DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Dear Secretary. O'Leary:

I am a Commissioner of Clark County, Nevada, a community with over 60 percent of Nevada's population, in addition to being one of the more rapidly growing metropolitan areas in the United States. I am writing to express some concerns about the manner in which the Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to resolve a severe national problem with the final resolution of the nation's radioactive and mixed radioactive waste issues.

While my immediate concerns are in reference to a proposal, recently described at a workshop in Las Vegas, to consider the storage of weapons-usable Fissile Materials (more commonly known as Plutonium "pits") at the Nevada Test Site (NTS), my concerns address a host of issues associated with the NTS.

As you are probably aware, the NTS is being considered as a storage, treatment and disposal site for a considerable amount of the waste that has been generated in the nation's weapons development program. This is, of course, in addition to the hundreds of nuclear weapons tests that have been detonated over the years and the proposal to place all the nation's commercial spent nuclear fuel and defense high-level waste at the NTS. Now this proposal. Where will it end?

Nevada, because of its relatively small population and national political strength seems to be always automatically considered as a final solution when proposals such as these are generated.

DOE needs to be more creative in crafting final solutions. Nevada has obviously performed ably in doing its part in ending the "cold war." It is willing to continue to do its part in the final resolution of the onerous waste problems confronting the nation. Other parts of the nation, however, also need to do their part as well. 1/01.00.00

M-241

01 00 00 Comment Number 1

Comment noted. DOE is also considering sites in other states for the various storage and disposition alternatives analyzed in this PEIS. To obtain public comments, DOE held meetings near each of the potentially affected sites and a national meeting in Washington, DC. DOE also participated in meetings, open to the public, sponsored by different organizations at which the sponsors collected public comments which were forwarded to DOE. Technical, schedule, cost, and nonproliferation analyses along with environmental analyses will be used by the decisionmaker in determining the ROD. These documents were made available for public review beginning in late July 1996.

Secretary O'Leary
May 7, 1996
Page Two

The final solution of this problem needs to include states and communities, other than Nevada. DOE and the nation needs to interject more equity into the final cleanup process and not take the line of least resistance and automatically foist all the waste and nuclear materials on one locale. This will be work for DOE, but is the only way to ensure that just as many communities and states benefitted (as well as contributed to the defense efforts) from the jobs and wages that accrued from this program, that they will also share in the waste and material disposal side. 1/01.00.00 cont.

It should be noted that there are communities that have recognized this inequity and have worked to redress it. The NTS Community Advisory Board and the Fernald Ohio group, for example, have interacted to develop a more equitable solution to these issues.

As a result of their discussions what was originally an alternative to transport a high proportion of the waste to Nevada has been modified to one where a considerable amount of the waste will remain safely stored, in Ohio, some to a private incinerator in Utah, and yes, some for final disposal in Nevada. This is an equitable solution that could be emulated throughout the nation. It also offers the added benefit of reducing the amount of material (and consequence to added cost) that must be transported on U.S. highways, and thereby, reduce another source of potential accident and exposure to the public. 2/01.04.00

We are certain that you will support these valuable, positive efforts to solve, I reiterate, in an equitable manner, these serious problems.

Nevada, because of geography and history have limited transportation options. Much of the material consequently may end up being transported through one of the more vibrant communities in the United States. In a tourist-based economy we, understandably, have great concerns.

I look forward to the initiation of a constructive dialogue on these issues.

Sincerely

Lorraine Hunt
Commissioner

cc: Thomas Grumbly, Under Secretary
Clark County Board of Commissioners
Donald L. Shalmy
James Ley
Richard B. Holmes

07oleary.doc

M-241

01 04 00 Comment Number 2

The disposition alternatives evaluated in the PEIS will produce various types and quantities of waste. Some of this waste will be disposed of onsite, while other quantities will be shipped offsite for disposal. As part of the implementation process and depending on the type of waste, DOE will consider alternatives for onsite versus offsite disposal in order to define an approach that will reduce cost, transportation requirements, and potential exposure of the public to radiological releases and contaminants, and will be consistent with decisions associated with other NEPA reviews, such as the *Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Treatment, Storage, and Disposal of Radioactive and Hazardous Waste* (Waste Management PEIS).