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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

December 7, 2001

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
The Honorable John Warner
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Bob Stump
Chairman
The Honorable Ike Skelton
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Subject: Nuclear Weapons: Status of Planning for Stockpile Life Extension

In response to changes in the international climate in the late 1980s, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Defense Programs altered its mission. Instead of designing, testing, and building new nuclear weapons, the Office's current mission—known as the Stockpile Stewardship Program—is to maintain the safety and reliability of the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile indefinitely without nuclear testing. The Office now performs this mission as part of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a semiautonomous agency within DOE.¹

Because the nation's existing nuclear weapons are anticipated to remain in the stockpile well beyond the expected life of their original design, one of the Office's key tasks will be to refurbish each of the nine weapon types through a comprehensive stockpile life extension program. To accomplish this task, the Office of Defense Programs will have to (1) determine which components will need refurbishing to extend each weapon's life; (2) design and produce the necessary refurbished components; (3) install the components in the weapons; and (4) certify that the changes do not adversely affect the safety and reliability of the stockpile. This program will require a coordinated effort among the design laboratories and production facilities that comprise the nation's nuclear weapons complex.

¹ NNSA has responsibility for the nation's nuclear weapons, nonproliferation, and naval reactors programs.

To plan for the work of refurbishing the stockpile, the Congress, in section 3133 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, required DOE to prepare a comprehensive plan for the stockpile life extension program that was initially due in January 2000 and was to be updated thereafter with each annual budget submission. In requiring such a plan, the Congress sought to ensure that stockpile life extension activities are planned in detail, coordinated fully, and executed within fiscal resources. Section 3133 also required us to assess any plan that was prepared. Because the Office of Defense Programs has yet to issue a final comprehensive plan for the stockpile life extension program, we reviewed the status of the Office of Defense Programs' efforts to comply with the legislative requirement.

In summary, we found the following:

NNSA's Office of Defense Programs is not developing a comprehensive stockpile life extension program plan as called for in section 3133 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000. The Office issued an "interim plan" in May 2000. However, this interim plan was essentially a description of the life extension process and did not meet all of the requirements stated in section 3133. In response to our evaluation of the interim plan, NNSA promised that it would provide the information required under section 3133 as part of its budget request for fiscal year 2002.² However, nothing closely resembling such a plan was included in the budget request. Instead, brief, often generalized information on weapon refurbishments was included in various places in the budget request. The Office of Defense Programs is not developing a comprehensive stockpile life extension program plan because program officials were unsure of the need for such a plan, along the lines that the legislative requirement envisions. They believe their fiscal year 2002 budget submittal fulfills the spirit of the legislative requirement, and they have no current plans to complete a comprehensive plan for the stockpile life extension program, other than to again include certain high-level refurbishment-related information in the fiscal year 2003 budget request. They pointed out that they are taking steps to improve the planning processes for certain individual weapon life extension programs as well as their overall planning processes; however, they have no plans to integrate the individual life extension plans into an overall program. Nevertheless, integrated planning is vital to successfully managing the interrelated activities of the design laboratories and production plants and to making well-informed decisions in a resource-constrained environment.

Background

The U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile consists of nine types of bombs and missile warheads, numbering several thousand devices, that are currently either stored at strategic military locations or deployed on military aircraft, missiles, or submarines. A national complex of nuclear weapons design laboratories and production facilities, run by NNSA, supports this stockpile. With the easing of tensions with the former

² See *Nuclear Weapons: Improved Management Needed to Implement the Stockpile Stewardship Program Effectively* (GAO-01-48, Dec. 14, 2000).

Soviet Union in the late 1980s, this complex has decreased in size. There are currently four production sites in the DOE complex: the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, Texas; the Y-12 Plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; the Kansas City Plant in Kansas City, Missouri; and the Savannah River Site in Savannah River, South Carolina. The complex also includes the Nevada Test Site and three national laboratories that design nuclear weapons: Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, California; Los Alamos National Laboratory, New Mexico; and Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico and California.

Within NNSA, the Office of Defense Programs is responsible for designing and maintaining the stockpile. The Stockpile Stewardship Program is aimed at preserving the core U.S. intellectual and technical competencies in nuclear weapons in a nontesting environment.³ This program includes:

- “Campaigns” to develop and maintain critical scientific knowledge about nuclear weapons so that the Office can continue to certify the stockpile into the foreseeable future;
- “Directed Stockpile Work” to maintain and extend the life of the stockpile; and
- “Readiness in Technical Base and Facilities” to ensure that infrastructure and facilities are operational, safe, secure, in compliance, and ready to operate.

Directed Stockpile Work includes the mission of extending the life of existing nuclear weapons through scientific study, simulation, and refurbishment. Weapon refurbishment becomes necessary because nuclear warheads, even while in storage, can deteriorate over time. Refurbishment involves design activities at the weapon laboratories; transferring the weapons from Department of Defense (DOD) custody to the Pantex Plant for disassembly; component rework and new component fabrication at the Kansas City and Y-12 Plants; and finally, reassembly at the Pantex Plant for return to DOD. The Office of Defense Programs currently is conducting a life extension program for the W87 warhead and is embarking on life extensions for several other weapons, including the B61 bomb, the W76 warhead, and the W80 warhead. The lifetimes of these weapons are to be extended up to 30 years beyond the minimum life—generally about 20 years—for which they were originally designed.

Because of the national importance of extending the life of the nuclear weapons in the stockpile, in 1996, the Office of Defense Programs established the stockpile life extension program, managed by the Office of Military Applications and Stockpile Operations. Section 3133 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 requires the Secretary of Energy to carry out a program to provide for the extension of the effective life of weapons in the nuclear weapons stockpile. As part

³ While a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which would limit nuclear testing by participating countries to extremely low levels, known as zero yield, was rejected by the U.S. Senate in October 1999, a unilateral U.S. moratorium on testing that began in 1992 continues.

of the program, DOE (NNSA) is to develop and submit annually to the Congress a long-term stockpile life extension program plan, which would:

- provide for the remanufacture, refurbishment, and modernization of each weapon design designated for inclusion in the stockpile;
- expedite the collection of information necessary to carry out the program;
- ensure the appropriate assignment of roles and missions for each nuclear weapons laboratory and production plant, workload allocation, modernization, and retention of skilled personnel;
- allocate funds for activities by weapon type and facility; and
- identify the funds needed to carry out the program, for the current year and the next 5 fiscal years.

The initial plan was to be submitted not later than January 1, 2000, with subsequent updated plans submitted annually with the Department's budget request. The act also called for us to assess whether the program could be effectively carried out under any plan submitted. In addition, Title 32 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, which established the NNSA, mandated the use of sound planning, programming, budgeting, and financial activities. In particular, it required that NNSA submit to the Congress a Future Years Nuclear Security Program plan that details NNSA's planned expenditures for the next 5 years.

Our December 2000 report on NNSA's Stockpile Stewardship Program confirmed the need for improved planning. We recommended that the Administrator, NNSA, direct the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs to ensure completion of a stockpile life extension program plan containing all of the information required by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, especially information on plant workload capacity and budget. In addition, we also recommended that the Stockpile Stewardship Program's planning efforts, including stockpile life extension planning, be integrated with the program's management controls and coordinated with the budget planning and formulation process.

Interim Stockpile Life Extension Program Plan Was Incomplete

In May 2000, the Office of Defense Programs issued an interim stockpile life extension program plan. However, as we reported in December 2000, the interim plan was incomplete. The plan was essentially a detailed description of the weapon life extension process. It included a multiyear stockpile work schedule for various weapons, but it did not list all facilities to be involved for each weapon life extension, or the nature or time frame for their involvement. As stated in our December 2000 report on the management of the Stockpile Stewardship Program, the plan did not:

- compile complete and current information necessary to implement the life extension program, such as requirements for when, how, and to what extent key weapons are to be refurbished;
- address potential plant production capacity issues; or

- include budget information.

In particular, we found that information used in the interim plan regarding plant capacity was not complete. For example, Y-12 Plant capacity estimates for producing certain weapon components at that site were not available because the Y-12 Plant did not have a current, validated model for estimating plant capacity. The contractor at the Y-12 Plant agreed on the need for such information and expected to develop a complete and validated model in fiscal year 2003.

We also found that the interim plan did not address how to remedy potential plant capacity shortfalls. For example, by 2016, Pantex Plant officials expect the beginning of a 6-year period where workload may significantly exceed plant capacity for performing a variety of scheduled weapon operations and tests. Although a draft 10-Year Site Plan for the Pantex Plant described these potential shortfalls, the interim plan did not specifically address how to deal with them. In particular, it did not establish activities and make firm commitments to modify facilities or hire and train additional staff to prevent delays to the schedule. We found that the interim plan neither projected budget needs for the program nor allocated funds either by weapon type or by facility and that “without such basic budgeting information, managers in the Office of Defense Programs cannot use the plan for budget decisions.”

In responding to our December 2000 report, the Office of Defense Programs acknowledged weaknesses in its program planning and the need to supply the information required by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000. At the time the interim plan was submitted, the Secretary of Energy committed to providing the congressional defense committees with a final report by the end of September 2000. However, according to the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, this date could not be met because NNSA and the Department of Defense had not made key refurbishment decisions, the Stockpile Stewardship Program was going to be realigned, and programmatic and budget issues within the new NNSA remained to be resolved. The Office expressed the hope that information on stockpile life extension could be incorporated into the fiscal year 2002 budget submission.

The Office of Defense Programs Did Not Complete a Comprehensive Plan to Extend Stockpile Life to Accompany Its Fiscal Year 2002 Budget Request

Over the last year, NNSA has several times stated its intention to respond to the congressional requirement by including pertinent information in the agency’s fiscal year 2002 budget request.

- The Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, in a November 7, 2000, letter commenting on our draft stockpile stewardship report, stated that the Office would comply with the intent of our recommendation that NNSA complete a stockpile life extension plan containing the information required under the act. The Deputy Administrator stated that this information would be included as part

of the Directed Stockpile Work plans to be submitted with the budget request for fiscal year 2002.

- The Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs wrote along similar lines to the Chairman, House Committee on Armed Services, on January 10, 2001, raising the prospect of incorporating stockpile life extension program needs in NNSA's fiscal year 2002 budget.
- Finally, the NNSA Administrator wrote to us on April 3, 2001, outlining his plans to address the recommendations in our December 2000 report. He stated that NNSA would incorporate the spirit of our recommendation to provide the Congress with a stockpile life extension program plan in its fiscal year 2002 budget request and subsequent budget requests by providing supplementary information on the stockpile life extension process, or "stockpile refurbishment planning," within the larger framework of the agency's Directed Stockpile Work.

However, NNSA did not follow through on these statements. Nothing close to such a plan was included in the fiscal year 2002 budget request submitted on April 9, 2001. Instead, information on stockpile life extension in the budget was limited, often generalized, and located in various places. The discussion of weapons refurbishment under the Directed Stockpile Work budget program activity did not provide the requisite overview. It did not present a coherent, multiyear picture of the status of the effort, including—broken out by weapon type—information on (1) facility roles, missions, and workload; (2) funding; and (3) schedules. Instead, activities related to refurbishment of the B61, W76, W80, and W87 weapons could be found in any one of four areas under the Directed Stockpile Work program activity. For example, under the "stockpile research and development" category, refurbishment was listed as a subcategory (with about \$91 million requested for fiscal year 2002) and under the "stockpile maintenance" category life extension operations, repairs, and maintenance was listed as a subcategory (with about \$247 million requested for fiscal year 2002). Stockpile life extension activities were also mentioned in the "stockpile evaluation" and "production support" categories.

The Office of Defense Programs Believes Other Plans Are an Adequate Substitute for a Comprehensive Stockpile Life Extension Program Plan

While they agreed that the fiscal year 2002 budget submittal did not represent a unified "cross cutting" overview of refurbishment, as the legislative requirement envisions, Office of Defense Programs officials said they have no current plans to complete a single stand-alone stockpile life extension program plan. Several officials stated that the program's budget submittal at least partially fulfilled the spirit of the legislative requirement. They stated that they plan to include refurbishment activities in the fiscal year 2003 budget submittal in a form similar to that in the fiscal year 2002 budget submittal. One official noted that the fiscal year 2003 submittal might not change substantially from the previous year, other than that the funding numbers would be updated. Some officials questioned whether such a plan was needed in the form that the congressional requirement envisions, while another official said he was unsure that the congressional requirement was still valid.

As support for their view that a stockpile life extension program plan may not be needed, Office of Defense Programs officials cited existing documents and planning initiatives under development that they believe cover the key aspects of a stockpile life extension program plan—even though the documents and initiatives have not been packaged into a single plan. With respect to existing documents, they noted that the Office of Defense Programs annually issues a Production and Planning Directive that spells out, among other things, refurbishment requirements as agreed to between NNSA, DOD, and the weapons laboratories. They also cited procedural guidelines that the Office of Defense Programs has developed for the refurbishment phase of the weapons development and production life cycle—generally referred to as the “Phase 6.X Process.” As additional support for their position, the officials mentioned several refurbishment-related planning initiatives that they are currently working on, including:

- completing a Life Extension Program Management Plan for refurbishment of the B61, W76, and W80;
- developing individual project plans to carry out the B61, W76, and W80 refurbishments; and
- developing five Directed Stockpile Work plans that cover refurbishment activities related to several weapons, including the W87 and the three mentioned above.

We reviewed each of these documents and planning initiatives. While each is an important contributor to effectively managing the life extension of the stockpile, they do not, individually or collectively, meet all of the requirements called for in section 3133. More importantly, by spreading planning information across a variety of planning approaches, the concept of integration—which is key to managing such a complicated enterprise as life extension—is lost. Our analysis of each of the existing documents and planning initiatives follows.

Production and Planning Directive: The Production and Planning Directive is a high-level classified document that is used by the Office of Defense Programs and its Albuquerque Operations Office to give annual planning guidance primarily to the production facilities. While some areas called for in section 3133 are covered in the directive, such as the overall schedule for a life extension, the directive does not include the detail on such areas as roles and responsibilities for the various parts of the complex needed to effectively manage the overall program. Nor is the directive linked to budgets.

Phase 6.X Process guidelines: As a direct result of cost and schedule difficulties it experienced with the W87 life extension program, the Office of Defense Programs, for DOE, has established an agreement with DOD for future life extensions called the Phase 6.X Process. The Phase 6.X Process guidelines, which were issued in October 2000, use the management framework that the Office of Defense Programs employed for over 40 years to successfully design and build the nation’s nuclear arsenal and applies them to the refurbishment process. The Phase 6.X Process agreement with

DOD requires DOE to produce a DOE Project Plan for each life extension.⁴ We recognized in our December 2000 report on the management of the Stockpile Stewardship Program that the Phase 6.X Process promised to improve the management of future life extensions, through such management techniques as the development of plans and cost and schedule estimates; however, with respect to meeting the requirements of section 3133, the Phase 6.X Process is simply a set of guidelines and not a comprehensive plan for conducting life extensions.

Life Extension Program Management Plan: To further strengthen the management of individual life extensions, in February 2001, the Office of Defense Programs began to develop an additional set of guidelines, known as the Life Extension Program Management Plan. This plan is intended to support and expand on the Phase 6.X Process guidelines and contains more detailed requirements for such key management areas as roles and responsibilities; risk management; scope, cost and schedule documentation; and interface needs among components of the weapons complex. As drafted, the Life Extension Program Management Plan requires the development of many of the elements called for in Section 3133 but only for individual life extensions. It does not cover how the various life extensions will be integrated across the complex. Moreover, the Life Extension Program Management Plan has not been finalized. Initially, its completion was impeded by the inability of the various components of the Office of Defense Programs to agree on roles and responsibilities—a continuing management issue that we highlighted in our December 2000 report. After approval within the Office of Defense Programs, implementation of the Life Extension Program Management Plan has been delayed by NNSA because of discussions concerning roles and responsibilities related to the ongoing NNSA reorganization.

Individual life extension plans: Using the requirements contained in the Life Extension Program Management Plan, program managers for the B61, W76, and W80 life extensions have begun developing plans, known as DOE Project Plans, for their individual life extensions. The development of individual plans holds significant promise to improve the management of individual life extensions, but not the overall life extension planning effort. Moreover, these plans are far from complete. According to Office of Defense Programs officials, the plan for the W80 could be completed by late fall 2001; the plan for the W76 by the end of 2001; and the plan for the B61 by early 2002.

Directed Stockpile Work plans: A final, more broadly scoped planning effort, to develop five Directed Stockpile Work program plans, has been under way since May 2001. According to Office of Defense Programs officials, they believe this effort addresses stockpile life extension planning. They said the effort involves repackaging past stockpile work planning documents into five new plans that are to match the budget program activity categories currently under Directed Stockpile

⁴ The DOE Project Plan, functioning as a program plan for the refurbishment will be drafted in Phase 6.2, Feasibility Study & Option Down-Select, and finalized in Phase 6.2A, Design Definition & Cost Study. Advancement from one phase to another is controlled by the DOD-DOE Nuclear Weapons Council.

Work. In this regard, as noted earlier, refurbishment is not one of the five program activity areas, but rather a crosscutting set of activities. To obtain an overview of the Office of Defense Program's life extension efforts, it will be necessary to comb through each of these plans.

In commenting on a draft of this report, NNSA also cited its efforts to develop a new overall planning, programming, and budgeting process as a potential vehicle for satisfying the requirements of section 3133. As noted earlier, Title 32 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 mandates the use of sound planning, programming, budgeting, and financial activities. It also requires that NNSA submit to the Congress a Future Years Nuclear Security Program plan that details NNSA's planned expenditures for the next 5 years. Such a plan could contain some of the elements required by section 3133.

Early in his tenure, the NNSA Administrator indicated that he intended to comply with Title 32 by instituting a planning, programming, and budgeting process similar to that in use at DOD. While DOD's approach has not been without problems over the past 40 years, it is generally recognized as a system that, when properly led and staffed, is capable of making cost-effectiveness comparisons and of developing detailed program and budget plans. The Administrator originally set a goal of having NNSA's version of DOD's planning, programming, and budgeting process established by the fiscal year 2003 budget cycle. Subsequently, this date was pushed back to the fiscal year 2004 budget cycle because development was taking longer than expected.

NNSA has yet to submit a Future Years Nuclear Security Program plan to the Congress. NNSA was required to submit its first plan for the fiscal year 2001-2005 period, but it failed to do so because the NNSA Administrator said he did not have reliable data on planned expenditures that reflected recent congressional direction and the new executive branch priorities. NNSA did produce a plan for the fiscal year 2002-2006 period, which was submitted to the Office of Management and Budget in March 2001. The Office of Management and Budget is reviewing the plan, pending the soon-to-be-completed high-level reviews of the nation's national security programs, but it is unclear if the plan will be released to the Congress.

Integrated Planning Is Key to a Successful Overall Life Extension Effort

Extending the life of the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile is a complicated enterprise that requires each weapon life extension to use many of the same facilities at the three design laboratories, the four production plants, and the test site. As a result of this competition for scarce resources, integrated planning is needed not only among the laboratories and plants but also among the several different weapon types that are undergoing life extension at the same time. Although the B61, W76, and W80 life extensions are still in the planning phase, the consequences of the current non-integrated approach have already begun to surface.

- One of the high risks facing the W76 life extension is the expansion of the Acorn Production Line at the Kansas City Plant and the Acorn Loading Line at the Savannah River Site. While the W76 life extension is planning on using the Acorn technology as part of its effort, other life extensions are now considering using the Acorn technology as well. This means that the Kansas City Plant and the Savannah River Site currently do not have enough capacity to meet the potential need for this technology. If the capacity is not expanded or if the other life extensions do not change their desire to use the Acorn technology, the W76 life extension's schedule milestones could be in jeopardy.
- Officials at the Y-12 Plant told us that, on the basis of the production requirements, they expected their workload to sharply peak in the near future, then drop off. As a result, officials are seeking ways to "load-level" production operations at the Y-12 Plant so that they can achieve a more consistent and efficient use of the plant's personnel, equipment, and facilities. To achieve the load-leveling, Y-12 Plant officials believe they will need better integration of the three planned stockpile life extensions across the complex.
- By 2016, Pantex Plant officials expect the beginning of a 6-year period where workload may significantly exceed plant capacity for performing a variety of weapon operations and tests. Although a draft 10-Year Site Plan for the Pantex Plant described these potential shortfalls, the interim plan did not specifically address how to deal with them.
- The W76 program manager told us that hydrodynamic testing was very important to certifying the changes to the W76. A hydrodynamic test is a high explosive, nonnuclear experiment to investigate aspects of the function of a nuclear weapon primary. However, hydrodynamic tests are important to other life extensions as well, especially the W80. The W76 program manager was concerned about how effectively the hydrodynamic testing was being prioritized and who was doing the prioritization. He believed this was an area where an integrated plan would help identify and resolve issues.
- Each life extension will rely on the design and certification efforts of the design laboratories. Many of these design efforts will be carried out under the various Campaigns. However, no formal mechanism exists to ensure that the Campaigns anticipate and meet the needs of the life extension efforts. This lack of a formal mechanism was a significant concern to the B61, W76, and W80 program managers.

Conclusions

A significant portion of the Stockpile Stewardship Program will be the effort to extend the life of the nation's nuclear stockpile. As the life extension program expands in scope and individual life extensions begin to run concurrently in the first decade of the 2000s, integrated planning will be needed more than ever to enable effective prioritization among different weapon refurbishments. While the Office of Defense Programs appears to be conducting better up-front planning for the B61, W76, and W80 individual life extensions, the needed integrating mechanisms that an overall stockpile life extension plan could provide are not now in place, and may not soon be. As the Congress recognized in section 3133 of the National Defense

Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, a comprehensive stockpile life extension program plan that includes information on capacity, workload, and budget is vital to successfully managing the integrated activities of the design laboratories and production plants and to making well-informed decisions in a resource-constrained environment. We continue to believe, as we recommended in our December 2000 report, that the Office of Defense Programs should develop a comprehensive plan, not only to meet the legislative requirement, but also for effective program management.

Agency Comments

We provided NNSA with a draft of this report for review and comment. NNSA agreed with the need for integrated program planning, calling it a cornerstone of NNSA's ability to meet DOD's expectations for the weapons life extension programs. However, NNSA did not clearly state when, or if, it intended to comply with section 3133. While NNSA cited its recent efforts to develop a new planning, programming, and budgeting system as evidence that it is moving toward meeting the requirements of section 3133, a fully functioning process will not be available until the 2004 budget cycle at the earliest. Moreover, NNSA stated that its ability to follow through and demonstrate compliance with section 3133 will depend on its ability to reach administration agreement on a multiyear budget like that contained in a Future Years Nuclear Security Program plan. However, as we noted earlier, while NNSA did produce a plan for the fiscal year 2002-2006 period and submit it to the Office of Management and Budget in March 2001, it is unclear if this plan will ever be released to the Congress. NNSA also provided technical comments, which were incorporated as appropriate. NNSA's comments are included as an enclosure.

Scope and Methodology

We performed our review from June through December 2001 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. To determine the status of the Office of Defense Programs efforts to comply with the congressional requirement to develop a stockpile life extension program plan, we talked to responsible NNSA and Office of Defense Programs officials and examined pertinent documentation. Specifically, we collected information on existing documents and planning initiatives that could constitute such a plan and compared this information to the congressional requirement. To better understand this information in the context of currently expanding weapon refurbishment activities, we talked to key officials in various offices including the Office of Stockpile Assessments and Certification; the Office of Military Application and Stockpile Operations; the Albuquerque Operations Office and its Weapons Program Division; and in particular to the project managers of the scheduled B61, W76, and W80 weapon refurbishments.

We are sending copies of this letter to the Secretary of Energy, the Administrator of NNSA, and the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs. This letter will also be available on GAO's home page at <http://www.gao.gov>. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact James Noel or me at 202-512-3841. Dave Brack was a key contributor to this letter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary L. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "G" and "J".

(Ms.) Gary L. Jones
Director, Natural Resources and
Environment

Comments From the National Nuclear Security Administration



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

November 15, 2001

Ms. Gary L. Jones
Director, Natural Resources
and Environment
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Jones:

I am pleased to be able to present the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) comments on the Draft General Accounting Office (GAO) Report, GAO-02-146R, Nuclear Weapons: Status of Planning for Stockpile Life Extensions. While our traditional planning efforts have enabled programs to proceed, integrated program planning is a cornerstone of NNSA's ability to continue to meet our customers' expectations for all the life extension programs and for all NNSA tasks. As you are aware, approximately 2 years ago, we restructured our program into Directed Stockpile Work, Campaigns, Readiness in Technical Base and Facilities, and Construction. This business model has improved program integration.

Enclosed is a brief description of the path forward, general comments, and a list of specific comments keyed to specific portions of the draft report. We have taken actions to improve our planning abilities, which will achieve demonstrable results within the current fiscal year. However, our ability to follow through and demonstrate compliance with section 3133 of the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2000 will be dependent on our ability to reach Administration agreement on a multi-year budget for Defense Programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. E. Beck".

David E. Beck
Assistant Deputy Administrator
for Military Application and
Stockpile Operations
Defense Programs

Enclosure



Printed with soy ink on recycled paper

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