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DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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March 26, 1996

Major General Eldon W. Joersz
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Military Application
Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585-0104

Dear General Joersz:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) was pleased to receive copies of your letters to the Air Force and Navy regarding the Military Research Associate (MRA) Program. The effort on your part to revitalize this technical personnel interchange between the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Energy (DOE) national weapons laboratories is to be commended and demonstrates a clear appreciation of the critical aspects of a successful MRA program. It is essential that there be a well-defined career path with promotion potential for MRAs during and after their DOE assignment.

The Board shares your belief that revitalization of the MRA program, with full endorsement by the parent Services, could be of direct benefit to the interface between the DOE and DoD. The Board believes that the infusion of technical talent a revitalized MRA program could provide would enhance DOE's ability to safely execute its entire suite of defense nuclear activities.

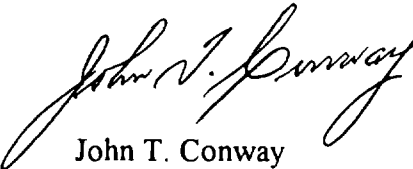
The Board has long considered that the assignment of highly-qualified military personnel to DOE can add significantly to the DOE's capability to safely provide nuclear weapons stockpile stewardship and management. Historically, the MRA program was an excellent mechanism for training young military officers in nuclear weapons duties for future assignments with their parent Service, joint nuclear weapons-related assignments, and assignments within DOE Headquarters. The degradation of the MRA program causes the Board concern.

In 1994, the Board discussed revitalization of the DoD-DOE technical personnel interchanges, explicitly including the MRA program, with then-Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch. Deputy Secretary Deutch seemed particularly interested in the concept of extending the MRA

program beyond the laboratories to other defense nuclear facilities. One facility specifically discussed was the Pantex Plant, where MRAs could provide technical support to surveillance activities in support of the enduring stockpile as well as to dismantlement operations.

Your offer to keep the Board advised of your progress on this matter is greatly appreciated. If there is any way in which the Board can be of direct assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John T. Conway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark Whitaker