



**Department of Energy**  
**National Nuclear Security Administration**  
Washington, DC 20585

September 10, 2003

The Honorable John T. Conway  
Chairman  
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board  
625 Indiana Avenue, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) interim response to your letter dated July 9, 2003, which requested, "NNSA's plans and schedules for addressing or rejecting the recommendations made by the Senior Technical Advisory Panel during the past 3 years, and to institutionalize the separation in time for the NESS and readiness reviews."

The NNSA is in the process of doing the following with regard to the utilization of the Senior Technical Advisory Panel (STAP):

1. Mr. Gene Ives is conducting an independent review of the current STAP process. We have asked him to evaluate the hiring criteria, contracting authority, performance measurements, safety study contributions, and overall value added. We expect Mr. Ives to give us an unbiased review of how we are utilizing the STAP today and how he believes we can best utilize their expertise in the future.
2. Upon completion of Mr. Ives' independent review, the STAP Charter will be rewritten and will be approved by the Assistant Deputy Administrator for Military Application and Stockpile Operations. Our intention is to ensure we manage the STAP in such a way as to continually update/improve the Nuclear Explosive Safety Study (NESS) process.
3. We anticipate having a path forward by the end of September 2003 and will respond back to you by October 7, 2003.

We will also address your concerns regarding previous STAP recommendations in our response. Both the NNSA Service Center and the Pantex Site Office have been working to implement some of the previously submitted recommendations.



With regard to your concern about separating the NESS and readiness reviews, we will review this process and will let you know of our decision by October 7, 2003.

If you have questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Chuck Westfall of my staff on 301-903-4051.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Beck', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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