



August 2, 2001  
Ms. Elizabeth Withers  
NEPA Compliance Officer  
Office of the Environment  
DOE LAAO  
528 35th Street  
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Dear Ms. Withers,

I would like to add the following statements as an addendum to Nuclear Watch of New Mexico's (NWNM) July 2001 scoping comments on the proposed BSL-3 facility at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). I request that this be included as part of the NEPA scoping record for this facility.

In light of the recent decision by President Bush to withdraw U.S. support for the verification protocols of the Biological Weapons Convention, NWNM has a two-fold concern regarding statements made by LANL Bioscience Division Director Jill Trewhella.

- a) During the poster session held in Santa Fe on the proposed BSL-3 facility, Ms. Trewhella stated to the Director of NWNM that LANL could never do offensive weapons work.
- b) In an article published by Santa Fe's New Mexican dated February 22, 2001, Ms. Trewhella was quoted as stating that "I want to be very clear. The proposed BSL-3 laboratory will never be used for weapons of destruction. It will not have that capability. We are and will always be in full compliance with national and international agreements that prohibit any research for the production of biological weapons." (Emphasis added)

Firstly, how will Department of Energy (DOE) LANL verify that Ms. Trewhella's claims are met: that no research conducted on biological select agents will be used for offensive purposes, in this new political climate adopted by the Bush administration after it withdrew support for the 29 year old international prohibition against biological weapons? The existence of 1972 Biological Weapons Convention was used as proof to the regional public, by Ms. Trewhella and others, that LANL could never be involved in offensive biological research. Ms. Trewhella's proof is no longer valid, and new proof must be provided by DOE LANL.

Secondly, how will DOE NNSA determine that none of their research conducted on biological select agents at the laboratories nation-wide will ever be used for offensive research, whether that research is being conducted directly at a national laboratory for offensive purposes or whether research conducted at a national laboratory is used to complement an offensive research program within another Federal agency?

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As was stated in NWNM's scoping comments, NWNM believes that it is a bad international precedent to site a biological research facility capable of handling organisms used for biological warfare at the nation's premier nuclear weapons research laboratory. Many of the ongoing activities at LANL are deeply shrouded in secrecy, making public or even international oversight very difficult. President Bush's withdrawal from the Biological Weapons Convention sheds a poor light on any biological research involving organisms which could be used for offensive purposes. It also heightens NWNM's concern that these activities by DOE NNSA could provide an excuse to other countries to develop or expand existing biological weapons programs of their own. Responsible policy makers in DOE NNSA and other branches of the Federal Government must approach research on biological select agents common to biological weapons programs, no matter how benign that research may be, with a very cautious eye for fear that those activities could be misinterpreted within the new political context forged by recent Bush Administration policies.

I would like to thank you for the previous opportunity to provide you with NWNM's scoping comments for the BSL-3 laboratory. I hope that you will consider this addendum to those comments as well and include them in the scoping of the Environmental Assessment for the facility.

Sincerely,

Colin King  
Co-Research/Technologies Director