

NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS:
Jeanne Lopatto, 202/586-4940
Lisa Cutler, 202/586-7371

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, January 23, 2002

Statement of John Gordon
Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration and
Under Secretary of Energy

Security at Nuclear Weapons Facilities

WASHINGTON, DC – Administrator John Gordon released the following statement regarding security at the Department of Energy’s nuclear weapons facilities:

“As the Administrator of the NNSA, I am responsible to the Secretary of Energy and the American people for the security of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex. I have assessed the security conditions at our sites many times and I personally reviewed our posture immediately following the terrorist attacks in September.

Allegations that the Department of Energy has lax security at its nuclear weapons facilities are false and misleading. Charges that there is a fifty percent failure rate in our security tests are simply untrue.

While we welcome serious inquiries into the Department’s security practices, it is unfortunate that some try to create a climate of fear grossly disproportionate to the risks to the public. Such unfounded allegations are a disservice to the communities that are home to our national defense facilities.

There is no question that DOE takes security seriously as a critical part of our mission. The strong group of professionals who protect our sites are a source of pride and it is grossly unfair to characterize individuals or the system as uncaring or ignoring problems. Other federal agencies look to the DOE’s force as a model for effective practices, and in fact DOE regularly trains other federal security organizations.

As is often the case in “reports” such as the one from POGO, the use of outdated data contributes to misleading conclusions. In the mid 1990s, when budgets were severely cut and security was progressively degraded, there was a higher level of risk. Now we aggressively protect our people, facilities, and material, and we display a formidable security posture to potential attackers. Our forces are well-trained and well-equipped. They are tested by outside challengers, often to failure – so we know where weaknesses are. Then we fix the problem.

The physics of creating a bomb has been well understood by the DOE for a long time. That is why we have security and operational measures in place to provide a high level of assurance that these materials remain safe and secure. Nuclear material is not at risk at Department of Energy facilities.”

(Additional information on this topic is available by calling the Department of Energy’s Office of Public Affairs 202/586-4940 or www.energy.gov)