

Testimony of Charles E. Anderson
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Environmental Management
Before the
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives

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Good morning. My name is Charlie Anderson and I am the Chairman of the Department's Nuclear Materials Disposition and Consolidation Coordination Committee (NMDCCC). I am pleased to be here today to answer your questions regarding the Department's efforts to consolidate and disposition its nuclear materials. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and your subcommittee for your interest in this complex challenge as it is vital to the security of our country.

I have personally been involved with nuclear material management for a number of years, currently with the Office of Environmental Management (EM) and in previous positions, including with the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). Nuclear material disposition and consolidation is very important to the Department as there are 21 Category-1 facilities at 10 sites across the DOE complex. Proper management of these materials is also one of the biggest challenges facing the Department, with respect to cost, security, and the schedule of reducing the footprint of the DOE complex.

Last year Secretary Bodman formally chartered the Nuclear Materials Disposition and Consolidation Coordination Committee. While individual programs, such as the Office of Nuclear Energy, NNSA, and EM, have their own disposition and consolidation projects, the purpose of this committee is to ensure integration of individual program efforts thus identifying opportunities for resource sharing. The principal mission of the committee is to provide a forum to perform cross-cutting nuclear materials disposition and consolidation planning with the objective of developing implementation plans for consolidation and disposition, as appropriate.

Progress on intra-site consolidation has been made, such as the relocation of plutonium from the Savannah River Site's F-Area to K-Area and consolidation of Hanford materials at the Fast Flux Test Facility to its Plutonium Finishing Plant. Although, the Department has been less successful in transferring nuclear materials from one site to another -- either for continued programmatic use or for storage pending disposition -- some progress has been made. NNSA has recently completed the relocation of Category I/II nuclear materials from the Criticality Experiments Facility at Los Alamos to more secure facilities at Los Alamos and the Nevada Test Site. EM consolidated its surplus plutonium at Rocky Flats to the K Area at the Savannah River Site and Idaho's Highly Enriched Uranium to Savannah River. As long as nuclear materials continue to be stored at multiple sites around the country, safe storage, and proper security must be maintained at each of those sites -- at substantial cost to the taxpayers. In addition, materials located at EM cleanup sites hinder progress of the cleanup of those sites until the materials are

disposed of or removed from the site. Consolidation of nuclear materials requires adequate storage space at the receiving site, compliance with all applicable laws, appropriate National Environmental Policy Act analyses, and sufficient transportation resources. Additionally, stakeholder support is also critical, particularly in the State and around the site proposed to receive nuclear materials.

Since becoming Chairman of the committee in November 2005, meetings have occurred at least once a month, and have included representatives from each DOE organization that is responsible for nuclear materials, as well as senior advisors from other organizations within the DOE. I have also briefed with the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board monthly since my appointment on the progress of the committee.

It was made clear to me that the Secretary expects the NMDCCC to make progress. That is the message I have conveyed to the committee at our meetings. Since my appointment as Chairman of the committee it has been clear to me that the NMDCCC needed to have a streamlined approach to and a clear understanding of the challenges it faced. The committee has initially outlined four major areas that needed progress:

- 1) Listing of near-term materials the committee would address,
- 2) Prioritization of these materials,
- 3) A strategic plan to address the path forward, and
- 4) Development of implementation plans to address each individual issue.

The committee has identified eight near-term issues:

- Consolidation of excess plutonium-239
- Removal of surplus weapon pits from Zone 4 at Pantex
- Disposition of U-233 from Oak Ridge National Laboratory
- Removal of surplus material from Y-12 (also Aberdeen material)
- Removal of surplus material from Los Alamos National Laboratory
- Removal of all Category I and II material from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- Removal of Sandia National Laboratory nuclear materials
- Consolidation of plutonium-238

After examining these issues, the committee concluded the top priority facing the committee was to identify a path forward for the plutonium-239 at our Hanford site. This issue was determined to be the highest priority for the committee chiefly because of urgency associated with removal of this material in order to avoid the expenditure of significant funding at Hanford to meet the latest security requirements.

I indicated in testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations in October 2005, the committee was about a year and half away from delivering the strategic plan. The committee is making progress on this strategic plan. The strategic plan sets the stage for the committee to develop individual implementation plans. An individual implementation plan will consist of a:

- Clear concise statement of the problem,
- Listing of all known pertinent facts, including source documents,
- Listing of alternatives,
- Cost evaluation of viable alternatives, and
- Recommended path forward.

Implementation plans will be transmitted, as appropriate, to the Secretary for final decision after approval by the NMDCCC.

While developing the implementation plan of consolidation of plutonium-239 the committee has identified three alternatives and is currently evaluating each: continued storage at a current site, consolidation and storage at an interim site, and consolidation and storage at the disposition site. Consolidation of plutonium-239 would provide several important benefits to the Department and the taxpayers; it would reduce the number of sites with special nuclear material, enhance the security of this material, and reduce or avoid the costs associated with plutonium storage, surveillance and monitoring, and security at multiple sites. In addition, consolidation of this material has been encouraged by members of Congress, stakeholders, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board. The committee is currently reviewing the pertinent facts and evaluating the cost associated with the alternatives. These facts include the necessary steps that need to be taken to meet applicable statutory requirements, before developing the recommended path forward.

In closing, it is very important to keep in mind that, while the Department has not yet made a decision to further consolidate nuclear materials, the Nuclear Materials Disposition and Consolidation and Coordination Committee is very active, and our activities are focused on completing the strategic plan and the plutonium-239 Implementation Plan.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify, and this completes my formal statement. At this time I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have for me.