



ACQUISITION
AND SUSTAINMENT

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
3010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3010

This letter provides the written certification from the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC) Chairwoman required by section 3141 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 (Public Law 115-91) regarding the Administrator for Nuclear Security recommended alternative for the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE/NNSA) plutonium capabilities. The recommended alternative is acceptable to the Secretary of Defense and NWC, and represents a resilient and responsive option to meet the Department of Defense (DoD) requirements for plutonium pit production capacity and capability.

The proposed strategy repurposes the Mixed-Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MFFF), currently under construction at the Savannah River Site (SRS), and utilizes capabilities at the Plutonium Facility (PF)-4 at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). However, as reported in the DOE/NNSA Plutonium Production Engineering Assessment (EA), there are major construction and certification schedule risks inherent in the plan. DOE must address these risks to preclude failure to meet military requirements by 2030.

To reduce risk under any proposed strategy, it is essential that NNSA resource near-term surge pit production capacity at PF-4 to the fullest extent practicable. This surge capacity increase will hedge against potential schedule risks in repurposing MFFF, and ensure the two sites achieve additive production capacity of 80 war reserve pits per year, the minimum necessary to meet military requirements by 2030.


DoD examination of the proposed alternatives included a review of cost estimates in the EA. Recognizing that non-recurring costs of reutilizing the MFFF are lower, and the recurring costs of the two-site option are higher, the hybrid two-site solution provides significant strategic resilience, hedging against the risk of an interruption in production at one site due to technical, environmental, or other unanticipated issues. The recommended alternative has been reconciled with the 2013 Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation Business Case Analysis. The acquisition cost estimates appear consistent with history for high hazard material processing facilities. To reduce risk, the recurring and non-recurring cost estimates for the recommended alternative must be refined prior to the next construction major milestone decision point, estimated to be in year 2021.

This approach will require leadership and intense focus by DoD and NNSA to meet the 2030 timeline. I commit to working collaboratively with your Committee and NNSA to continue to examine areas where we can further reduce risks and take advantage of opportunities to improve both production and fiscal performance. The NWC will exercise regular coordination and monitoring of progress implementing the recommended alternative. Reestablishing a robust plutonium pit capability is a top priority for Secretary Mattis and Secretary Perry. I look forward to addressing any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ellen M. Lord". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Ellen M. Lord
Chairwoman

A large, solid orange rectangular redaction box covering the bottom left portion of the page.