



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

October 31, 2001

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The purpose of this letter is to update you on the issues raised in your May 29, 2001, letter to the Secretary. Your letter requested that the Department of Energy (DOE) provide the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) with a written response to those comments and to provide the Board with a briefing following submittal of the written response.

The DOE is presently evaluating the use of F-Canyon to provide processing capability for plutonium disposition. Additionally, in previous studies the Department has taken a focused view of canyon utilization dependent primarily on Environmental Management Program needs. We are broadening our review to ensure all aspects of canyon needs are included in decisions with respect to future utilization of the canyons at the Savannah River Site.

The Department expects it will be December, 2001 before we can provide the Board with the results of our evaluation and our future plans. The current plans include processing sand, slag, and crucible residues and utilizing portions of the canyon for disposition of the americium/curium solution to the high-level waste system. We will continue to keep you informed of our plans as they are finalized.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessie Hill Roberson".

Jessie Hill Roberson
Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management

