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Office of the Associate Director for Weapons Physics

September 17, 2003
Ref: ADWP-03-055

Joseph S. Mahaley
Director
Office of Security Affairs, SO-1
USDOE, Washington, D.C. 20585

Department of Energy Declassification Review	
1 st Review Date: 7/29/11	Determination (Circle Number(s)) 1. Classification Retained 2. Classification Changed To: 3. Contains No DOE Classified Info 4. Coordinate With: AS-62 5. Classification Cancelled 6. Classified Info Bracketed Other (Specify):
Authority: DC DD	
Name: R. Hitchens	confirmed unclass; 3pp.
2 nd Review Date: 8/4/11	
Authority: DD	
Name: S. Finney	

Subject: Recommendations of the Technical Evaluation Panel

Dear Mr. Mahaley,

The Technical Evaluation panel met at the Nevada Site Office on July 21, 2003 to receive technical updates on issues under discussion within the Department (including Sigma 20) and to review four proposed declassification actions. The Panel makes the following recommendations on those proposals based on its discussion, and adds comments on the Sigma 20 update. A classified addendum to this letter will contain clarification that would not be appropriate here, regarding certain of our recommendations.

Test event declassification proposal:

The Panel endorses the proposal, to declassify specific associations for the specific test event presented, as a logical and reasonable step. We base this judgment on both the inevitability of this association given other unclassified information, and the lack of apparent harm. We noted at least one other event that could be the subject of a separate declassification proposal, and encourage SO-12 to complete analysis of that possibility.

Documents concerning stockpile information:

The Panel recommends against the proposed action regarding stockpile information. This proposal was initiated in partial response to an operational disagreement and circumstance among external sources impacting the DOE. On the basis of the information presented to us, we believe the proposal would be inconsistent with national security interests, particularly in a changing threat environment as reflected in the Nuclear Posture Review, by removing protection or uncertainty from certain stockpile information. Though we urge rejecting this proposal as a means to address the present circumstance, we do recommend further efforts to align implementation of current guidelines in a more operationally consistent manner (to support the intent of current guidance and avoid inefficiencies suffered by DOE/NNSA).

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DoD retains a significant equity in the type of stockpile information discussed in the proposal. From the information presented, it also seems unlikely that the context of long-term national security interests we considered will soon be modified through policy discussion.

Declassification Proposals: Various weapon component parts:

On balance, the Panel recommends against the proposed action and believes retaining the current direction is the more appropriate course. However, that recommendation is joined by the Panel's strong recommendation that SO take a measured path forward in discussing any subsidiary implementation actions with NNSA, that recognizes the extensive historical background provided to the Panel and that minimizes any collateral effects on either operations or information protection. We consider the recent CRD-SRD upgrade action to be a possible benchmark, but leave any subsidiary details to discussion between SO and programmatic leadership.

Pu-AVLIS declassification proposal:

The Panel recommends adopting the proposed declassification of techniques and lasers used to access atoms in metastable states in the Plutonium-AVLIS process. This recommendation is based on certain prior facts: that Pu-AVLIS would access metastable levels, the 1996 declassification of such techniques for Uranium-AVLIS, the 1990 guidance on the unclassified association of commercial lasers with Pu-AVLIS (application unspecified), and the limited number of credible technical approaches for metastable access. It is also based on remaining classification protection of process and implementation details, and the fact that AVLIS is not a Pu production technology per se (vice chemical separation). Further the techniques in question are not essential to application of AVLIS for isotope separation (though *precisely* how useful metastable access is here, may remain worthy of some protection). Finally, our recommendation is based on operational difficulty presented by the current guidelines, balanced against the limited potential value of the proposed information seen for a proliferant or competitor.

However the Panel's recommendation should not be taken as an indication that remaining Pu-AVLIS data and technology is not worthy of protection. In fact, as noted, our recommendation is made in light of the continued protection of such information. Prior classification decisions, while not unwarranted, might have taken slightly different direction had the post-Cold-War environment been more clearly seen a decade ago. Therefore we recommend that the new guidance be developed to ensure those remaining protections are sustained while alleviating this encumbrance to any potential activities.

Sigma 20:

The Panel was grateful for this informational briefing. The presenters were aware of the complexities of the issue and the need for both information protection and for communication within the community. On the other hand, the path being pursued raises several important details to be addressed. For example, we suggested that one of the draft guidelines might stem from a too-narrow description of the potential risk.

We recognize we were observing a work in progress. Yet overall, it is the details that will determine if the intended benefits can be achieved while avoiding unintended consequences (e.g. in terms of over-compartmentalization, or resource balance) to the DOE/NNSA or the broader national security enterprise. Therefore it will be important that distinctions from other SRD information be properly made. We look forward to future updates on this proposal and its development with field input.

This letter represents the consensus recommendations of the Panel.

For the Technical Evaluation Panel,

Philip D. Goldstone
Chairman

Cc: Joan Hawthorne, SO-12
Andrew Weston-Dawkes, SO-122
TEP members
Joseph A. Brown, LANL