



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

JUN 23 2004

The Honorable Robert Bennett
United States Senate
431 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4403

Dear Senator Bennett,


I understand that you have concerns about the Department's plans to study options for a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP) that would give the United States the capability to threaten hardened, deeply buried targets in hostile nations. Specifically, you have raised concerns that the development of such a system could require the resumption of underground nuclear testing.

I want to assure you that the Administration has no plans to conduct an underground nuclear test associated with the development of RNEP. As National Nuclear Security Administration Administrator Linton Brooks recently wrote to you, "the RNEP study is only looking at two existing weapon systems, the B-61 and the B-83. Both are well-proven systems with an extensive test pedigree from the 1970s and 80s."

If RNEP were to move from its current study phase to development, such plans would be part of the Administration's annual budget request to Congress. The Administration's intentions concerning underground nuclear testing during RNEP development, if different from our current intentions, would be explicit in that request. Congress would have the opportunity at that time to debate and pass judgment on those plans.

Thank you for the opportunity to address your concerns about the Department's development of RNEP. If I can be of further assistance, I hope you will let me know.

Sincerely,



Paul Wolfowitz

