



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

June 15, 2004

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Robert Bennett
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennett:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on June 3, 2004, to discuss your concerns regarding the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP) study and underground nuclear testing at the Nevada Test Site (NTS). I appreciate your concerns and I hope to address them in this letter.

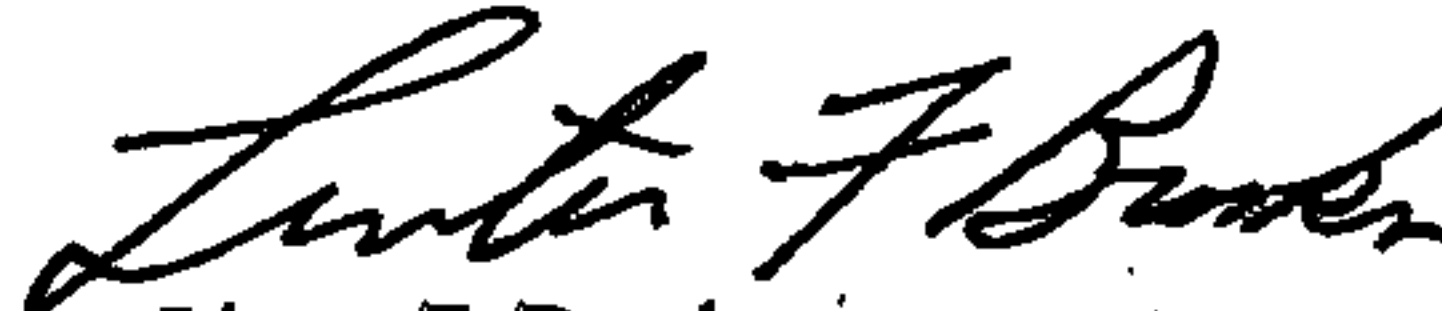
First, let me state unequivocally this Administration has no current plans or requirements to conduct an underground nuclear test. The Stockpile Stewardship Program is working today to ensure that America's nuclear deterrent is safe, secure and reliable. Currently there are no issues of sufficient concern to warrant a nuclear test. I certainly understand the concerns you and your constituents in Utah have with nuclear testing at the Nevada Test Site. However, I believe it is critical to maintain a readiness capability at the NTS to conduct such a test in the future if called for by the President of the United States, in order to ensure the safety and/or reliability of a weapon system. Therefore, I believe it is important for us to work together to ensure that the NNSA test readiness program continues to make safety a top priority.

Furthermore, I know you are concerned that the ongoing RNEP study could lead to the resumption of underground nuclear testing. The RNEP study will not require an underground nuclear test. Should the President support, and Congress approve, full-scale engineering development of RNEP, the Administration does not intend to conduct a nuclear test. From the beginning, we have operated under the assumption that resuming testing to certify RNEP is not an option and for that reason, more than any other, 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. I would be happy to work with you and the Senate Armed Services Committee to address your concerns on this sensitive matter.



If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or C. Anson Franklin, Director, Office of Congressional, Intergovernmental and Public Affairs at (202) 586-8343.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Linton F. Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and "B".

Linton F. Brooks
Administrator