

September 25, 2001

Ms. Kathleen A. Carlson  
Acting Deputy Administrator  
for Defense Programs  
Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-0104

Dear Ms. Carlson:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board has received your September 14, 2001 letter addressing our concerns about the Justification for Continued Operations for W88 activities. We look forward to interacting with you and your staff on the actions planned to resolve these issues.

We agree that timely completion of the Seamless Safety for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (SS-21) process is the most effective way to improve the safety of nuclear explosive operations at the Pantex Plant, including W88 operations. As you may be aware, the Board will be traveling to Pantex in October and will be interested in learning how DOE is working to accelerate the SS-21 process.

We accept that the current, interim, safety controls for the W88 operation are adequate to allow on-going operations and perhaps will not be changed substantially as a result of near-term efforts. Our focus on this issue will continue to be ensuring that appropriate requirements and expectations for safety analysis and control development are met. It is important to hold consistently high standards in these areas because the quality of safety authorization basis documents and their underlying analyses is essential to ensuring safe operations.

Again, we look forward to working with you and your staff to address these issues.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.  
Mr. Richard E. Glass  
Mr. Daniel E. Glenn