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April 15, 2002

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
United States General Accounting Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Comptroller:

I am writing to request some information related to the GAO's ongoing review of safeguards and security at Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons facilities. While to the best of my knowledge this review has only just begun, recent correspondence between John Hamre, the President and CEO of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS, which is reportedly conducting a review of DOE safeguards and security) and DOE Secretary Abraham includes assertions related to GAO's work that may not have accurately represented. Moreover, it would appear that CSIS is uniquely handicapped in performing an objective assessment of the current adequacy of DOE's safeguards and security because it has been employed by the DOE to perform safeguards and security work since early 2001.

As you may know, I have long been concerned about the adequacy of security at DOE nuclear weapons facilities. In October, 1997 I sent a letter (Attachment 1) to then-DOE Secretary Federico Pena regarding security and safeguards at various DOE facilities that detailed the risk of terrorist attacks and lax security at many DOE facilities, including Rocky Flats near Denver Colorado, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the Y-12 site at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. My letter cited reports of improper storage of nuclear weapons materials in broken vaults, the possibility that terrorists who gained access to nuclear weapons materials could quickly construct a dirty bomb or crude nuclear weapon that could achieve criticality and produce nuclear yield, reports that anti-government militia groups attempted to recruit members from within the Rocky Flats security guard force, and that DOE reports on Safeguards and Security downplayed and ignored security risks.

I am aware that the GAO has also long been critical of security at DOE facilities, with its publication of the following (incomplete list) reports:

- "*Information Security: Safeguarding of Data in Excess Department of Energy Computers*," March 2001.

- "*Information Security: Vulnerabilities in DOE's Systems for Unclassified Civilian Research*," June 9, 2000.
- "*Department of Energy: National Security Controls Over Contractors Traveling to Foreign Countries Need Strengthening*," June 2000.
- "*Nuclear Security: Security Issues at DOE and Its Newly Created National Nuclear Security Administration*," March 2000.
- "*Nuclear Security: Improvements Needed in DOE's Safeguards and Security Oversight*," February 2000.
- "*Key Factors Underlying Security Problems at DOE Facilities*," Statement of Victor S. Rezendes, Director Energy, Resources, and Science Issues, Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division, April 20, 1999.
- "*DOE Needs To Improve Controls Over Foreign Visitors To Its Weapons Laboratories*," statement of Keith O. Fultz, Assistant Comptroller General, Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division, October 14, 1998.
- "*DOE Needs to Improve Controls Over Foreign Visitors to Weapons Laboratories*," September 1997.

As you may know, recently (September 2001), a report entitled U.S. Nuclear Weapons Complex: Security at Risk by the Project on Government Oversight (POGO) described its eight-month investigation that used unclassified DOE documents to establish that nuclear weapons material at DOE sites remains vulnerable to theft or onsite construction and detonation of dirty bombs or homemade nuclear weapons. In particular, the POGO report described repeated failures by DOE contractor security personnel to protect DOE facilities from attack by mock "terrorists" who were testing security, repeated failures by DOE and its contractors to address and correct identified security problems, and weak and ineffective oversight of security by DOE headquarters personnel.

On January 23, 2002, I sent a letter to DOE (Attachment 2) that requested information about many of the same concerns highlighted by POGO, and requested information on a variety of other issues related to security measures taken or planned to be taken in response to the events of September 11th. The letter was released at a press conference and received a significant amount of attention. I have yet to receive a response to my letter from the DOE.

On February 4, 2002, John J. Hamre, the President and CEO of CSIS, sent a letter to Spencer Abraham, Secretary of Energy (Attachment 3), responding to a request evidently made by Secretary Abraham that CSIS review the POGO report. The letter concluded that "the risks to DOE and its sites are far more complex and subtle than those posed in the POGO report," "the POGO report takes a narrow view of security...," "most of the issues and allegations raised in the report appear to be a recycling of old issues that have passed into irrelevance, been resolved, or been independently reviewed and dismissed," and finally, that "We met with representatives from the GAO who said they reviewed the POGO report and decided the allegations did not justify further investigation."

As you may know, on January 19, 2001, CSIS received a contract worth $1.6 million from DOE for "specialized security analysis and recommendations." It therefore appears that the POGO report criticized the adequacy of DOE safeguards and security during a timeframe in which CSIS had a contractual relationship with DOE to analyze and make recommendations related to safeguards and security. I am concerned that CSIS may be unable to undertake an independent review of the POGO report, since this may have essentially required them to review the adequacy of their own previous work for the Department. In order to better understand the facts and circumstances surrounding the CSIS analysis of the POGO report, I ask that you provide me with answers to the following questions:

1. a) Did GAO, in meetings with John Hamre or other CSIS officials, state that GAO had "reviewed the POGO report and decided the allegations did not justify further investigation?"
   b) If so, does this mean that GAO has completed its review of DOE safeguards and