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# DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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01-0000475



March 5, 2001

General John A. Gordon  
Administrator of the National  
Nuclear Security Administration  
Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-0701

Dear General Gordon:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) has reviewed the Enhanced Transportation Cart (ETC) Project Plan, which was submitted in support of Commitment 4.3.7 in the Department of Energy's (DOE) Implementation Plan for the Board's Recommendation 98-2, *Safety Management at the Pantex Plant*. The ETC concept appears to be an appropriately engineered solution for the safe transport of partial nuclear explosive assemblies and physics packages at the Pantex Plant.

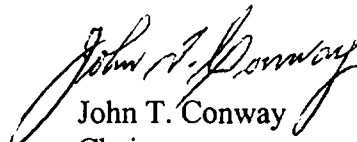
However, the Board was dismayed by the elaborate plan that DOE encouraged or allowed its contractor to develop for such a relatively simple project. Further, the schedule for deploying this piece of equipment does not reflect the relative simplicity of the equipment or the risk reduction that DOE seeks to attain.

The Board's Recommendation 98-2 highlighted the need to simplify and expedite the Seamless Safety for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (SS-21) process at the Pantex Plant. The plan to deliver two transportation carts is scheduled to take longer than the completion of an entire SS-21 development project for a weapon program.

The receipt and inspection of the first ETCs (partial assembly type) at the Pantex Plant is not scheduled until October 2002. Furthermore, the design and procurement cycle for the second group of ETCs (physics package type) is longer than that of the first. Lessons learned during the first ETC procurement cycle should shorten, not lengthen, the development and procurement period for the second group. Finally, the project plan includes several rebaselining tasks that portend further delays in an already overlong schedule.

Overall, the ETC Project Plan does not provide for expeditious implementation of the design, fabrication, and operational acceptance of equipment important to safety and does not meet the intent of the Board's Recommendation 98-2. The Board urges DOE to revise the plan to expedite the design, procurement, and delivery of the ETCs to meet the intent of the Board's Recommendation 98-2.

Sincerely,



John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: Brigadier General Thomas F. Gioconda  
Mr. David E. Beck  
Mr. Richard E. Glass  
Mr. Daniel E. Glenn  
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.