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INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY POLICY

MEMORANDUM FOR STEVE HADLEY
J.D. CROUCH

THROUGH: FRANK MILLER

Not a happy picture!

SUBJECT: Trip Report -- Rocky Flats and Pantex (U)

(U) On 6 and 7 November, I joined the Nuclear Weapons Council Standing Committee trip to visit these two DoE facilities. This memorandum provides what I learned and my general impressions.

Rocky Flats

(S) We toured Building 559 (the Production/Support laboratory for material analysis) and Building 707 (the manufacturing and development facility). EG&G is working toward resumption of operations in Building 559 early next year; this entails Operational Readiness Reviews by EG&G and DoE as well as reviews by the two independent advisory groups established by ADM Watkins and the Hill. If successful, the next candidate for resumption is Building 707, which is bound to be a greater challenge.

(S) While 559 is essentially a laboratory with glove boxes and small amounts of plutonium, 707 is the main manufacturing facility for primaries ("pits") with large amounts of plutonium storage and handling. The activities are largely industrial -- casting, metal working, assembly, and inspection. The blue collar force of United Steel workers has been out of practice for the last two years and may not yet have recovered from resentment over the infusion of new management over the last two years. A significant amount of PU dust must still be cleaned from the building's ducts. EG&G was unwilling to provide a timetable for resumption of operations.

(S) Even if manufacturing operations begin next year, Rocky Flats has insufficient "clean" plutonium to support the planned build rate of W88s. Since the buildings to reprocess contaminated PU will not reopen until later, Rocky Flats will require reprocessed (not "new") plutonium from Savannah River and Los Alamos. This was news to Bob Barker and Richard Claytor, DoE's Assistant Secretary for Defense Programs.

(U) My general impression after one day at Rocky Flats was that the management was disorganized, the work force demoralized, and the prospects for reopening unclear. That said, EG&G is trying hard to reopen, and DoE has injected a large number of retired Navy nuclear officers in an attempt to instill discipline in the work force.

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DOE
SECTION 6.2(a)

Pantex

(U) My general impression of Pantex and the prime contractor, Mason and Hanger, was much more favorable. The management seemed more organized, and the work force more motivated and skilled.

(S) We toured various assembly cells and bays where nuclear weapons are assembled and dismantled. Security is high, and two-person rule enforced. With respect to dismantlement, non-nuclear components (e.g., firing sets and radar fuzes) are first removed and subsequently demilitarized (through crushing). The primary is removed, and the high explosives stripped off; the primary is held at Pantex pending reopening of Rocky Flats, and the high explosives are burned. The secondary is returned to Oak Ridge, and the tritium bottles to Savannah River. Components are controlled from the moment they are removed from the weapon. Disassembling a weapon requires 1-4 weeks; decontaminating and disposing of its parts can take 1-4 months.

(S) If Rocky Flats does not reopen, Pantex's planned staging facility for weapons and pits will reach capacity in late FY92 or early FY93. Pantex is currently seeking a change to security requirements to allow stacking of pits in current igloos and/or expansion of storage to igloos not currently used for nuclear components.

(S/FOUO) In FY91, Pantex conducted 1595 "disposals" (defined as PU and HE separation), completing disposal of the B43, W44, and W50.

[REDACTED] In FY92, Pantex is planning on new production W88 (assuming Rocky reopens--which does not seem particularly likely), or [REDACTED] additional retrofits. It plans on 1810 disposals, including W28, W48, W55, W57, W68, and W70. In FY93, it plans on 2000 disposals, including initial disposals of the W79, and a build of [REDACTED] W88. This disposal rate is comparable to rates in the early 1980s, when the W31 HONEST JOHN warhead was withdrawn from Europe and dismantled.

(S) When I raised the possibility of a Soviet visit to Pantex as part of US-Soviet discussions on warhead dismantlement, the DoE management was obviously reluctant on the grounds of security and effort. Nevertheless, they thought such a visit could be accommodated. They were also intrigued by the notion of assisting the Soviets (or Ukrainians) in dismantling nuclear weapons, but stressed that techniques for disassembly could vary widely across different weapons types and that we knew little about Soviet weapon designs. Some US weapons, such as the W79, were built with little consideration as to how they would be dismantled -- a view apparently expressed to Vic Alessi about Soviet artillery weapons during the post-Initiative trip to Moscow.

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Concluding Observations

was to me

(S) Resumption of operations at Rocky Flats seems problematic, at best. There are many with stakes in seeing it not reopen, and they will find increasing rationale why it shouldn't. Cancellation of SRAM II has formally terminated the requirement for the W89. Even if a cost-effective way of extending SRAM A life reinvigorates the warhead requirement, DoE is pursuing a W89 Alternate that The W91 production program was cancelled with SRAM-T. The only other warhead currently planned for production is the W88; however, NWC trip participants were abuzz with rumours of a J-8 study that suggests sufficient W88s may have already been produced. We are now reviewing that study.

(S) Conceivably, Rocky Flats could be left without any near-term requirements for pit production, fueling the arguments of those who would close the plant and begin to build new plutonium manufacturing facilities elsewhere as part of DoE's "Complex 21." A key question then is political: If we do not restart manufacturing at Rocky Flats, how likely really is it that we can begin manufacturing elsewhere?

[Signature]
Greg Schulte

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