

Department of Energy Mission and Priorities

Secretary of Energy

Spencer Abraham

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The Mission and Priorities of the Department

Most of you have heard me describe a very general vision of the Department of Energy as one in which the Department enjoys a reputation for excellence, such that every other cabinet member would wish they were the Secretary of Energy and employees of other departments wished they worked here.

This vision is the product of expectations I have for our people, our management and our missions.

Perhaps the most important part of achieving excellence is acquiring and retaining the best people and the best managers. Therefore, I have asked Deputy Secretary Frank Blake, Under Secretary John Gordon and Under Secretary Bob Card to begin implementing the kind of management changes that attract and retain the highest caliber people.

The flip side, of course, is that I also expect measurable performance objectives and accountability.

Where performance does not measure up, I have made clear to my entire leadership team that changes will be made.

I also have three specific expectations for every manager.

The first is that I expect managers to understand that they are responsible for ensuring the safety of our employees and of those communities surrounding our facilities. Second, I expect every manager to understand that they should instill a respect for and the observation of the highest standards of security. And, third, I expect every manager to help build a culture where merit determines promotion and hiring, and diversity is viewed as a key to recruiting and retaining the best people.

As I just mentioned, excellence must be achieved by setting the highest standards of performance. That requires that we set priorities; discipline our focus; and measure everything we do by reference to our missions and priorities.

I know we are all well aware that the department is widely viewed as unmanageable and unfocused. There is no question that the history of how this department was put together does not obviously suggest an overarching mission that applies to each and every program. And the nature of the relationship of federal management and contractor run sites is an added complexity that all of us deal with every day.

But I don't accept this characterization and I think it should change. We are one department; we do have some common, overarching objectives. And I want us to think of ourselves in that way.

In my view, the starting place is to understand that our overarching mission is national security.

Quite obviously, the defense side of the building fits well within that mission. But so should our other programs. I think it is time for all of us to understand that our energy and science programs should be judged by whether they advance this nation's energy – and hence, national – security.

And I think it is time for us to understand that clean up of our sites is an imperative to ensure that safety legacies of the cold war are addressed and resolved, and done so in a manner that does not impede future national security missions.

Viewing our overarching mission as one of national security means that we should focus on certain priorities. Let me take a moment to walk through what that means program by program.

For our national defense programs, I have four overriding priorities:

First, ensuring that we can guarantee the safety and reliability of the nuclear stockpile;

Second, ensuring that our research, development and production plans for the future are geared to the nuclear strategy of this administration;

Third, producing a plan to address and resolve the threat of weapons of mass destruction;

And, fourth, continuing to provide safe, efficient, effective nuclear power plants for the United States Navy.

For the energy side of our programs, I have three other priorities:

First, ensuring our energy security by strengthening our ability to identify and protect the critical infrastructure that supports the production and delivery of energy in America.

Second, implementing the President's National Energy Plan. We need to focus on programs that help America increase its supply of energy by increased domestic production, that revolutionize how we approach conservation and energy efficiency, and that help us identify a wider array of not only the types of sources of energy but also the geographic sources of energy;

And, third, directing our research and development budgets at ideas and innovations that are relatively immature in their development, and ensuring the greater application of mature technologies.

For our environmental programs, I have two priorities:

First, completing the top to bottom review of the entire environmental management program by the end of this year and producing a plan to accelerate the cleanup and closure of all sites where there is no longer a national security mission;

And, second, completing the process of determining the suitability of the Yucca Mountain site for permanent storage of this nation's spent nuclear fuel.

Now, let me turn to the science programs and, in particular, the national laboratories. We all know the high caliber of programs and people who are involved with our science programs. The national laboratories are rightly viewed as a national treasure.

But the national laboratories and our science programs are not a treasure to be raided regardless of mission, scope, or budget. They are too important to be squandered.

So, from now on, I will expect us to implement a major change in how we do business. That change means that our science programs and national laboratory work should directly relate to and support the missions I have outlined above. Programs and projects that fall outside those missions will not receive my support for funding without a clarity of mission and compelling circumstances. And it is important to note, for example, that programs like the Human Genome Project, or the President's national climate change technology initiative, support our mission – whether using what we've learned in genetic sequencing to protect against bio-terrorism, or unleashing our technological genius to ensure a future where our energy security is enhanced, not eroded, by our efforts to understand and address climate change.

I would add to this list two priorities that deserve special mention.

The first involves the unique technological contribution we can make to our energy and national security by finding new sources of energy. Whether it is fusion or a hydrogen economy, or ideas that we have not yet explored, I believe we need to leapfrog the status quo and prepare for a future that, under any scenario, requires a revolution in how we find, produce and deliver energy.

It is not simply because many of our resources are depletable.

It is not simply because we are increasingly dependent on energy from areas of the world that are periodically unstable.

It is not simply because questions surrounding climate change force us to confront policies that focus on a carbon-free society.

All of these are factors. But the important point is that success in this mission could well be one of the greatest contributions to our energy and national security for generations to come.

I intend, therefore, that this Department take a leadership role in exploring how we can identify and use potentially abundant new sources of energy with dramatic environmental benefits.

The second additional mission is one that obviously flows from the tragic events of September 11th. We already do an enormous amount of work on non-proliferation issues. But it is also true that we have a lot to offer our country by training our best minds on the

problems presented by homeland defense, and, in particular, the threats posed by terrorism. There are a lot of challenges in front of us. But one priority that requires our focus is the threat of weapons of mass destruction posed either by small groups of terrorists or by nation states.

It falls to us, therefore, to focus on these two enhanced missions in a way that will likely have far reaching consequences for our budget, our programs, and our organization.

I have asked Deputy Secretary Blake, working with General Gordon and Under Secretary Bob Card, and all of the directors of the national laboratories, to conduct a strategic missions review with a report to me by the end of next January that addresses two large issues:

First, identify those programs and projects that do not fall within the missions I have set forth above. I recognize that the Department has an important science mission. But this is the time to sharpen our focus and ensure that our nation's highest priorities are being addressed.

The second objective of the strategic missions review is to identify what changes are necessary to increase our ability to use every resource at our disposal to support the following missions:

- Identifying new sources of energy for the future
- Protecting our critical energy infrastructure
- Implementing the President's energy plan
- Implementing the President's climate change initiative
- Ensuring the reliability of our stockpile
- Addressing proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology
- Enhancing homeland defense against new terrorist threats; and
- Implementing environmental cleanup faster and cheaper

I am convinced that we are more than capable of achieving these objectives, and I am certain that we must address these priorities. This department, as the Department of Energy, or as a forerunner organization, has for 50 years ensured our national security. This should still be our principal focus. It is the key to ensuring that we have a motivated work force. It is the greatest contribution we can make to our country. I look forward to working with you to make this vision a reality.