Analysis of the April 2 Document
from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
on Scientific Integrity in the Bush Administration

April 19, 2004

Introduction

Sixty-two prominent scientists released the statement Restoring Scientific Integrity in Policy Making on February 18, 2004, in which they charged the Bush administration with widespread and unprecedented “manipulation of the process through which science enters into its decisions” by placing people with “clear conflicts of interest…on scientific advisory committees, by disbanding existing advisory committees, and by censoring and suppressing reports by the government’s own scientists.” This scientists’ statement made brief reference to specific cases that illustrate this pattern of behavior. Detailed documentation backing the charges was provided in the report Scientific Integrity in Policymaking prepared by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and also released on February 18. This report was updated with supplemental information and posted on the UCS website on March 31, 2004.

The UCS report examined a large number of cases reported in respected newspapers and scientific journals during the past two years. From these, UCS selected the cases that appeared to be clear-cut examples of such practices, conducted additional interviews with current and former government scientists involved in these incidents, and obtained documents, retaining only those cases in the UCS report that survived this vetting.

On April 2, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy issued a statement by John H. Marburger, III, the director of OSTP, that claims the descriptions of the incidents in the UCS report are all “false,” “wrong,” or “a distortion.” Analysis of the particulars in the White House document shows that these claims are unjustified. Aside from a couple of minutiae mentioned below, the White House document fails to offer much evidence to support its claims. Instead, the White House document often offers irrelevant information and fails to address the central point of many charges in the UCS report.

The preamble to the White House document deals at length with the administration’s support of funding for scientific research. It should be noted that neither the statement by the scientists nor the supporting UCS report discusses the issue of research funding. That said, it should be noted that neither document was intended as a criticism of Dr. Marburger’s efforts on behalf of scientific research.
UCS Analysis of White House Document
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UCS stands by the findings and conclusions of its report. The following examples, which cover the spectrum of charges made in the scientists’ statement and in the UCS report, demonstrate that contrary to the claims in the White House document, the administration has in fact frequently attempted to undermine scientific integrity when, to quote the scientists’ original statement, “scientific knowledge has been found to be in conflict with its political goals.”

The statement by 62 scientists charging the administration with lack of scientific integrity in its policy making and the report by the Union of Concerned Scientists documenting charges in scientists’ statement can be accessed at www.ucsusa.org/rsi.

The statement by John H. Marburger, III, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy can be accessed at www.ostp.gov.

Responses to White House document

Climate Change: The White House document calls “false” the charge that the White House attempted to force revisions to the climate change section of the Environmental Protection Agency’s draft Report on the Environment. This position would imply that The New York Times front-page story was false, that the leaked EPA memo referred to in the Times story and included in the UCS report is a fabrication, and that the well-known statement by EPA Administrator Christie Todd Whitman that the political environment surrounding this issue was “brutal” is misleading. The EPA memo shows clearly that the White House attempted to force the EPA to misrepresent the state of knowledge regarding climate change in its Report on the Environment. As Administrator Whitman later wrote in a commentary in New Scientist, “rather than publish a watered-down [climate] chapter, which would only muddy the waters, I opted to leave it out entirely.”

The purpose of the Report on the Environment, according to the EPA, is to “answer Americans’ questions about the environment and guide our environmental decision making.” Removing the discussion of climate change leaves a major gap in a report intended as a comprehensive assessment of the state of the environment. The White House document claims that the deletion of the climate change chapter was decided for two reasons: (1) “an ordinary review process indicated” it did not “adequately address” climate change science, and (2) that a full-fledged treatment was soon to appear in the Climate Change Science Program Strategic Plan. As to the first assertion, the EPA staff memo and comments by Administrator Whitman make clear this was anything but “an ordinary review process.” On the second point, the strategic plan is a massive document describing a long-range research program for a technical audience, whereas the EPA Report on the Environment is intended for widespread use in educating the public and policy makers on the environmental challenges facing the nation. Clearly, one is no substitute for the other. Furthermore, research is not the only task of government scientists; they also have the responsibility to inform the body politic about the potential

impact of issues such as climate change so that appropriate action can be considered in light of the best available evidence.

The White House document also implies that the Bush administration’s position on climate change mirrors that of the consensus within the scientific community, providing as evidence a quotation from the June 11, 2001, Rose Garden speech of the president, acknowledging that concentrations of greenhouse gases, especially CO₂, have increased substantially since the Industrial Revolution, and that the National Academy of Sciences attributed this increase in large part to human activity. Actually, in that Rose Garden speech, President Bush went into considerably more detail than is acknowledged in the recent administration response. He stated that “we know the surface temperature of the earth is warming. It has risen by six-tenths of 1 degree Celsius over the past 100 years. There was a warming trend from the 1890s to the 1940s, cooling from the 1940s to the 1970s, and then sharply rising temperatures from the 1970s to today.” He also explained that “greenhouse gases trap heat, and thus warm the earth, because they prevent a significant proportion of infrared radiation from escaping into space.” Further, he also pointed out that “our useful efforts to reduce sulfur emissions may have actually increased warming, because sulfate particles reflect sunlight, bouncing it back into space.” All of these statements are in agreement with the consensus view of the scientific community, as is his assessment that the United States is “the world’s largest emitter of man-made greenhouse gases,” and as a consequence, that “we recognize the responsibility to reduce our emissions.”

The problem has been the efforts of senior administration officials to back away from the NAS report’s clear exposition of the science in the nearly three years since the president’s Rose Garden speech. The alarm expressed by the scientific community about the elimination of the treatment of climate science in the 2003 EPA document was that the reviewers in the White House were attempting to introduce uncertainty about whether the global surface temperature was actually rising and whether human activity is contributing to climate change, in contrast with the president’s clear statement as quoted above. In May 2002, the administration submitted its Climate Action Report to the United Nations, as required by the 1992 climate treaty signed by the president’s father. That report stated that, “Greenhouse gases are accumulating in the Earth’s atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing global mean surface temperature and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise.”

When the report’s clear restatement of the consensus view of the science triggered protests from conservative supporters, President Bush distanced himself from it, saying, “I read the report put out by the bureaucracy.” It is also noteworthy that climate change and global warming have not been mentioned in any of the three State of the Union speeches since the president’s Rose Garden speech in June 2001.

Mercury Emissions: The UCS report states that, “the Bush administration has long attempted to avoid new standards to regulate mercury emissions from coal burning power plants … as required by the Clean Air Act.” The White House’s denial is undercut by the

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3 US Climate Action Report, Department of State, May 2002.
recent revelations and testimonials that reveal a badly compromised EPA process. The updated UCS report pulls in new material from a recent *Los Angeles Times* investigative report that exposed in detail how political appointees bypassed professional and scientific staff at the EPA. According to UCS interviews with Bruce Buckheit, who recently resigned as director of the EPA’s Air Enforcement Division, the new regulations were “hatched at the White House ... and the experts were not consulted at all.”

The White House document further asserts that the EPA report on children’s health and the environment had no new information on mercury. This is inaccurate. In addition to the numbers cited in the White House document, the EPA report warned that half of all women of child-bearing age have at least some mercury content in their blood, and that “there is no safe level” of mercury blood levels for unborn children.

The White House acknowledges that the use of the industry language in the EPA’s proposed rules on power plant emissions “should not have occurred.” UCS agrees. In addition to the language lifted from an industry legal memo referred to in the UCS report, it has since been revealed that the EPA proposed rule draws heavily on language provided by a power industry group, West Associates, on standards for determining likely mercury emissions from power plants.  

Recently, more evidence emerged of White House interference with EPA science on mercury. According to *The New York Times*, the White House Office of Management and Budget deleted or modified information about mercury in the EPA’s proposed rule. In the cases that were cited, the OMB changes all were in the direction of attempting to minimize the risks to health. Included with the article were actual photocopies of pages of the draft proposed rule, with handwritten notes by OMB staff, along with photocopies of the pages of the published proposal, clearly demonstrating that this did in fact occur. As an example of the changes that were made:

*A draft passage originally read, “Recent published studies have shown an association between methylmercury exposure and an increased risk of heart attacks and coronary disease in adult men.” It was changed to “it has been hypothesized that there is an association between methylmercury exposure and an increased risk of coronary disease; however this warrants further study as the new studies currently available present conflicting results.”*

On April 12, seven U.S. senators formally requested the EPA’s Inspector General to launch “an investigation into the apparent serious irregularities” in the mercury rulemaking process, including “strong evidence that EPA career staff members were directed by political appointees not to follow the normal regulatory development procedures, and that the affected industry had an undue influence over the entire

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process.” Given that the White House document states, “President Bush believes policies should be made with the best and most complete information available,” UCS looks forward to the administration’s support for such an independent investigation into these serious allegations of abuse.

**Air Pollution:** Both the scientists’ statement and the UCS report point out that the administration withheld important results of an EPA assessment of bipartisan Senate legislation put forward as an alternative to the administration’s proposed Clear Skies Act. The White House document makes much of the fact that the senators did ultimately receive the information on the costs and benefits of their bill—as is acknowledged in the March 2004 updated UCS report. This does not change the fact that this information was only provided after its key findings had been reported in *The Washington Post.* Nor does the White House refute an incident described in *The New York Times,* where EPA staffers contend that Assistant Administrator for Air Programs Jeffrey Holmstead wondered aloud, “How can we justify Clear Skies if this gets out?”

Finally, it should be noted that far from being an isolated incident, this is part of a pattern of EPA withholding from Congress information relating to agency decisions and proposals on clean air and water issues, a pattern that led nine senators on the Environment and Public Works Committee on March 29 to send a letter to EPA Administrator Michael Leavitt asking that he fulfill Senate requests for such information dating as far back as May 2001. An earlier March 4 letter to Administrator Leavitt from Senators Inhofe and Jeffords, the chairman and ranking member of the committee, expressed their joint “concern with the Agency’s delays in providing information requested by this committee,” and urges him “to resolve these outstanding requests to ensure a productive working relationship on matters pertaining to the committee’s oversight responsibilities.”

**Abstinence-only Education:** The White House document does not address the central claim in the UCS report that the administration is promoting abstinence-only education as an effective program despite scientific evidence indicating it does not work. Instead, the White House document contends that a specific abstinence-only program in the UCS report was not designed to be a scientific study and thus scientifically usable data could not be obtained. As discussed in the UCS report, published evidence reveals that monolithic abstinence-only programs have a paradoxical effect on teenage pregnancy rates: rather than decreasing adolescent pregnancies, abstinence-only programs increase them. The White House document also claims that a project to identify effective sex education programs, called “Programs That Work,” was discontinued because the programs that had been listed on the CDC website were “limited.” This project did use performance criteria designed to provide scientifically valid data; none of the five programs highlighted in 2002 were abstinence-only programs. While identifying and

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8 See press release and attached material online at www.jeffords.senate.gov/~jeffords/press/04/03/032904epa.html.
9 Letter available online at www.epw.senate.gov/pressitem.cfm?party=dem&id=218801.
adding to the website additional programs “that have scientifically credible evidence of effectiveness” is a worthy goal, the White House response provides no rationale for dropping information about programs that had already met this standard.

**HIV/AIDS:** The White House document claims that a fact sheet on proper condom use was removed from the CDC website during routine updating of web content. The White House document fails to mention that the condom fact sheet was removed for more than a year, and that the new fact sheet does not provide information on proper condom use and underplays the effectiveness of consistent condom use in protecting against HIV and other STDs. The White House document also does not dispute the charge in the UCS report by a CDC staff member that these changes were made at the direction of Bush administration officials at the Department of Health and Human Services. This calls into question the White House assertion that this was an instance of routine updating of information by CDC professional staff.

**Breast Cancer:** Similarly, the White House document ascribes a change in information linking breast cancer to abortion on the National Cancer Institute’s website to conflicting information in the published literature. This is not correct. Until the summer of 2002, the posted information correctly stated that scientific evidence indicated no link between abortion and breast cancer. In November 2002, the Bush administration removed this assessment and posted the following information on the NCI website: “Some studies have reported statistically significant evidence of an increased risk of breast cancer in women who have had abortions, while others have merely suggested an increased risk” *The New York Times* called the revised NCI statement “an egregious distortion of the evidence.” After protests from Congress and other groups, the NCI assembled a panel to review the evidence. The White House agrees with UCS that the correct information was re-posted after this workshop reconfirmed the strong scientific opinion that there is no link between abortions and breast cancer. On March 4, 2003, the NCI website reported once again that, “Induced abortion is not associated with an increase in breast cancer risk,” and the strength of evidence was listed as “well-established.” In the absence of any new major studies published on this topic from November 2002 to March 2003, one can only conclude that the change in NCI assessment from “no association” to “inconclusive” to “no association” in just four months was not based on science but, rather, on other considerations. Throughout this interval, the World Health Organization website consistently reported no association.

**Airborne Bacteria:** The UCS report states that a USDA microbiologist was prevented from releasing his data on bacteria emanating from hog confinements, and the White House asserts, “This accusation is untrue.” But the White House document undercuts its claim by acknowledging that USDA microbiologist Dr. James Zahn was denied permission to speak about his research, arguing only that Dr. Zahn “did not have any scientific data or expertise” on the matter of health risks from hog confinements. As quoted in the updated UCS report, Dr. Alan DiSpirito, an associate professor of microbiology, immunology and preventive medicine at Iowa State University who has collaborated extensively with Zahn, states that Zahn was careful never to make
unwarranted claims about the health effects of his research. 10 As he puts it, Zahn’s “data concerned careful measurements of odor producing compounds.” According to DiSpirito, Zahn “found evidence of airborne toxic substances and antibiotics, which certainly raised health questions, but as a careful and very competent scientist, he never commented on these in his work except to suggest that someone else ought to look into them.” The White House document claims that Dr. Zahn was prohibited from publicizing the potential public health implications of his findings on five occasions, not eleven. After release of the White House document, Dr. Zahn told Science that eleven is the correct number, and added that, “no one from the White House contacted him to check their claims before ‘questioning my credibility and expertise.’” 11 Whether five times or eleven times, it is inappropriate for the administration to muzzle its scientists in this fashion.

**Iraq’s Aluminum Tubes:** The scientists’ statement asserts, “in making its invalid claim that Iraq had sought to acquire aluminum tubes for uranium enrichment centrifuges, the administration disregarded the contrary assessment by experts at the … National Laboratories.” To address this issue, the White House cites a February 2004 speech by CIA Director George Tenet that is beside the point. The UCS report described how the U.S. nuclear lab experts and those at the International Atomic Energy Agency expressed skepticism that the tubes were for enriching uranium because the dimensions of these tubes were identical to those used by Iraq for missile engine casings before the first Gulf War; that Secretary of State Powell was aware of the disagreement before he spoke to the UN in February 2003; and that the argument that the aluminum tubes were intended for the manufacture of uranium for nuclear weapons was central to Powell’s case for war. The White House response is silent on these charges.

Gregory Thiemann, a retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer who headed the State Department Intelligence unit, confirms the accuracy of the UCS report: “Senior officials in the U.S. government misrepresented the evidence on the aluminum tubes” and ignored a growing consensus within U.S. intelligence that the tubes were not usable for centrifuges. 12

Dr. W.K.H. Panofsky, who has been a high-level government advisor on national security issues since the Eisenhower administration, points out that “the case made in the scientists’ statement and the UCS report is not disposed of by referring to Mr. Tenet’s acknowledgement of a disagreement within the Bush administration on this important matter a year after the fact when expert opinion was disregarded in making unjustified and embarrassing claims by the President, the Vice President, and their most senior aides.” 13

**Endangered Species Act:** On the Endangered Species Act, the White House response focused mainly on explaining its budgetary and program initiatives on endangered species. 

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10 DiSpirito has published nine joint papers in recent years with Zahn, including some on livestock wastes; see [http://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/bbc/cv-dispi.htm](http://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/bbc/cv-dispi.htm).
13 Email from Dr. W.K.H. Panofsky, April 12, 2004.
species, and the reasons behind the drop in listings of new species as threatened or endangered. The updated edition of the UCS report removed the sentence about species listings. While factually accurate, it was not germane to showing the abuse of science in the policy-making process.

The White House document fails to address the central argument in both the scientists’ statement and the UCS report: that the administration is supporting revisions to the ESA that would greatly constrain scientific input into the process of identifying endangered species and critical habitat, for example, by greatly limiting the use of population modeling and other commonly accepted tools for assessing species viability.

Missouri River: Despite providing obfuscating details and sanitizing the political context of this issue described in many news accounts at the time, the White House document fails to address the basic charges: that the Bush administration didn’t like the results of the original, peer-reviewed biological opinion; that the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) established a SWAT team that included few members of the original team and had less expertise on Missouri River issues; that the new result was closer to the administration’s position than the original one; and that the amended biological opinion has not been reviewed by independent scientific experts.

The White House document suggests that a court order is to blame for the inappropriately abbreviated timeline imposed on the second biological opinion. It is worth noting that the court deadline, agreed to by the administration’s Department of Justice, was set prior to the Army Corps of Engineers request for a new biological opinion and did not have deadlines for the ESA consultation, because a new ESA consultation should not have been necessary. The Corps sought a new biological opinion knowing full well the scientific process would have to be truncated. Given that the FWS had to act quickly, it would have been sensible to refer the issue to the team that had written the 2000 biological opinion. FWS, however, chose to form the new team, which UCS research shows had only two members of the original 15-member team, not seven as the White House document states.

Forest Management: The White House document fails to address the key concern raised by the UCS report: that the Forest Service’s decision to substantially alter the Sierra Nevada Framework for forest management was driven primarily by policy priorities rather than being “grounded in the best available scientific information.”

OMB Bulletin on Peer Review: In this case, the White House document contends that the OMB language should not be interpreted as stated in the UCS report, but fails to address the widespread opposition to the OMB proposal from scientific associations and individual scientists noted in the UCS report. Most recently, the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s Council adopted a resolution stating that it “is strongly opposed to the proposal, requests that OMB withdraw the proposal, and encourages other scientific organizations to oppose this proposal.”

The draft proposal also generated concerns within the rest of the federal government. In its comments to OMB, the Environmental Protection Agency warned that “the broadly applicable standards proposed in the draft Bulletin are too restrictive and may lead to lost time and resources with minimal value added, impediments to recruiting the best qualified experts to serve as peer reviewers, diminished quality of peer review advice, and inconsistencies with existing laws and regulations that agencies must follow.”

In its revised proposal released on April 15, OMB responded to what The Washington Post termed “a chorus of criticism” from science groups by dropping or substantially modifying many of the most controversial aspects of its initial version. As OMB’s John Graham told the Post, “We listened to the scientific community and made revisions designed to make the peer-review policy more objective and workable.” The fact that OMB felt compelled to make such major changes underscores the validity of the concerns summarized in the UCS report.

On one point, the White House document is correct: the Pharmaceutical Research Manufacturers Association (PhRMA) comments do offer “general support” for OMB’s proposal, provided that it does not apply to a federal activity of great interest to PhRMA’s members—the Food and Drug Administration’s decisions “to approve or deny an application to market a new drug or biologic.” In that context, PhRMA warns, “peer review procedures would be ill-advised, in certain situations unlawful, and in any event unnecessary in light of FDA’s procedures.”

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Panel: The White House provides detail that is irrelevant to the charge, without addressing the central point: that highly qualified individuals recommended by CDC staff scientists were rejected in favor of less qualified individuals recommended by industry. Interestingly, in its assertion of seeking balance on the panel, the White House document does not mention Dr. William Banner. Dr. Banner, testifying in court on behalf of the Lead Industry Association, stated that studies have never adequately demonstrated a link between lead exposure and cognitive problems in children at seven times the current standard for lead poisoning. The White House document’s long discussion of whether the current federal standard for lead in blood should be lowered is irrelevant, as the UCS report does not take any position on this policy issue. Rather, it is our concern that scientific deliberations on these and other issues be conducted in a fair and objective manner by highly qualified experts.

Political Litmus Tests on Workplace Safety Panel: The UCS report discusses HHS Secretary Thompson’s dismissal of three well-qualified experts on ergonomics from a peer review panel at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the belief of at least two of these experts that they were rejected because of their support for a workplace ergonomics standard. The White House document asserts “the claim of politically motivated intervention is not true,” but provides no basis for this assertion, instead putting forward the true but unresponsive statement that “agencies typically

17 PhRMA comments available online at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/2003iq/1q/118.pdf
review many individuals to serve on advisory panels and they may be rejected for a variety of reasons.” The White House document states that, “one of the scientists UCS mentions was actually selected to be appointed to the committee.” This presumably refers to Dr. Pamela Kidd, who is referred to in the UCS report as “another prospective member of the study section,” and was appointed to the panel. The third expert who was rejected for the panel, Dr. Katherine Heaney at Ohio State University, was not mentioned in the UCS report by name, as UCS was unable to reach her in person.

*Underqualified Appointees in Health Advisory Roles:* The UCS report provides examples of underqualified individuals being appointed to health advisory panels. While the White House document takes issue with these characterizations, it does not provide any information on these individuals. The UCS report provided the following information: an investigation by *Time* revealed the following about Dr. W. David Hager, who was chosen by FDA senior associate commissioner Linda Arey Skladany to chair the FDA’s reproductive health advisory committee: “Though his resume describes Hager as a University of Kentucky professor, a university official says Hager’s appointment is part-time and voluntary and involves working with interns at Lexington’s Central Baptist Hospital, not the university itself.” Hager authored a book recommending particular scripture readings as a treatment for premenstrual syndrome, and in his private practice, *Time* reported, refuses to prescribe contraceptives to unmarried women.¹⁸ By way of comparison, consider the credentials of two nominees proposed by FDA staff for Hager’s position but rejected by Skladany: Donald R. Mattison, former dean of the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health, and Michael F. Greene, director of maternal-fetal medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. Similarly, Dr. Joseph McIlhaney, known for his disdain for the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, was appointed to the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS and selected to serve in a four-year term on the Advisory Committee to the Director of CDC despite his dearth of published, peer-reviewed scientific research.

*Litmus Tests:* The White House document describes the charge that some scientific advisory candidates have been subject to political litmus tests as “preposterous,” but backs this up with little information other than that White House Science Advisor John Marburger is a Democrat, as are other scientists on various advisory panels. In the case of Dr. William Miller, a candidate for a panel on drug abuse, the White House document does not rebut the fact that such inappropriate questions were asked, but only contends that his answers were not the basis for his rejection. Dr. Miller’s claims have been seconded by Dr. Sally Satel, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, who recently stated, “I personally recommended Dr. Miller and was dismayed when an HHS “vetting” aide asked me about his views on abortion and whether he had voted for Bush.”¹⁹ The three people named in the discussion of the workplace safety panel have stated that they were subjected to such tests, as did a candidate for the Army Science Board panel. These incidents were reported in the *Journal of the American Psychological Association*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Science*. Again, the White House document does not deny that these individuals were asked inappropriate questions during the vetting process.

**Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Panels:** The White House document claims that the National Nuclear Security Administration Advisory Committee (NNSA AC) was not abolished, but simply fulfilled its two-year mission. That is incorrect. The charter of the committee reads as follows: “(3) Time Period Necessary for the Committee to Carry Out the Purpose: The Committee is expected to be needed on a continuing basis.” The intent of the charter is reinforced by NNSA AC member Sidney Drell, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University and Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution, who played a major role in the creation of NNSA and this committee. He states he recruited technical and policy specialists as members with the “clear understanding that we were making an investment of time and energy to create an enduring mechanism.” The committee was disbanded (without comment) in 2003 after not having been able to arrange a meeting for a full year.20

The UCS report points to the dismissal in 2001 of the State Department’s Arms Control and Nonproliferation Advisory Group (ACNAB), and states that a new committee has not been formed. According to Dr. Richard Garwin, former chairman of the group, the “ACNAB was disbanded with thanks by [Undersecretary of State] John Bolton’s letter of August 6, 2001. Two years and three months later, its charter was reauthorized, and some two years and eight months after we ceased to exist (or 34 months after ACNAB’s charter expired) there is still no committee.”21 The White House document acknowledges this to be the case, stating, “the specific membership is currently under consideration.”

**Conclusion**

The White House document fails to refute the serious allegations that the Bush administration has engaged in activities that undermine scientific integrity in policy making. The administration and its appointees have a responsibility to use the best available science when making decisions that affect human health, the environment, public safety, and national security. While reasonable people can disagree about policies, it is essential that elected and appointed officials have access to, and can rely on, rigorous, objective scientific analysis when they formulate that policy.

It is unfortunate that the administration is not taking the concerns of the scientific community seriously, as these issues have significant consequences for the public’s health and well-being. In the absence of a constructive and candid response from this administration, it is left to scientific associations and scientists, members of Congress, the media, and others to further pursue these allegations of abuse of scientific input to policy making, and to press for institutional and legislative reforms aimed at preventing such abuses by future administrations.

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20 Statement from Dr. Sidney Drell, April 7, 2004 (appended).
21 Email from Dr. Richard Garwin, April 2, 2004.
Dr. Kurt Gottfried  
Chairman of UCS  

Dear Kurt:  

I am writing to comment briefly on the response by Jack Marburger, the Director of OSTP, dated April 2, 2004, to the analysis on “Scientific Integrity in Policy Making”, prepared by the Union of Concerned Scientists, dated February 2004. Although not a signatory to the letter accompanying the report I am sufficiently informed on one of the issues raised in the report, and discussed in Dr. Marburger’s answer, to offer these comments which paint a different picture than the one he presents.

I was a member of the NNSA Advisory Committee (NNSA AC) that was summarily abolished in June 2003. The creation of this advisory committee was recommended by the sub-committee, on which I served, of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, chaired by Warren Rudman, in our 1999 report, “Science at its Best, Security at its Worst.” Our report, which recommended creating NNSA, was prepared in response to a White House request following the Wen Ho Lee case at Los Alamos.

As stated in its Charter:

“The objectives of the National Nuclear Security Administration Advisory Committee shall be to, at the request of the Administrator, provide advice and recommendations on matters of technology, policy, and operations that lie under the authority and responsibility of the Administrator, as set forth in 50 U.S.C. 2402(b). In responding to the Administrator’s charge, activities and duties of the NNSA AC shall include:

• Review the strategies, long-range plans, priorities and mission-relevance of programs and office of the NNSA and identify key initiatives and issues of strategic importance.

• Provide advice on the focus, scope, and quality of NNSA science and technology programs, and their interface to other such programs in the Department of Energy and the broader U.S. science and technology community.

• Conduct assessments from a policy, performance, and scientific perspective of specific programs, projects, and facilities of the NNSA.

During its first year in existence the Advisory Committee was considered an important part of NNSA and worked hard to fulfill its obligations, including preparing substantive written reports on both the weapons programs and the non-proliferation activities. However it became clear after General John Gordon was appointed to the National Security Council in the White House in July 2002 that we were no longer valued, and we became inactive during the second year of our existence. Given their other missions and responsibilities, I do not agree with Dr. Marburger’s suggestion that other advisory boards for the Defense Department and STRATCOM, who are the customers for NNSA’s program, can serve as effective substitutes for the NNSA AC.
Paragraph 3 of the NNSA AC Charter, entitled “Time Period Necessary for Committee to Carry Out the Purpose,” states that “The Committee is expected to be needed on a continuing basis.” When I agreed to serve on this Committee, and also worked hard to help recruit outstanding technical and policy specialists as members (approximately 15 total), it was our clear understanding that we were making an investment of time and energy to create an enduring mechanism with a rotating membership that would play an important and constructive role in helping ensure that the NNSA fully met its obligations in the interest of U.S. national security to maintain the nuclear stockpile, the nuclear infrastructure, and the required nuclear weapons expertise, and also to develop effective programs against proliferation of nuclear weapons. In view of this I regret the statement in Dr. Marburger’s response which suggests that this Committee was intended only for a two year existence and had fulfilled its mission when it was disbanded (without comment) in 2003 after not having been able to arrange a meeting for a full year.

I am afraid that the article published recently by David Ruppe of the Global Security News Wire may give a more cogent reason why we were disbanded. By gaining access to our unclassified report through the FOIA – it has just been released by NNSA after being bottled up for two years – he has revealed that a rather broad, and I believe constructive, critique emerged from our deliberations on the NNSA defense programs. However our findings are not in close accord with currently stated administration policy.

Sid

Sidney Drell
Professor Emeritus, Stanford University, and
Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution

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