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INFO MEMO

FOR: Mr. Larry Di Rita
THRU: David Trachtenberg
FROM: Keith Payne
SUBJECT: Secretary’s Response to Rep. Tauscher before the HASC, 5 Feb.

- At Tab A is brief background paper regarding the Secretary’s response to a question regarding an alleged $1.26 billion dollar program to develop new smaller nuclear weapons.

- My staff reviewed a broadcast of the hearing and concluded that the Secretary’s response to Rep. Tauscher’s question on small nuclear weapons was correct.

- At Tab B is the article, which served as a basis for Rep. Tauscher’s question. The article claims that the Defense Department declined to comment on the article before the presses rolled on February 3.

- This claim was based on an E-mail sent to our Public Affairs office late Friday evening (Jan 31) after the desk officer had gone home for the weekend.

Attachments:
A. Background Paper
B. LA Times article

6 February 2003
TAB

A
Background: (No hearing transcript available yet; only TV broadcast.)

- During the FY 04 budget hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, the Secretary was asked by Rep. Tauscher about what she alleged is a $1.26-billion DoD program to build the next generation of small nuclear weapons.

- In reply, the Secretary said that he was not familiar with the article or the program that Rep. Tauscher described. She added that it was a DTRA program outlined in a recent LA Times article that was based on information posted on DTRA’s web site.

- The Secretary said that he was 99% certain that there is no program to build small nuclear warheads, but that some research program might be mentioned in the classified portion of the Nuclear Posture Review.

- He added that he was not aware of any new nuclear weapon development, but he would get back to the Committee on the question. (AT&L should respond.)

  The Secretary is correct. There is no new nuclear weapon development ongoing today. He did not imply a foreclosure of any future development.

- The Secretary went on to say that hard deeply buried targets were a very serious problem that needed attention.

Analysis:

- The basis for Rep. Tauscher’s question was triggered by the Times article and DTRA’s web site containing a contract solicitation for, Weapons of Mass Destruction – Defeat Technology.

- The solicitation was aimed at an Advanced Concept Technology Demonstrations (ACTDs) to improve modeling capability for ground shock against deep underground targets using conventional and nuclear weapons.

- Only a small portion of the proposed work is aimed at a nuclear ACTD. All the work is being carried out in response to the NPR, programmed under global strike.

- The maximum net amount to the overall 10-year multi-source WMD defeat contract was $1.26 billion.