General Received 3/20/00 Ann: Please make copies of this letter for the April CAB Mtg Info Packets. TX,

Los Alamos National Laboratory

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Date: March 7, 2000
Refer to: ESH-DO:00-028

Ms. April VanCamp Gil
House of Representatives
Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515-3103

Dear Ms. Gil:

On behalf of Laboratory Director John Browne, I am pleased to respond to the concerns expressed in Congressman Tom Udall's February 18 letter. In his letter, Congressman Udall expresses concerns of certain New Mexico constituents as to the possibility of planes flying over our state spraying chemicals that may result in "chemtrails." These concerned constituents wonder whether spraying of chemicals and "filamentous" materials may be related to attempts at weather modification or to testing of a new weapons program. Congressman Udall also requested the Laboratory to determine whether our air monitoring system may have detected such chemicals.

As an official of this institution, I state with confidence that the Los Alamos National Laboratory is not participating in any such project. I also state that the Laboratory has no knowledge of any such activity.

With regard to the Laboratory's air monitoring network, we operate some 55 sampling stations, most of which are sited on the perimeter of the Laboratory. Several of these stations, however, are located beyond the Laboratory site. These offsite stations are located in Española (1), El Rancho (1), Jemez Pueblo (1), San Ildefonso Pueblo (1), and Santa Fe (2). This network of samplers continuously collects particulate matter and water vapor for subsequent analyses. The samples are analyzed for tritium, gross radioactive activity (alpha, beta, and gamma radiation), and isotopes of uranium, plutonium, and americium. In addition, certain samples are also analyzed for beryllium and selected rare earth elements. If chemicals were being released from airplanes, our air-monitoring network would have potential to detect only those releases involving the just-listed components. Following a systematic examination of our surveillance data, we observe no unexplainably-high concentrations of these materials. Such conclusion comes with an explanation. Even though our network is capable of measuring very low levels of these air contaminants (generally less than one percent of federal standards), elevated releases, such as those from an airplane, would need to be relatively large to be measurable due to atmospheric dilution.

Our ambient air monitoring data is accessible by the public through a specific Laboratory web site (http://www.air-quality.lanl.gov/airnet.htm). This data is regularly updated. In addition, the Laboratory's air quality experts would be pleased to provide additional comment or answers to specific questions about our surveillance program and its data. Feel free to contact my colleagues, Craig Eberhart (505-667-2917) or Jean Dewart (505-665-0239) of the Laboratory's Air Quality Group.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dennis J. Erickson
Division Director
Environment, Safety, and Health

DJE/CE/dts

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CIC-10/A150
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