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TO: Mr. Robert E. Browning, Director  
FROM: Paul T. Prestholt, Sr. On-Site Licensing Representative  
DATE: October 21, 1987  
SUBJECT: Newspaper Articles

Please find enclosed more information that appeared in our local newspaper that is of interest.

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Thursday, October 15, 1987  
b Donrey of Nevada, Inc.

# LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

## Nevada faces nuclear waste bill showdown

Air Force eyes dump's effect on Nellis Reid, Hecht plot strategy in Senate

By David Koenig

Review-Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — An Air Force official has indicated the service remains concerned about the possible impact a high-level nuclear waste dump would have on training operations at Nellis Air Force Base.

The U.S. Department of Energy has hired a contractor to conduct a study of the potential impact a dump at Yucca Mountain, on the edge of the Nevada Test Site, would have on flight operations.

Col. Timothy Titus, a chief in the Air Force's congressional liaison office, said in a letter to two Nevada lawmakers that if the supersonic flights, live munitions training or other exercises at Nellis are restricted by the presence of a repository, it "would reduce the utility of the Nellis Range Complex and lessen the payback from our tremendous capital investments

made there."

Titus called Nellis the "most important combat readiness training and testing resource" in the Tactical Air Command, and said the Air Force expects to expand use of the range to 20 hours a day, six days a week, by the year 2000.

Titus noted that the Department of Energy plans for Yucca Mountain don't indicate whether flight restrictions, such as limits on supersonic fly-overs, would be imposed near the dump. Because the issue is now being studied for the first time, by Science Applications International Corp., Titus said, "the Air Force is making every effort to ensure our concerns are included."

The letter was sent to Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Jim Bilbray, both D-Nev., who had requested Air Force comments on the possible defense impacts of a dump. The lawmakers hope to use such information as

Please see NELLIS/4A

By David Koenig

Review-Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — With a showdown nearing on the Senate floor, Nevada's senators are plotting strategy to stop or reshape a nuclear waste bill that is opposed by virtually every public official in the state.

Whether the Nevadans, Democrat Harry Reid and Republican Chic Hecht, will succeed is another question: They have failed so far to stop the legislation in two committees.

The Senate could take up, at any time now, a proposal by Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., to speed up the selection of a site to bury highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel rods. Nevada officials, and observers in Congress, say Johnston's provisions make it likely Yucca Mountain in Nye County would be picked.

Reid, along with two other senators, is

planning a filibuster against the bill that contains Johnston's provisions. Aides to both Reid and Hecht are busy drafting amendments they say would soften the bill's impact on Nevada.

"We have no illusions about how many votes we will get on some of these amendments," said an aide to Reid, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"But hopefully we can drag it out four or five days before they shut us up, and maybe we can get the Senate to focus on" what Reid believes are problems in the nation's nuclear waste program.

The Johnston provisions, included in a \$16 billion spending bill for federal energy and water projects, would require that January 1989 the U.S. Department of Energy pick either Yucca Mountain, Hanford, Wash., or Deaf Smith County, Texas, to undergo detailed underground study.

Please see SENATE/4A

## Nellis

From 1A  
leverage against consideration of Yucca Mountain, seen as the leading site for a nuclear graveyard.

"My Senate colleagues should take note of these defense concerns before they move too quickly to find a place for the nation's nuclear

waste dump," Reid said. "This is yet another indication that policymakers have not done all of their homework."

Bilbray said Nellis' training mission "should not be sacrificed in order to locate the nuclear dump at Yucca Mountain."

# Senate

From 1A

Because of selection criteria in the bill, the foregone conclusion on Capitol Hill is that Yucca Mountain, the cheapest site to build, would be picked No. 1.

Among the amendments Reid plans to offer are ones to allow the chosen state to appeal to the federal courts, to eliminate cost savings as a criterion, offer money to utilities to store spent fuel rods at their nuclear reactors, and require the Department of Energy to clean up existing toxic waste dumps before it can build a nuclear waste repository.

Hecht has circulated three amendments. One would call for the reprocessing of spent fuel — a move rejected by President Carter because reprocessing yields the materials needed to make nuclear bombs. Another would offer money for a state other than Nevada, Washington or Texas to take the dump. The third would change Johnston's bill by requiring it to continue the search for a second dump site in the East.

But Johnston is confident he has the votes to win in the Senate, and some Nevadans think he is right.

One such Nevadan is Stephanie Hanna, press secretary to Rep. Barbara Vucanovich, R-Nev., who says Nevada's only remaining hope is a rival bill in the House. That measure, by Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., would slow the Department of Energy's work for a year while the entire controversy is studied by a special three-member commission.

"Chic couldn't stop (the Johnston bill) in the Energy Committee, and Harry couldn't stop it in

the Appropriations Committee," Hanna said. "It's a fait accompli in the Senate. Our best chance is Udall."

Udall's bill, a watered-down version of a measure he introduced this summer, may face its first vote Thursday in the House Interior energy and environment subcommittee.

Meanwhile, a group of reporters and congressional aides listened Tuesday to a discussion of the nuclear waste issue between Luther J. Carter, a Washington journalist who has written a book touting the Yucca Mountain site, and Steve Frishman of the Nevada Nuclear Waste Projects Office.

Carter said the arid and remote location of Yucca Mountain makes it the best site for burying nuclear waste safely. He said building the repository, plus a waste repackaging plant called a "monitored retrievable storage" facility, would create jobs that will be greatly appreciated if the Nevada Test Site is shut down by a U.S.-Soviet Union ban on nuclear testing.

But Frishman said Yucca Mountain could be an unsafe burial ground because of ground movement from earthquakes and nearby nuclear testing. He said the state has been singled out because "if you shut your eyes and think what looks like a neat place for nuclear waste, almost like a Saturday morning cartoon, you come out with a picture of a desert."

Frishman, accusing Johnston of looking for the quick way to provide a dump for the nuclear power industry's garbage, called Johnston's bill "political expediency instead of technical conservatism."

# REVIEW-JOURNAL

## Reid hopes tactic stops nuke dump site search

By David Koenig  
Review-Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A Senate committee moved Thursday to slow the search for a nuclear waste dump in the West for up to two years.

The move would kill an effort to focus on just one dump site, probably Nevada's Yucca Mountain, by 1989. Instead, the U.S. Department of Energy would have to proceed with simultaneous, but limited, studies of three top sites.

"I'm just happy we were able to do this," said Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., an opponent of the dump, who had a role in pushing the proposal through the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. "This is one of the biggest steps forward we've had.

"It absolutely stops the single-site selection," Reid said. "It stops everything for two years."

Thursday's action has thrown the fate of nuclear waste legislation up in the air. It puts the Environment Committee on a collision course with the Senate Energy Committee, which favors speeding up the selection of a dump site.

Each congressional committee is supposed to recommend ways to cut federal spending under its control.

Led by Sens. John Breaux, D-La., and Alan Simpson, R-Wyo., the Environment Committee decided it could save money by stopping the U.S. Department of Energy's plans to conduct detailed underground tests at Yucca Mountain.

Please see DUMP/4A

## Dump

From 1A

tain, Hanford, Wash., and Deaf Smith County, Texas, until preliminary surface testing is done at all three sites.

The underground tests would cost more than \$1 billion each.

That approach differs from one taken earlier this year by the Energy Committee, which approved a bill by Chairman J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., to go ahead with the underground study of one of the three sites.

The Johnston bill has generated angry opposition from Nevada officials, who believe the bill is designed to put the dump at Yucca Mountain adjacent to the Nevada Test Site.

According to a Senate staffer close to the issue, senators on the Environment Committee "felt the Johnston bill would be better if you add some environmental safeguards."

The staffer said Simpson and other senators believed the Johnston bill narrows the choice to one dump site too quickly, based only

on preliminary data gathered so far by the Energy Department. "To have more assurances that you pick a good site, we need more information," he said.

The tests are designed to learn if the site is safe from ground and water movement that could cause the repository to leak radioactive waste.

The Environment Committee's action, however, is a long way from approval. For one thing, committee staffers still must put the proposal in writing this weekend.

Then, the proposal goes to the Senate Budget Committee, which must settle the fight between the Environment and Energy Committees. An aide said, "This might present the Budget Committee with a real problem."

"The only problem I see is that I'm sure the fur is flying with the Energy Committee," Reid said. "You can imagine how Bennett Johnston is feeling. He is the great manipulator and we out-manipulated him.

I just hope we can turn around some of the things we've won," Reid said.

Johnston was unavailable for comment Thursday night.

While Reid tries to outmaneuver Johnston on the budget-cutting measure, Johnston already has laid the groundwork to push his vision of the nuclear waste program on several fronts.

For example, his plan to push aggressively to study one dump site is also part of a bill that would pay for energy and water development projects next year. He has hinted strongly that Yucca Mountain appears to be a top candidate. That bill is awaiting action on the Senate floor, although Reid and others have vowed to filibuster it.

Although he may have lost Thursday's battle, Johnston could still win the war if Congress approves his energy and water bill before taking up the budget-cutting resolution.



Thursday / Oct. 15, 1987

## Nellis: Nuke dump threat to national defense

By Mary Manning  
SUN Staff Writer

Air Force officials fear a high-level nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain could interrupt flight operations and threaten national defense, Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. James Bilbray, both D-Nev., said Wednesday.

The 46-year-old Nellis Air Force Base is the largest tactical fighter training center in the country with 206 aircraft stationed there and built with \$3.2 billion in tax monies.

Yucca Mountain, at the edge of the Nevada Test Site 60 miles northwest of Las Vegas, is one of three finalist sites picked by the Department of Energy as a possible nuclear waste dump. Two other sites are located in Hanford, Wash., and Deaf Smith County, Texas.

"My Senate colleagues should take note of these defense concerns before they move too quickly to find a place for the nation's nuclear waste dump," Reid said. "This is yet another indication that policymakers have not done

all of their homework on nuclear waste disposal."

Sen. Bennett Johnston, D-La., has introduced a bill to narrow the dumpsite search to a single location, saving \$4 billion of nuclear industry funds. Rep. Jerry Huckaby, D-La., introduced a similar bill in the House on Oct. 6. Behind the scenes, Johnston's bill is known as the "Screw Nevada" bill because it offers \$100 million a year to the state that offers to take the dump, but only Nevada's low population and climate ap-  
See NELLIS, Page 4A

## Nellis: Nuke dump threat to national defense

Continued from Page 1A  
appear suitable for the federal repository.

Air Force officials expect that the use of Nellis Air Force Base and its flight range will expand to 20 hours a day, six days a week, by the year 2000, said Air Force Col. Timothy Titus, program liaison division chief in the Office of Air Force Secretary. That would put the Air Force on a collision course with the repository, scheduled to open in the year 2003.

Reid said he notified Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee, and Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, of Air Force concerns.

Not only would a nuclear dump crimp extensive combat training and developing tactical weapons systems, but it could interrupt flying at the Indian Springs auxiliary base, 50 miles northeast of Las Vegas, and affect munitions movements, Titus said.

"A restriction on any one of

these missions due to a nuclear waste repository would reduce the utility of the Nellis Range Complex and lessen the payback from our tremendous capital investments made there," Titus said in a letter addressed to both congressmen.

DOE headquarters has commissioned a study to evaluate the possible effects the dump could have on Nellis.

"Nellis' ability to train our pilots should not be sacrificed in order to locate the nuclear dump at Yucca Mountain," Bilbray said. "The taxpayers have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the facilities out at Nellis, and it would be foolish to reduce the value of that investment by imposing severe restrictions on Air Force operations because of the dump."

In fact, the Nellis budget was \$169.6 million for fiscal year 1986-87. With 59,000 individuals — airmen, families, civilians and re-

tirees — at Nellis, the base contributed \$757 million to Southern Nevada's economy this year, including a \$443 million payroll, \$54 million in contracts and \$51 million in construction, according to the Nevada Development Authority. Another \$17.5 million was contributed by Nellis for health care and education.

Reid and Bilbray earlier this year noted that of the three potential nuclear dump sites, only Yucca Mountain could seriously harm national defense. At the same time, both Nevada lawmakers expressed concern over restricting air corridors at the Nellis range.

In the letter to the two, Air Force officials said the agency shared their concerns about protecting the Nellis Air Force Base mission. "The significant contributions which these assets make to national defense training and testing must not be reduced due to nuclear waste repository restrictions," the letter said.

## Single nuke dump delayed in new accord

WASHINGTON — Selecting a single site for the nation's high-level nuclear waste dump could be postponed until the early 1990s under an agreement reached Thursday by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

"The Environment and Public Works Committee was asserting its rightful place in formulating nuclear waste policy," said Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., a member of the committee. He said he expected the agreement to be signed this weekend.

The committee agreed by voice vote to a motion by Reid that requires the Department of Energy to undertake a "surface investigation program" at all three potential dump sites — Yucca Mountain, Hanford, Wash., and Deaf Smith County, Texas — before a decision is made to fully study only one site and drill an exploratory shaft.

The agreement also would require that the decision to go to one site be made only after the DOE more fully evaluates environmental and safety concerns outlined in the National Environmental Policy Act, said Reid, a staunch opponent of a high-level nuclear repository in Nevada.

This would include some degree of public participation and an in-depth review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission into both the DOE decision and the methods behind the decision, Reid said.

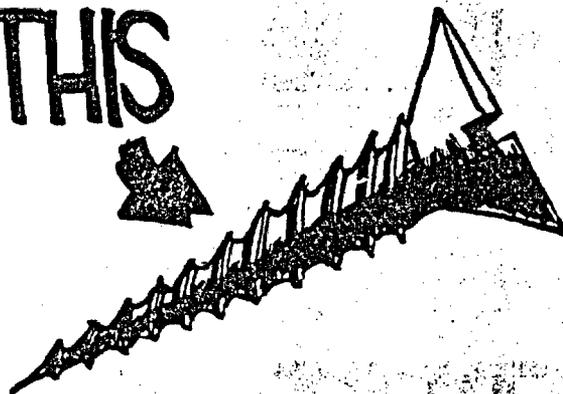
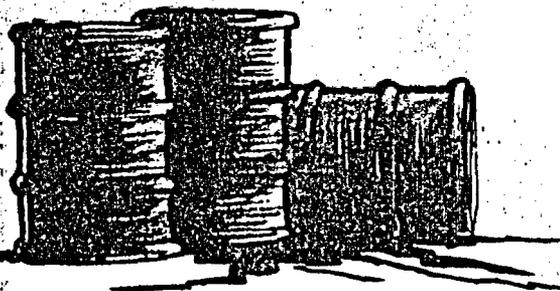
The agreement requires public participation, and differs from a Senate Energy Committee bill that requires DOE to settle on a single nuclear dumpsite by Jan. 1, 1989, without benefit of public or NRC review.

Reid stressed the need for a full environmental review of each potential nuclear waste dump site and added, "This is a major step toward slowing down the process so that we are not forced into a potentially disastrous situation."

The bill will be added to the Senate Budget Committee's reconciliation bill.

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SMITH 1987

## Nuke dump in Nevada would harm Nellis AFB

**A**s Nellis Air Force Base, the largest tactical fighter training center in the free world, expands to meet U.S. defense needs into the 21st century, it apparently is on a collision course with the proposed nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain.

Nellis trains an average of 6,200 pilots a year at the 3-million-square-mile base and gunnery range. It was built at a cost of \$3.2 billion in tax dollars.

In fact, Air Force officials have already notified Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., and Rep. James Bilbray, D-Nev., that Yucca Mountain as a nuclear graveyard could have quite an impact on proposed increased training — 20 hours of flying time a day, six days a week by the turn of the century.

Not only would a nuclear dump at Yucca Mountain interfere with Nellis activities, but other active training and munitions movements at Indian Springs military facility, about 60 miles northeast of Las Vegas.

With 59,000 individuals at Nellis — enlisted men and women, families, civilians and retirees — the base contributed \$757 million to the local economy, including a \$443 million payroll this year.

The promise of \$100 million a year from allowing the government to put a highly radioactive waste dump at Yucca Mountain pales in comparison to Nellis' contribution to Southern Nevada's economy.

Is the sacrifice of Nellis worth it to turn Southern Nevada into a nuclear waste dump? We think not.

Where else will the Air Force train pilots at supersonic speeds? That's a question DOE has yet to answer.

The Department of Energy's environmental assessment considers the crash of a jet fighter into any repository at Yucca Mountain the worst pos-

sible disaster. According to that scenario, it would kill everyone at the dumpsite.

However, DOE did not include overflight restrictions, and could not identify specific impacts on Air Force operations when defense leaders asked for them.

To correct that oversight, DOE has contracted with the Science Applications International Corp., a regular contractor, to perform an assessment of Air Force aircraft impacts on the site and proposed rail access routes.

Taxpayers have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into Nellis and Indian Springs bases. Their money could be wasted if Yucca Mountain becomes a nuclear dumping ground and pilot testing grounds disappear.

The key value of Nellis Range complex is its versatility, Air Force officials said. Currently, Air Force pilots can conduct supersonic, live munitions, low level and electronic jamming missions on the Nellis range.

A restriction on any one of those missions due to a nuclear dump would cut Nellis' use and lessen the value of taxpayer dollars in the Air Force base.

Reid and Bilbray noted earlier this year that of the three potential nuclear dump sites — Yucca Mountain, Hanford, Wash., and Deaf Smith County, Texas — only Southern Nevada's site could seriously harm national defense.

At the same time, both Nevada lawmakers are concerned that a nuclear dump here could restrict Nellis air corridors.

The idea of a nuclear dump at Yucca Mountain poses a threat to national defense a lot closer to home. To solve that threat, let the federal government find a safe salt cavern closer to those nuclear reactors.