

This is a draft document for board discussion
German Spent Nuclear Fuel Shipped to Savannah River Site

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Background

There has been international, national and local debate about German Spent Nuclear Fuel (SNF) to be shipped to Savannah River Site.

On December 8, 1953 President Dwight Eisenhower spoke before the General Assembly of the United Nations. President Eisenhower's speech titled "Atoms for Peace" outlined the need for the world to come together to stop proliferation of nuclear weapons while asking the world to work together and explore the power of nuclear science. In his speech the President said,

"The United States is prepared to undertake these explorations in good faith. Any partner of the United States acting in the same good faith will find the United States a not unreasonable or ungenerous associate."

"...the United States pledges before you, and therefore before the world, its determination to help solve the fearful atomic dilemma - to devote its entire heart and mind to find the way by which the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life."

The United States started the Atoms for Peace program in the 1950's. Through the Atoms for Peace program the United States provided enriched uranium to 41 countries, including Germany, in exchange for agreement not to develop bomb-making technologies. Spent fuel shipment to the United States was part of the Atoms for Peace program.

On March 5, 1970 the United Nations Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) entered into force. On May 11, 1995 the United Nations extended NPT indefinitely. NPT recognizes five countries as nuclear weapon states: United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China. One hundred ninety non-nuclear weapon states have ratified this treaty including originally both East Germany and West Germany, and now Germany.

NPT Article VI states

"Each of the parties to the treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating in cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

In February 2016, DOE hosted public meetings on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Acceptance and Disposition of Used Nuclear Fuel Containing U.S. Origin Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) from the Federal Republic of Germany. In this EA it

was identified that DOE has several options moving forward: 1) DOE can issue a NEPA determination, called a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), or 2) announce its intent to prepare a full environmental impact statement (EIS). However, even if these actions are taken, they do not constitute a decision by DOE to accept the German material but will be used to help formulate that decision.

Throughout its history Savannah River Site has been an invaluable asset to not only the United States but to the entire world. Unfortunately, there have been and will continue to be nuclear problems and issues throughout the world in the future. With the past as an indicator, Savannah River Site will be here to provide research, education and security for the world. Be it Three Mile Island, Chernobyl or more recently Fukushima, Savannah River Site and its contractors have provided the world science, technology and solutions for all. We believe the Savannah River Site (SRS) has the capability to safely handle and process the German HEU. We also believe this project has the potential of rendering this U.S.-origin HEU in a form no longer usable for an improvised nuclear device, a radiological dispersal device, or other radiological exposure device as originally envisioned by the Atoms for Peace program.

The SRS CAB strongly supports the preparation of an EIS for the German SNF due to the duration, complexity, and other uncertainties about the project.

Recommendations

The Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory board recommends that DOE:

1. Consider accepting the German SNF following through on commitments made by President Eisenhower to the United Nations through the Atoms for Peace program as well as keeping in "good faith" under NPT but only under a full cost recovery scenario through the German Government
2. Include in this full cost recovery scenario provisions (i.e. financial resources) for community outreach activities. This project will greatly benefit from its location in South Carolina and from the workforce and other resources provided by the region. In recognition of these benefits, the German Government should take meaningful actions to implement its community commitment and provide funding for such activities.
3. Communicate clearly, concisely and often to the public via traditional news media, press releases, social media and any other way possible way that DOE SRS is fulfilling its Environmental Management (EM) mission by accepting the German SNF and demonstrate fulfillment by the German Government of a full cost recovery business case including provisions for community outreach.