

Savannah River Site Watch
For Immediate Release
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Contact: Tom Clements, cell 803-240-7268, now in Washington for DOE-related meetings

Department of Energy Budget Request Deals Budget-Cutting Blow to Plutonium MOX Project, \$270 Million Request for Project “Termination” is \$70 Million less than Current Spending Level; Cut would Speed Orderly Termination of Mismanged MOX Program

Washington, DC – The U. S. Department of Energy budget request for Fiscal Year 2018 presented to Congress and the public today holds a big surprise for the MOX project at the Savannah River Site (SRS) – a cut of \$70 million to \$270 million for MOX plant construction. This funding is specified to be for termination of the problem-plagued project and is welcome by the non-proliferation advocates and fiscal conservatives alike, according to Savannah River Site Watch.

In the request, DOE recognizes that the program to turn surplus weapons plutonium into mixed uranium-plutonium oxide fuel (MOX) is not financially viable and will be terminated. The Trump budget released at noon on May 23 that the MOX construction termination and pursuit of an alternative plutonium disposal method “will avoid up to an additional \$5 billion to \$9 billion in construction costs and billions more in operating costs while disposing of the surplus plutonium more quickly.”

See budget document posted May 23 on Office of management and Budget (OMB website):

Major Savings and Reforms BUDGET OF THE U. S. GOVERNMENT
Fiscal Year 2018

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ELIMINATION: MIXED OXIDE FUEL FABRICATION FACILITY TERMINATION

Department of Energy

The Budget proposes to terminate the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility (MFFF) project and to pursue an alternative disposition method that will achieve significant long-term savings.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/msar.pdf>

“The budget request reflects that the dire situation with the MOX project has not changed due to a new administration in office and that there is no way that the project can be made viable,” said Tom Clements, director of Savannah River Site Watch. “The budget recognizes that spending more money on the mismanged MOX project is a waste and that the project should be shut down and plutonium disposition options pursued. Politics can’t save the MOX project, which is mired in massive cost overruns, significant schedule delays and chronic construction problems.”

The MOX budget request is a significant cut from the current budget of \$340 million/year, which is already a level which would result in eventual termination. The new budget-request figure would speed

up the orderly termination of the mismanaged project, which is far over budget and far behind schedule.

The \$270 million figure is the same of presented in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget request by the Obama administration.

SRS Watch supports a full environmental review of cheaper and safer non-MOX plutonium disposition options.

For the first time in recent years, DOE failed to hold a briefing on the budget for public stakeholders, raising concerns about commitment to openness and transparency by the new DOE administration.

SRS Watch director Tom Clements, in Washington for official meetings with colleagues in the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (ANA) – a network of public interest groups near to DOE facilities nationwide – will be hearing reactions to the budget by congressional and administrative offices. ANA meetings will continue through May 24.

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