



Savannah River Site Watch

**Savannah River Site Watch**

<http://www.srswatch.org/>

**For Immediate Release**

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**Construction of MOX Facility Marks 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - No Celebration Expected Given Mismanaged Construction and as Project Remains on Life Support and On Track to Termination**

***Odds Falling that the Badly Bungled MOX Project Will Make it to its 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary***

**Columbia, SC** -- With no fanfare expected and no reason to celebrate, the problem-plagued plutonium fuel (MOX) plant under construction at the Savannah River Site has now reached its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of construction.

The project remains barely alive and is on the Trump administration's chopping block, so it is anticipated that there will be no formal recognition of the date by either the U.S. Department of Energy or by CB&I AREVA MOX Services, the contractor that remains at the MOX plant even after bungling its construction.

Construction of the MOX plant began on August 1, 2007 by DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration. At that time there was misplaced optimism that the plant could be efficiently constructed on a budget and schedule to produce MOX fuel as a way to dispose of surplus weapons plutonium, via irradiation in commercial nuclear power reactors. But shortly after construction got underway it was clear that something was awry as cost estimates increased and the schedule steadily slipped. Later, it was learned that construction had started long before plant design was sufficiently completed, causing a host of key design changes during construction, which may have been the kiss of death for the facility.

"Given that the project remains on a termination track, there is no reason to celebrate the status of the beleaguered MOX project on its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary" said Tom Clements, director of Savannah River Site Watch. "I well remember the start of construction of the facility and though it was clear that the MOX project was ill conceived, I had no idea how far off the rails the project would be 10 years later. The project is a monument to DOE waste, poor planning and inept project management and if anything is noted on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MOX boondoggle it's how not to carry out such a large construction project."

Conceived in the mid-1990s, site clearing began for the MOX plant at SRS began to great celebration on October 14, 2005. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), who has become the top booster of CB&I AREVA

MOX Services, spoke words at the ground-breaking ceremony that would, on reflection, prove a decade later to have been overly optimistic and mostly untrue:

‘The congressional delegation and the Bush administration are committed to ensuring the MOX program becomes a reality. Today is another important step in the right direction,’ said Graham. “The MOX program is vital to our national security and we will continue to work together to ensure it is adequately funded. The citizens of South Carolina, along with the Savannah River Site workforce, should be proud of the role we are playing in making the world a safer place.”

Though it has received \$340 million for the current fiscal year, that amount is barely enough to keep the project alive. Funding for Fiscal Year 2018 as being discussed by the House Appropriations Committee in Congress is the same as the current termination-track amount of funding. Efforts to increase the funding failed when the Trump administration came to the view that MOX was not viable should be terminated. (Trump/White House statement on DOE appropriations by US House - affirms opposition to MOX at SRS, July 24: [linked here](#).)

As the Senate Appropriations Committee has recommended termination of the project and funding only enough to carry that out – \$270 million – it is believed that the projects may be on its last legs. (See [Senate Appropriations report, July 20, 2017](#), page 100, for language approved by the full committee: “*MOX Construction*.—The Committee recommends \$270,000,000, and supports the budget request proposal to terminate the construction of the MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility as early as practicable. No funds are provided to continue construction of the MOX Fuel Fabrication facility.”

Rumors continue that morale at the MOX project is low at the project, work-force turnover high, productivity poor and that the amount of “rework” (or things improperly installed) is significant.

As storm clouds continue to gather over the project and efforts grow to officially terminate it, the project still stumbles along and is not expected to make it to its 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in the opinion of SRS Watch.

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**Notes:**

**[DOE news releases on construction of MOX plant at SRS:](#)**

**NNSA Starts Construction on MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility in South Carolina**

August 01, 2007

<https://nnsa.energy.gov/mediaroom/pressreleases/nnsa-starts-construction-mox-fuel-fabrication-facility-south-carolina>

**NNSA Completes One Year of Successful Construction at the MOX Facility in South Carolina**

August 01, 2008

<https://nnsa.energy.gov/mediaroom/pressreleases/nnsa-completes-one-year-successful-construction-mox-facility-south-carolina>

**NNSA Marks Two-Year Construction Milestone at MOX Facility in South Carolina**

July 31, 2009

<https://nnsa.energy.gov/mediaroom/pressreleases/07.31.09a>

**NNSA Breaks Ground On MOX Facility**

October 14, 2005

<https://nnsa.energy.gov/mediaroom/pressreleases/nnsa-breaks-ground-mox-facility>

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**SRS fact sheet** (with old, logo for failed entity “Enterprise SRS) – mentions August 1, 2007 date

[http://www.srs.gov/general/news/factsheets/srs\\_esrs.pdf](http://www.srs.gov/general/news/factsheets/srs_esrs.pdf)

**Aerial photos of the MOX plant**, May 26, 2017, can be used with credit to ©High Flyer:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OBwkyYyn8X-ySaGZjbUduT3Axb00>