



Statement to South Carolina Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council

Tom Clements, Director, Savannah River Site Watch (www.srswatch.org), July 10, 2014, Columbia, SC

There were several issues of concern discussed at the meeting today. Two matters are of primary concern: status of the high-level waste management program at Savannah River Site and delays to it and the import of highly radioactive commercial spent fuel from Germany.

On the high-level nuclear waste issue, it is of growing concern that the schedule for the closure of aging waste storage tanks continues to slip due to financial and technical issues. Given the environmental and health risks involved with this program, it merits the closest of scrutiny by the Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council, politicians at all levels and the public. DOE needs to refocus its efforts on this program and not continue to be side-tracked by the plutonium fuel (MOX) boondoggle or by repeated efforts to bring high-level nuclear waste (spent fuel) to the site for storage and/or processing.

The proposal to bring spent fuel from two commercial prototype nuclear reactors in Germany for processing and storage is not the future we want to see for the Savannah River Site. Conceived in secrecy, the program is now hitting obstacles of public opinion and political opposition both in Germany and the United States, and rightly so. See Savannah River Site Watch for much more information on the issue: www.srswatch.org.

The proposal, as we have seen from the Department of Energy presentation, would result in high-level nuclear waste being left at SRS in "storage awaiting repository." DOE itself has thus validated that we are at risk of being a long-term storage site for the German spent fuel. Disposal of spent fuel at SRS is not legal as spent fuel, under law, is required to go to a geologic repository. Claims by DOE or German entities that the spent fuel would be brought to SRS for "disposal" are misleading. Rest assured the public and politicians in Germany are being made aware that SRS is not a disposal site and that the import negatively impacts SRS clean up.

The export of the spent fuel from Germany, as I have outlined in my comments submitted to DOE - <http://tinyurl.com/qxvllql> - is illegal as German law prohibits the export of spent fuel for processing and disposal. The effort 25 years after the AVR and THTR-300 experimental power reactor were closed to rebrand them as "research" reactors is proceeding but I predict that effort will fail. DOE should simply halt its review of the import of the German spent fuel and terminate the "environmental assessment" process.

DOE claims that 900 kg of highly enriched uranium are in the graphite fuel balls but this is misleading as this was the amount of HEU originally supplied. For the AVR spent fuel, only a small amount of HEU remains and the amount of HEU in the THTR spent fuel has been greatly reduced. Also, some of the uranium in some spent fuel balls may be low-enriched uranium of German origin. Thus, the biggest proliferation risk with the proposal may be the development of a new graphite fuel reprocessing technique to be applied in an unsafeguarded reprocessing plant. China and Russia will be watching with interest. Additionally, the speculative threat of import to SRS of US spent graphite fuel from the closed reactors at Fort. St. Vrain and Peach Bottom has other negative waste management implications for SRS.

I am submitting various items for the GNAC record on the German waste import:

- *Plan to ship German nuclear waste to SC questioned*, Greenville News, July 9
- *New German waste another bad signal*, Aiken (SC) Standard editorial, July 7, 2014
- *Don't dump this on us*, Augusta (GA) Chronicle editorial, July 6, 2014
- *Don't bring more nuclear waste to SRS*, Greenville (SC) News editorial, May 1, 2014
- Response to a question posed by a member of the German Bundestag, establishing that a number of municipalities owned the AVR commercial nuclear power-producing reactor, April 15, 2014

