Statement of May 2, 2014 by Tom Clements
Director of Savannah River Site Watch
http://www.srswatch.org/

In Response to Encouraging Testimony of NNSA Administrator Klotz on Placement of Mismanaged Plutonium Fuel (MOX) Project on Standby
(Klotz statement linked below, with MOX text)

Columbia, South Carolina

SRS Watch takes special note of the encouraging testimony of the new administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration concerning the shutdown of the plutonium fuel MOX program. In testimony on April 30 before the Senate Subcommittee on Energy & Water Development, Administrator Frank Klotz submitted testimony stating that “we will cease all construction activities in order to minimize costs” of continued construction of the MOX project. Klotz went on to say that “NNSA must immediately take prudent actions to commence lay-up to preserve our investment while minimizing costs.”

We applaud General Klotz for recognizing the unsustainable nature of the mismanaged MOX project and for adopting a position in the first weeks of his tenure which endorses placing the MOX plant construction on cold standby. Given the rapidly escalating costs of the failed MOX project, it is heartening to see that the new NNSA administrator understands the problems with the project and that he is taking steps to constrain pointless spending on it.

We encourage Administrator Klotz to follow through on his efforts to further control of spending for the unsustainable MOX project by terminating it completely in Fiscal Year 2015. Alternative disposition pathways for surplus weapon-grade plutonium are viable and nobody knows better than a former general that we must take action to prevent surplus plutonium from any future use in nuclear weapons.

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E&W Subcommittee: FY15 National Nuclear Security Administration Budget – April 30, 2014


Testimony of NNSA Administrator Klotz

http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/sites/default/files/hearings/4-30-14_Klotz%20Testimony%20FINAL.pdf
Statement of Lt. Gen. Frank G. Klotz, USAF (Ret)
Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
U.S. Department of Energy
on the
Fiscal Year 2015 President’s Budget Request
Before the
Subcommittee on Energy & Water Development
Senate Committee on Appropriations
April 30, 2014

Extracts on MOX...

Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation

The Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation (DNN) request is $1.6 billion, a decrease of $398.8 million, or about 20.4%, from the FY 2014 level. The programs under DNN have been accurately described as “defense by other means.” The majority of the decrease is due to the decision to place the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility construction project at the Savannah River Site in cold stand-by to allow further study of more efficient options for plutonium disposition. Other decreases reflect the conclusion of the President’s four year effort to secure nuclear materials worldwide and bring the FY 2015 request in line with funding levels before the acceleration needed to implement the four-year effort.

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Going forward in FY 2015, the Administration remains firmly committed to disposing of surplus weapon-grade plutonium. Over the past year, we have been working closely with the MOX project contractor and others to determine if there are opportunities to make the current MOX fuel approach for plutonium disposition more efficient. During the same time that we were analyzing the current MOX fuel approach, we have been analyzing alternatives to accomplish the plutonium disposition mission, including reactor and non-reactor based approaches. DOE expects to complete the options analysis and an external independent review in the next 12-18 months. It is now clear that the MOX approach will be significantly more expensive than anticipated—at a $30 billion lifecycle cost estimate—even with potential contract restructuring and other improvements that have been made to the MOX project. As a result, the MOX project will be placed in cold stand-by, meaning we will cease all construction activities in order to minimize costs. The Fissile Materials Disposition request is $311 million, including $221 million to put the MOX project in cold stand-by, while assessing more cost effective options. NNSA must immediately take prudent actions to commence lay-up to preserve our investment while minimizing costs. The remaining funding will continue to support activities for disposition of plutonium and highly enriched uranium.