

MONITOR

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...plus International Nonproliferation Initiatives (State, DoD, G-8, IAEA) ♦ Uranium Enrichment

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NNSA: NUKE POSTURE REVIEWS SHOULD'N'T DELAY TRANSFORMATION

National Nuclear Security Administration chief Thomas D'Agostino last week stressed the need to continue to move forward with plans to modernize and reduce the size of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex even as the United States's future strategic posture is being developed. "The vision of a smaller, safer, but modern nuclear security enterprise is well thought out and is, first and foremost, based on our nation's nuclear security needs and requirements," D'Agostino said during a March 17 House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee hearing. "Secondly, it's based on our need to retain the human capital that is unique and world-class in performing their mission. And finally, there's an urgent need to act now to sustain key capabilities necessary to maintain essential national nuclear security requirements, not just now but well into the future. The need for change is urgent. We must act now to adapt for the future and stop pouring money into an old Cold War weapons complex that is too big and too expensive."

U.S. Strategic Posture Could Change

The Bush Administration finalized its plans for 'Complex Transformation' in Records of Decision issued late last year, outlining an initiative to eliminate 9 million square feet of facility space, consolidate special nuclear material to five sites and cut 20 to 30 percent of weapons-related jobs by 2017. The plans hinge on the construction of several multi-billion-dollar facilities, including the Uranium Processing Facility at the Y-12 National Security Complex and the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement-Nuclear Facility planned for Los Alamos National Laboratory.

The future U.S. strategic posture, however, remains uncertain, with the Congressionally mandated Strategic Posture Commission set to issue its findings in several

months (*see related story*) and the Department of Defense on track to carry out a Nuclear Posture Review over the next year. "We must have a complex, while smaller, that is responsive to today's threats and adaptable to meet tomorrow's. A complex which meets only one of these two objectives—that is, today's threats instead of tomorrow's—cannot, in my mind, responsibly protect our national security and the American people," said Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-N.J.), the panel's ranking member. He added, "That said, we can't wait forever. Our stockpile is not getting any younger, and neither is the workforce dedicated to our national security that manages it."

Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) said he was "frustrated" over the uncertainty. "I feel like I'm out here trying to design a mode of transportation not knowing what I want it to do—whether I want it to fly in the air, go in the water, go over rocky roads and mountains, whether I want it to go on the interstate or whether I want it to do all of those things," he said. "Until the customer tells us what it wants, how do we know what a complex is supposed to look like?" D'Agostino, though, noted the lengthy time that would be required to make major changes to the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. "We know we can't throw a light switch and immediately change that stockpile of the future. We know that it will take us, depending on how the math works, on how many warheads the nation is going to want to maintain and our capability to actually make those, that it could actually take anywhere from 10 to, you know, 50 years to make that type of a change," he said.

Nonproliferation Benefits Touted

As one example of the need to continue to move forward with Complex Transformation, D'Agostino cited the potential impacts on the NNSA's nonproliferation mission. "The ability to perform research, development, surveillance and production with plutonium is essential to being able to perform the nuclear security work our nation needs.

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Our research, surveillance and manufacturing capabilities currently are carried out in facilities that are 50 to 60 years old and well beyond their economic lifetime,” he said. “What will happen if we just maintain the status quo? The short answer is we’ll reach a point where we’ll be unable to perform ... nonproliferation, nuclear counterterrorism, nuclear forensics, nuclear incident response and nuclear deterrent missions.”

Plan Based on Wrong Assumptions, Expert Says

Philip Coyle, former associate director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, said the NNSA’s plans were based on incorrect assumptions over the likely future size of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. While the NNSA assumes a stockpile of approximately 6,000 warheads, including those kept in reserve, recent reports indicate that the stockpile is significantly less and is set to continue to decrease, he said. Coyle called for an independent study to be conducted to “define a more optimum and adaptive production complex than one sized only for a maximum or peak production rate much higher than expected to be required in the future.” He added, “In addition to sizing what I would call an adaptive complex to sustain the stockpile projected in 2012 at less than 2,200 warheads, NNSA could also look at the 1,000-strategic warhead level—about half that level—and at about 500 warheads at about one-quarter the 2012 level. The reason for choosing these two levels is the proposals for levels of 1,000 and 500 have gained considerable constituency in this country. ... Then for the adaptive complex, NNSA could consider the type of production complex and laboratory structure it would need to sustain, perhaps, a strategic stockpile of just a few hundred weapons—maybe only 100.”

‘Excessive Contingency’

Former NNSA Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs Everet Becker cited the need to scrub “excessive contingency” from the costly facilities to be built as part of the Complex Transformation effort, such as the UPF planned for Y-12, the CMRR-NF planned for Los Alamos and the Pit Disassembly and Conversion Facility to be built at the Savannah River Site. “I think NNSA really has scrubbed their projects to get them as small as they reasonably can be to cover all of the things that seem to be in front of the nation, but you can’t have it both ways. You cannot continue to shrink the complex and expect everything to be the way it was when you were spending an additional billion dollars about the time I left four years ago,” Becker told the subcommittee. “Those, I think, have to be scrutinized further to see if there’s any way to take additional money out of them, because the budget cannot swallow those three projects as presently aligned.”

Richard Garwin, former chair of the State Department’s Arms Control and Nonproliferation Advisory Board, said the NNSA should consider eliminating the nuclear facility portion of the CMRR project. “I would suggest that one look at doing without the nuclear facility, that is, requiring further upgrades to the PF-4 plutonium facility at TA-55 at Los Alamos. But a real re-think, if we’re not making new-design pits, what can be done in the research laboratory upgrade building without the big expenditure on the NF? We might be able to put that off if we look at it specifically,” he said. D’Agostino, however, warned of the impacts of major design changes on projects already underway. “The radiation laboratory is almost completed with its construction. So ... there are some huge nuclear safety impacts associated with trying to bring that capability into the radiological laboratory,” he said.

Security Costs Targeted

NNSA should also look at modifying its current security requirements as a cost savings measure, Becker said. “In the past eight years the security budget in the NNSA has tripled. It’s gone from \$300 million to \$900 million since 9/11, and I think everybody believes, well, you can’t have too much security, but pretty soon you can’t afford all this,” he said. “So I would argue that you go back and look at it again, and at the very least ... compare it with the way that DOD does security. They have nuclear weapons in their custody. NNSA has nuclear weapons in their custody. We should make those two requirement sets if not the same, pretty close to it. And at present, I think NNSA is spending a lot more money than the DOD is.”

—Mike Nartker

POST-RRW, CHILTON RENEWS PUSH FOR WARHEAD MODERNIZATION

U.S. Strategic Command head Gen. Kevin Chilton renewed his push for modernizing the U.S. nuclear stockpile in testimony on Capitol Hill last week, placing particular emphasis on the warhead reductions and security enhancements that could be achieved through design modifications. Those points will be key in determining whether a new warhead modernization effort can rise from the ashes of the Bush Administration’s failed Reliable Replacement Warhead program to gain support in Congress, a fact not lost on Chilton during his March 17 appearance before the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee. “The fundamental points that I made last year in supporting RRW apply to the fundamental points that you still see in my posture statement today,” Chilton said. “They are describing a capability that we need of increased reliability, increased security and increased safety in a modern

weapon; not desiring any new capabilities beyond that.” Chilton also appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee March 19 but received no questions about the nation’s nuclear weapons complex.

The Obama Administration has firmly put RRW in the country’s rearview mirror, outlining plans in Fiscal Year 2010 budget documents to end funding for the controversial program and shift warhead modernization efforts into the Advanced Certification program. Subcommittee Chair Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.) made it clear that while the basic tenets of RRW will survive, any new warhead modernization effort needs to be repackaged. “We obviously have a number of opportunities going forward to modernize a smaller arsenal, including ... advanced certification, which could effectively replace what was used to be called RRW in a way that we are, I think, being more responsible in the way that we’re putting forward what we’re doing.” She added that, “My concern about RRW always was that it led people to believe that we were building new weapons. I don’t think we want anybody to believe that.”

Potential Stockpile Reductions Highlighted

At several points during the hearing, Chilton emphasized the stockpile reductions that could be undertaken if a modernized production capability was put in place, pointing out that the United States must now keep a large number of weapons in the stockpile as a “hedge” against the technical failure of a warhead design or changing geopolitical environment. “The reason we need those on the shelf today is because we have no production capacity,” Chilton said. “In the Cold War, we hedged by having a large production capacity in that area. And we also benefitted from the ability to test to help resolve problems. Although that was not used all that often, it was still a capability.” Chilton told Tauscher that while he is a “strong advocate for maintaining robust support” for the Stockpile Stewardship Program, “I don’t think that’s the sole solution in front of us. I think we also need to look at modernization of our industrial base. We need to be able to produce the key elements, and ultimately nuclear weapons. And I think if we do that, if we have that capability, it will lead to an ability to reduce inventories, which is a desire of all in this business.”

Tauscher responded that “it’s not completely true that we don’t have a production facility,” citing the ability to produce pits at Los Alamos National Laboratory. “We don’t have an end-to-end production facility. But clearly ...we were told that if we could reproduce pits that we were solving a very big question mark in the future, as to our sustainability of the current stockpile.” Chilton, though, said he does not view LANL’s production as a real production capability. “I wouldn’t use the word production

capability at Los Alamos. It’s a laboratory. They can make about 10 to 20 pits per year. And that is not on the scale of a production capacity, in my view. And so I think that needs to be robusted.”

2009 Could be Milestone Year

The hearing comes amidst a host of ongoing actions that will shape the future of the nuclear weapons complex, not the least of which is the study commissioned by Congress to provide recommendations on the nuclear posture of the United States. That review is set to be submitted to Congress as early as next month (*see related story*). Negotiations on a follow-on to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia are expected to heat up as the landmark treaty’s December expiration date looms closer, and by the end of 2009 or early 2010, the Defense Department will have completed its Nuclear Posture Review. “That’s why I think 2009 is such a great year,” Chilton said. “One, we’ve been talking about this issue for the last year and a half, and I think that has really been an important part of enlightening the debate and bringing this forward so that we’re postured now to go forward as a policy review goes on, and a nuclear policy review of the new administration and the Department of Defense. Not only that, we’ll have a quadrennial defense review, which those two will be very linked, in my view, because that typically will focus more on the delivery platforms; whereas the nuclear policy review will look more toward the nuclear part of the deterrent.”

As such, a warhead modernization effort could go a long way in achieving many of the goals likely to be set by the various reviews this year, Chilton said. “Some measure U.S. seriousness in nonproliferation by the total inventory of our weapons, and so following a strategy of improving the industrial base and modernizing the weapons that would allow you to reduce the amount of hedge weapons you have could be in line with that and supporting of that position,” Chilton said. He added that, “when we think about the reliability of our weapons in our inventory, there’s a key linkage to our friends and allies, who rely on the nuclear umbrella provided by the United States of America. And their trust and confidence in the reliability of that umbrella certainly ... has a linkage into proliferation/nonproliferation concerns in the debate. And that needs to be considered as we look at this in the policy reviews this year.”

Chilton: Warhead Requirements Have Changed

While bluntly stating that “we do not need a new nuclear weapon with new capabilities,” Chilton said the United States has “a great opportunity here to develop modern

nuclear weapons ... that have 21st century requirements put into their design.”

Chilton pointed to the Cold War-era weapons requirements of “maximum nuclear yield and minimum size” that were driven by the fact that the U.S. had “small missiles and we wanted to maximize the number of warheads we could put in on top of them” in comparison to Russia. “We weren’t worried about the Russians stealing our weapons. They had plenty of their own,” Chilton said. “As we look forward to the 21st century, we do worry about terrorists getting their hands on our weapons. And in an environment where we have reduced and probably never will grow a production capacity anywhere near that we had in the Cold War ... the number one design requirement, I think, as you look to the future is high reliability.”

Along with the increase in reliability, there is “the opportunity to add in a modernized weapon safety and security features that we never envisioned that we would have had or were a part of the original designs,” Chilton said. And, perhaps most importantly, moving forward with a modern capability would have huge human capital impacts. “By re-energizing the design, science, engineering and production capability, you re-energize and maintain the human capital element that is also aging, and you attract youth and energy into the program that will make sure that 20 years, 40 years from now America will still have the preeminent knowledge and know-how on how to maintain a safe, secure stockpile and provide this deterrent for America,” he said.

—Martin Schneider

DESPITE SETBACK, MOX OFFICIALS CONFIDENT INTEREST EXISTS FOR FUEL

Duke Energy’s Contract Terminated Dec. 1, 2008, Leaving Program Without Customer for MOX Fuel

AIKEN, S.C.—While the termination of Duke Energy’s contract to purchase fuel produced at the National Nuclear Security Administration’s Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility has left the controversial facility without a buyer for its product, senior officials involved in construction of the \$4.86 billion facility said last week they weren’t worried about finding buyers. “I would say I’m very confident,” David Stinson, president of MOX plant contractor Shaw AREVA MOX Services, told *NW&M Monitor* last week. “Utilities are continually pressed to try to do more with less, to find ways to cut their operating costs. MOX fuel has the opportunity for them to reduce the cost of their fuel. ... We’ve had lots of discussions with utilities over the last couple years and there is certainly interest out there.”

Negotiations are Ongoing

Duke Energy, which until 2006 was a member of the team building the MOX facility at the Savannah River Site, contracted in 1999 to purchase 900 of the 1,700 MOX fuel assemblies that are scheduled to produce from 34 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium. But the utility began to hedge in its commitment in recent years as schedule delays pushed the start-up date for the facility to 2016. Facing an uncertain supply of the fuel due to the delays and unable to renegotiate the contract with Shaw AREVA MOX Services, Duke let its contract automatically terminate on Dec. 1, 2008. The utility has said it will continue to negotiate with Shaw AREVA MOX Services to purchase the MOX fuel for use in its Catawba and McGuire reactors, however, and in a Securities and Exchange Commission filing last month said it “continues to support the objectives of the surplus weapons disposition program and is interested in receiving a future proposal from MOX Services for the use of MOX fuel.”

Other utilities, though, including the Tennessee Valley Authority, have also contacted Shaw AREVA MOX Services, *NW&M Monitor* has learned. The fuel is being offered to utilities at a discount to standard uranium-based fuel assemblies as a way to convince utilities to use the fuel, which has never been used in the United States before. “Whether or not it turns out that Duke will be the major irradiator or some other reactor owner, we’ll see,” NNSA federal project director Clay Ramsey told *NW&M Monitor*. “Are we particularly worried about whether we’re going to have one? Not at all.” Ken Chacey, the director of site engineering and construction management in the NNSA’s Office of Fissile Materials Disposition, also said he wasn’t worried about finding a buyer for the fuel. “Being the first commercial entity that does burn this fuel I think will have some challenges,” Chacey said. “After that’s over with I think things will line up.”

Fuel Assurance Among Primary Concerns

Chief among the worries of many utilities are the delays that have pushed back completion of the project, which could jeopardize their uranium supply. Fuel assurance liability issues among the parent companies of Shaw AREVA MOX Services and the Department of Energy also complicated negotiations, Stinson and Ramsey said. “That really only came to light in these discussions back and forth with Duke that this is something they expected,” Ramsey said. “We did not envision that they expected these things.”

To compensate, the Department of Energy is contracting to down-blend 12.1 metric tons of highly enriched uranium that will be set aside as a backup source of fuel for MOX

customers. “These discussions with Duke identified to us that we need to be able to address some realistic concerns that the utilities have, which is they have to have a solid reliable source of fuel to fuel their reactors with additional power plants projected to come online,” Ramsey said. “Right now the fuel market is being locked up eight years in advance and it makes it very difficult for them if their fuel supplier doesn’t deliver.” Stinson put it another way: “You don’t want to have a multibillion investment sitting idle because there’s no fuel there.”

Some Urge Termination of Program

The split between Duke and Shaw AREVA MOX Services is the latest black eye for a project hampered by delays and hiccups. Due to complications with the previously parallel Russian plutonium disposition program, the program was slow to get off the ground, and budget cuts and Congressional opposition kept construction at bay until 2007. After construction began in August of 2007, the project had to weather a \$212 million funding cut in the Fiscal Year 2008 omnibus appropriations act, and lead test assembly irradiation at Duke’s Catawba plant was stopped after the second of two planned cycles because of irregular growth in the assemblies. Earlier this month the Government Accountability Office questioned the reliability of the project’s schedule.

Duke’s pullout has sparked renewed calls for the cancellation of the project from environmental groups and even nuclear weapons expert Richard Garwin. Garwin, a physicist and nuclear weapons policy expert, told the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee that the MOX project should be terminated because the program didn’t have a buyer for the fuel. “Considerations of plutonium fuel should be limited to its possible use in future breeder reactors if and when such can become competitive with existing light water reactors in cost and safety,” Garwin testified. Environmental activist Tom Clements, the Southeastern Nuclear Campaign Coordinator with Friends of the Earth, also called for the project to be terminated last week. “The events around the loss of the Duke reactors should serve as a red flag to other utilities, that their participation in the troubled plutonium program will be fraught with risks and obstacles,” Clements said.

MOX officials, however, say it’s much too early to give up on the program. Sue King, Shaw AREVA MOX Services’ vice president of projects, said it would be ideal to have a utility in place to buy at least some of the MOX fuel by next year, and Stinson said not all of the fuel has to be accounted for in that timeframe. “We really need six reactors, but we don’t need six right away,” he said. “We need two to get started and then we go to four and then to

six over about a six-year time frame. We’re not needing to have all those in place right now.”

Construction Ahead of Schedule

Since construction on the facility began in August of 2007, workers at the site have transformed what had been a large hole in the ground for the facility’s main 600,000-square foot process building into a mass of concrete and rebar more than 20 feet above the ground; eventually, the walls of the facility will reach another 50 feet into the air. Approximately \$25 million is being spent each month on the project. Eight of the 19 buildings that make up the MOX facility have been completed; another four, including the flagship process building where the MOX fuel pellets will be produced and fashioned into fuel assemblies, are under construction. In all, construction officials say the main process facility is 15 percent complete and currently on track to be ready 16 months ahead of its October 2016 scheduled start-up date. “We are today ahead of schedule,” Stinson said. “And we intend to keep it that way. It’s a long time ‘til 2016, but the project is really going well. That inspires confidence and makes these contracts easier to do.”

The 16-month buffer is built in to compensate for future problems, but project officials have taken steps to mitigate potential issues. For instance, many of the most complicated gloveboxes that will eventually be installed in the facility will first be tested in three spacious bays of the already-completed 110,000-square-foot Process Unit Assembly Facility in an effort to avoid costly delays if problems were to arise during installation. “We’re trying to be smart and look at the risks that are out there that we’ve calculated, that we’ve learned from the French, that we’ve learned from other projects,” Ramsey said. “We want to take that highly complex stuff that’s going to be the highest risk, and we’re going to put it together ourselves and pre-test it.” Stinson said the progress on the facility should be a signal to utilities that the government is serious about completing the project. “MOX has been under this cloud for years,” he said. “Is it going to be funded? Is it going to be terminated? How real is the project?,” he said. “Well, concrete and steel says it’s real. If you look at the progress we’ve had to date, progress has been very good and you will find this is one of the cleanest worksites you will see.”

Officials Confident in Schedule Despite GAO Concerns

The GAO, however, has questioned the data underpinning the project’s schedule, specifically the lack of risk analyses performed on the project’s baseline, which was adjusted slightly in December of 2008 due to funding cuts in the FY2008 omnibus appropriations act. The risk analysis is

part of the Earned Value Management System (EVMS), an industry-wide tool used to validate cost and schedule progress on projects, and without an up-to-date risk analysis, the GAO said MOX officials can't be sure that they're on schedule and on budget at a March 4 House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on project management. "Our initial work has found that the underlying basis of the EVMS schedule data is not reliable in our view," Gene Aloise, GAO's Director of Natural Resources and the Environment, said in testimony at the hearing. "DOE needs to fix that as soon as possible. Here we are starting again where we've identified problems somewhat early on that could lead to cost overruns and budget increases and schedule delays in the future."

Ramsey said a partial risk analysis targeting the baseline changes was performed last year. The last full risk analysis was performed in 2006 when the project was baselined, and Ramsey said there was a "misunderstanding" between project officials and GAO over that review. Another risk analysis will be performed this summer, however. "I don't know what we'll see. I expect we'll see something very close to that," he said, referring to the current schedule and cost estimate. "Exactly why GAO determined that is the weak link I'm not really sure except for the fact that it's possible they didn't fully understand we have done this and we continued to do it on the baseline change."

—Todd Jacobson

NNSA DEFENDS DECISION TO BEGIN WSB CONSTRUCTION

Federal Project Director Says Building Tied to Needs of MOX

AIKEN, S.C.—Addressing concerns raised earlier this month by House appropriators, Tom Cantey, the federal project director for the Waste Solidification Building being built at the Savannah River Site, defended the decision to begin construction on the \$345 million facility while the plutonium disposition strategy at the site remains undecided. Though National Nuclear Security Administration officials are analyzing alternatives to building the Pit Disassembly and Conversion Facility near the WSB and Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility, Cantey said the WSB's schedule is tied to construction of the \$4.86 billion MOX facility rising several hundred yards away at Savannah River's F Area (*see related story*). The WSB will process waste from both facilities.

Most significantly, he said the WSB needs to be operational when the MOX facility begins cold startup testing in 2013. "We have to be ready when they're ready," Cantey told *NW&M Monitor*. "When they get to the point in their project when they are going to be sending fluid they'll be

spending a lot of money on a per day basis. We are a significantly smaller facility and we won't spend a fraction of what they'll spend on a daily basis. It's much more advantageous for us to be early. If we held them up two months it would be an enormous hit."

Construction on WSB Began in December

Construction on the Waste Solidification Building officially began in December with site prep work, and a contract for constructing the actual building is currently out for bid. However, the quick pace of the process has raised concerns in Congress. At a House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee hearing March 4, Chairman Peter Visclosky (D-Ind.) was surprised to hear that construction had begun and questioned whether it was "premature to start construction of the Waste Solidification [Building] until you know exactly what you're going to do with" PDCF, adding, "This sequencing issue is pretty damn important." The NNSA has planned to build the multi-billion-dollar PDCF near the MOX facility and WSB in Savannah River's F Area, but the agency is currently looking into alternatives, including using existing facilities at Savannah River's K Area. Visclosky was concerned about having a strategy in place "so we don't do too much construction" before changes are made.

Cantey said MOX's needs make finishing the Waste Solidification Building by 2013 a top priority. "We have to be up and running whenever that first facility is ready to send us the first liquids," Cantey said. "We'll be ready well before we get any radioactive liquids. I think right now they go into the cold startup testing in the 2013 timeframe so we've anchored our schedule to that, but they'll do a year and a half or so where we'll just be receiving water and chemicals. Whether that will be PDCF or MOX is immaterial to us. We have to be there."

PDCF Alternatives Narrowed Down

The NNSA is expected to make a decision this summer on its PDCF plans. The agency was slated to build a dedicated facility for pit disassembly and conversion near the MOX and WSB facilities at Savannah River's F Area, but the NNSA put those plans on hold late last year to explore other options at the site. Last week, a team led by PDCF Federal Project Director Scott Cannon narrowed down 23 different possibilities at the site to two: the baseline plan to build a dedicated PDCF facility and using the site's K Area facilities for pit disassembly and conversion along with work on the Office of Environmental Management's Plutonium Preparation Project. Cannon's team will deliver its recommendations to NNSA headquarters in June.

The current cost range for the dedicated PDCF facility is \$2.4 to \$3.2 billion—which Shannon said was almost certain to rise during baselining if that option is chosen—and the K Area option could be a cheaper alternative to the expensive standalone facility. But building in an already-in-use facility has its drawbacks, too. “My experience, and where we’re coming from is, it’s tough to do business in a secure environment and an operating environment,” Shannon said. “Now does it offset? That’s what the analysis we’re looking at is about and we’re trying to compare. You look at the increased risk of doing it in a secure and operating environment versus not having to build a structure, and do they offset each other?”

Size of Building an Issue?

The extent to which the building has to be in place to receive the waste has received scrutiny from the Government Accountability Office, however. “We’re looking at how does the DOE know how to size that building, because if the pit disassembly facility is not built there, then they’re going to have a different requirement. So that’s something we need to look at,” Gene Aloise, the Government Accountability Office’s director for Natural Resources and the Environment, testified at the subcommittee hearing.

When completed, the WSB will occupy about nine acres near the MOX facility and the planned location for PDCF, and it will package transuranic waste from both facilities and send it to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico, while low-level waste will be packaged and kept at the Savannah River Site or shipped to a commercial facility. The building will have two process lines, one for americium waste and another for low-level waste, but 80 percent of the waste will come from the MOX facility, including a 12,000 gallon high-level waste stream and a separate 44,000 gallon low-level waste stream, Cantey said. A 12,000-gallon low-level waste stream will come from PDCF, he said. Cantey said even if the NNSA chooses to build PDCF somewhere other than Savannah River—the NNSA had considered using existing facilities at Los Alamos National Laboratory as well as the Nevada Test Site and the Pantex Plant—the changes to the WSB’s design would be minimal. “The sizing wasn’t driven by PDCF,” Cantey said.

—Todd Jacobson

FORTHCOMING STRATEGIC POSTURE COMMISSION REPORT DELAYED

A report from a Congressionally mandated panel tasked with analyzing the role of nuclear weapons in the nation’s

strategic defense posture has been delayed by up to a month, *NW&M Monitor* has learned. The Strategic Posture Commission, led by former Defense Secretary William Perry and former Energy and Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, was expected to release its report April 1, and a round of hearings with the House and Senate Armed Services committees had been tentatively scheduled for the next day. Those hearings, however, have been cancelled until the committee’s final report is completed.

Along with the Pentagon-led Nuclear Posture Review expected later this year, the committee’s report is expected to play a significant role in the formation of U.S. nuclear weapons policy, providing guidance on the role of nuclear deterrence, the appropriate size of the nuclear weapons complex and the nation’s nuclear weapons arsenal. In an interim report released in December, the commission said the U.S. should maintain the “reliability, safety and security” of its nuclear forces and recognized that the need for deterrence and extended deterrence “could extend for an indefinite future,” and promised to “define the most efficient and effective way” to maintain a credible deterrent in its final report. “As long as we need to maintain such forces, our challenge is to define a nuclear program that contributes to decreasing the global dangers of proliferation, including maintaining the needed reliability, safety and security of our nuclear weapons and maintaining the role they play in overall stability and the reassurance of allies,” the report said.

—Todd Jacobson

SENATORS URGE OMB TO CANCEL STUDY OF POTENTIAL NNSA MOVE TO DEFENSE

Letter: Any Study of NNSA Placement Should Wait for Completion of Nuclear Posture Review

Five influential Senators last week urged the White House Office of Management and Budget to abandon plans to study moving the National Nuclear Security Administration to the Department of Defense and postpone any plans to examine the NNSA’s structure until after a Pentagon-led Nuclear Posture Review is completed later this year. OMB tasked the NNSA and DoD to study a potential move of the agency out of the Department of Energy by the start of Fiscal Year 2011 in budget guidance earlier this year, sparking debate among many corners of the nuclear weapons enterprise and Congress. While acknowledging in a letter to OMB chief Peter Orszag that NNSA’s current setup within DOE is “in many ways dysfunctional,” Sens. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), and Bob Bennett (R-Utah) expressed their “firm opposition to the transfer of the NNSA to the Department of Defense” over concerns about shifting control of nuclear weapons

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technology into the hands of the military and the impact such a move could have on the agency's nonproliferation work, retaining weapons scientists and physicists and ensuring the health of the nation's nuclear weapons laboratories.

New Mexico's Congressional delegation—including Bingaman and Sen. Tom Udall as well as Democratic Congressmen Martin Heinrich, Ben Ray Lujan and Harry Teague—also pressed OMB to end the study in a separate letter to Orszag last week. “We believe that civilian control of our stockpile recognizes the crucial differences between nuclear weapons and conventional military munitions,” the Congressmen wrote. “Shifting to military control could be a dangerous precedent, causing other nuclear weapons states, such as Russia and China, to do the same.”

OMB Broadens Study

OMB spokesman Thomas Gavin said the guidance has since been broadened to assess “how NNSA supports the defense strategy and force structure that is being developed in the Quadrennial Defense Review and Nuclear Posture Review,” including the structure, composition and organizational placement of the NNSA's nonproliferation, naval reactors and weapons development and production work. “The study and its methodology are not in any way preordained,” Gavin said in an email to *NW&M Monitor*. “This systematic, objective review will be an important resource for members of Congress and the Administration alike who share the decision-making role with regard to our nation's nuclear posture.”

That isn't likely to appease the study's Congressional opponents, who favor postponing the study until the NPR is completed. “Any such review would be premature prior to the conclusion of the Nuclear Posture Review,” the Senators wrote. “That review will provide guidance for the size and shape of the nuclear stockpile, and the resources and capabilities necessary to support it. It is prerequisite to having an informed discussion of the NNSA and its core missions and structure.”

A History of Civilian Control

Control of the nation's nuclear stockpile was given to civilian agencies in 1946 when the Atomic Energy Commission was created, and the nation's weapons programs have resided in the Department of Energy for decades. Safety and security problems sparked a push to segregate the weapons programs from the rest of DOE more than a decade ago, resulting in the creation of the NNSA as a semi-autonomous agency within the Department in 1999. Even then, however, some in Congress wanted complete autonomy for the agency.

The current study has generated plenty of arguments, from those that believe a move to the Department of Defense could provide top-level leadership that's been lacking, to others that think the nation's weapons program could be best served by a standalone agency, disentangled from the bureaucracy of the Department of Energy. Still others believe the agency's problems might be best solved by a restructuring within DOE, including Bingaman and Udall. “We recognize that the current structural relationship to the DOE of NNSA is in many ways dysfunctional,” the Senators wrote. “Improvements are needed if the NNSA is to optimally carry out both its missions focused on the stockpile and its potential to contribute to broader national defense, energy, and economic security.”

Chilton Noncommittal on Move

According to the Senators' letter, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and National Security Advisor Jim Jones oppose the potential transfer of NNSA to DoD. Gen. Kevin Chilton, the head of U.S. Strategic Command, however, was noncommittal when asked about the potential shift during a March 17 House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee hearing. “I guess I don't have any particular views, one way or the other, on that,” he said. “I think it's a valid question to ask. I think it's a good question for the administration to take on. And I'm glad they're looking at it. But I think it's not just a question for the administration. It's a question for the Congress as well because, I mean, they're interlinked. They're in the oversight role as well. And so I look forward to the results of the administration's look at this here, when that gets published.”

—Todd Jacobson

TAUSCHER'S DEPARTURE FOR STATE LEAVES QUESTIONS MARKS FOR NNSA

Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.) is poised to leave Congress for a senior arms control position within the State Department, a move that would further deplete an already eroding base of support for the National Nuclear Security Administration on Capitol Hill. The seven-term Democrat from Northern California has been a vocal supporter of the nation's nuclear weapons complex, wielding considerable power as chair of the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee. But the days when NNSA has a key supporter as one its most important authorizers will soon be over, as Tauscher is expected to be nominated by President Barack Obama as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. That position was initially expected to go to Clinton-era arms control veteran Robert Einhorn before he withdrew himself from consider-

ation because of “family reasons,” according to published reports. Tauscher was a well-known supporter of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during Clinton’s presidential campaign.

Departures Leave Void

As a representative of California’s 10th district, which includes Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the California campus of Sandia National Laboratories, Tauscher has been active in nuclear weapons policy issues, and following on the heels of the retirement of Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) in January, her departure continues the exodus of senior lawmakers that have long stewarded the nuclear weapons complex. “You’ve lost some continuity at an obvious minimum,” one industry official told *NW&M Monitor*. “The more of these guys in leadership position you don’t have, the worse it is for your program.”

Though Tauscher ultimately reversed course and opposed the Bush Administration’s Reliable Replacement Warhead program last year, she has remained a supporter of efforts to modernize the nation’s aging nuclear arsenal and been an advocate for many of the NNSA’s Complex Transformation initiatives, an area where few House members have tread. “I think she represented about 50 percent of the knowledge in the House on nuclear weapons issues,” said David Culp, an anti-nuclear lobbyist with the Friends Committee on National Legislation. “It’s a big gaping hole.”

Tauscher Pushed START, CTBT

Tauscher has also taken a leadership role in arms control and nonproliferation, and has pushed the Bush Administration to renew the expiring Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia and advocated for the ratification of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty—two issues central to President Barack Obama’s foreign policy that will top her priorities in the State Department. “Keeping nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorists, making sure other countries do not obtain them, and one day, I hope, ridding the world of these terrible weapons, has become my passion and, I hope, my life’s work,” Tauscher said in a statement March 18.

It’s unclear who will replace Tauscher, though there are several natural candidates among the current Armed Services Committee. Rep. Rob Andrews (D-N.J.), a member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, has the most seniority of committee members. Next in line would be Strategic Forces Subcommittee members Jim Langevin (D-R.I.) and Rick Larsen (D-Wash.). Rep. John Spratt (D-S.C.) might be a long-term successor, Culp said, but as the chairman of the House Budget Committee he’s ineligible

to chair a subcommittee. Spratt “knows this stuff forward and backwards,” Culp said, and he will “undoubtedly be the dominant voice on these issues in the House Armed Services Committee in 2011 and on, but in the short term, it’s not clear who is going to fill Ms. Tauscher’s shoes.”

Gottemoeller Nominated to State Post as Expected

Obama also formally nominated Rose Gottemoeller March 17 to be assistant secretary of state for verification and compliance (*NW&M Monitor*, Vol. 13 No. 4). The former director of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace’s Moscow Center, Gottemoeller was previously the director of the Department of Energy’s Office of Nonproliferation and National Security from 1997 to 2000, and she’ll likely serve as the chief negotiator for the expiring START treaty. Einhorn is expected to serve as an adviser on arms control issues.

—Todd Jacobson

UK PRIME MINISTER MAKES PITCH FOR WORLDWIDE NUCLEAR CUTS

Russia Announces Plans to Strengthen Nuclear Arsenal

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown called for the world’s nuclear-armed countries to cut their nuclear weapons stockpiles last week to set an example for other countries that may have nuclear ambitions, but he stopped short of committing the United Kingdom to cuts. First, he wants the United States and Russia to make cuts to their arsenals, and he said he welcomed the increased commitment from the countries on negotiating an extension to the expiring Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. “For our part, as soon as it becomes useful for our arsenal to be included in a broader negotiation, Britain stands ready to participate and to act,” Brown said at the International Fuel Cycle Conference in London last week.

Brown’s comments are the latest in a growing chorus pushing for significant nuclear weapons reductions. Four senior statesmen—former Senator Sam Nunn, former Defense Secretary William Perry and former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz—laid out their vision for a world free of nuclear weapons in a pair of *Wall Street Journal* commentaries in 2007 and 2008, and President Barack Obama has made striving for nuclear disarmament a priority in his Administration.

A ‘Global Nuclear Bargain’

Brown pitched a “global nuclear bargain” in which the nuclear haves set an example for the nuclear have-nots by committing to further stockpile reductions. “As possessor

states, we cannot expect to successfully exercise moral and political leadership in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons if we ourselves do not demonstrate leadership on the question of disarmament of our weapons," he said.

Brown acknowledged the potential challenges to his vision—most notably the hurdles presented by the spread of nuclear energy around the world—but he said an example needed to be set by nuclear-armed countries. "The only way to guarantee that our children and our grandchildren will be free from the threat of nuclear war is to create a world in which countries can, with confidence, refuse to take up nuclear weapons in the knowledge they will never be required," he said.

Russian Strengthening Nuclear Forces

At the same time, however, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announced plans for Russia to undergo an expansion of its Army and Navy, including its nuclear forces. "The primary task is to increase the combat readiness of our forces, first of all our strategic nuclear forces. They must be able to fulfill all tasks necessary to ensure Russia's security," Medvedev said at a meeting of Russian defense officials in Moscow, according to *Agence France Presse*.

Russian General Nikolai Solovtsov also tied the deployment of a nuclear capable missile able to carry multiple warheads to the expiration of the START treaty Dec. 5. "A regiment with one command center and one rocket division armed with RS-24 complexes with detachable warheads will be placed on a state of combat readiness," Solovtsov was quoted as saying. The RS-24 potentially could combat U.S. plans to deploy a missile defense system in Poland that Russia believes is aimed at diminishing its nuclear deterrent.

Russia has been beefing up its nuclear forces to make up for shortfalls within its conventional armed forces, and the latest news out of Russia was met with little alarm in the Pentagon. "We've noticed that the Russian government is investing heavily in its strategic arsenal," Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said last week. "That's a fact of life. I think we are always mindful of how people are arming themselves around the world, and we encourage everybody to be as transparent as possible so there's no misunderstanding about intentions."

—Todd Jacobson

MEDICAL SCREENINGS ON HOLD DUE TO LOST PERSONAL INFORMATION

Free medical screenings for workers at Department of Energy sites have been shut down while DOE investigates an incident in which personal information for thousands of workers could have been compromised. Before the work is resumed, DOE apparently plans to establish a new protocol for all contractors and subcontractors to better protect privacy information when information is being transferred from site to site. The incident at the center of the controversy involved a lost disk containing the personal information of more than 50,000 current and former employees at the Idaho National Laboratory. Although the issue reportedly involved only the Idaho lab, other DOE-sponsored programs that provides free medical screenings and CT scans were put on hold until the investigation is completed by DOE's Office of Health, Safety and Security.

In Oak Ridge, the Atomic Trades and Labor Council, which coordinates some of the programs, was busy notifying workers and canceling appointments after learning of the problems March 13. "It's disappointing that this happened because the program had really picked up, and we were scheduling folks up to two months ahead," said Ed Mee of the ATLC. The ATLC offers screenings to former workers at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 National Security Complex in conjunction with Queens (N.Y.) College, which coordinates the medical services. Similar programs are in place for former workers at the K-25 plant and those who worked constructions at the government's Oak Ridge facilities.

Disk Held Information on Approx. 60,000 People

According to information provided by Queens and the United Steel Workers Union, which coordinates the screening programs at Idaho, the computer disk was reported lost Jan. 30. It was being shipped via UPS from Queens to the Center to Protect Workers' Rights in Maryland. Jim Frederick, the assistant director of health, safety and environment for the USW, said the disk contained the personal information for 59,617 current and former workers at the Idaho laboratory. That information includes names, social security numbers, dates of birth, and other personal data. Frederick and officials with Queens said the computer disk was password-protected, and they said there was no evidence that any of the information had been compromised or used in any way. In a statement on DOE's Idaho Web site, the agency said efforts are under way to locate the lost disk. DOE's Office of Health, Safety

and Security is conducting an investigation to determine the adequacy of existing procedures for transporting workers' privacy information, the agency said.

New DOE Guidance Expected Soon

Dr. Steven Markowitz, a physician who operates the occupational medicine program at Queens, said he hopes the worker screening programs will be up and running again within a couple of weeks. "I think DOE is moving rapidly in reviewing and specifying procedures it wants us to follow for personal identifying information," Markowitz said. "I'm hoping people don't get discouraged," he said.

Oak Ridge Associated Universities, which manages a nationwide program of medical screenings for DOE, also was affected by the incident. Project director Donna Cragle said ORAU and its subcontractor are continuing to conduct medical exams for former workers at DOE facilities around the U.S., but there's a delay in sending results to patients—unless there's a medical urgency, she said. Cragle said she expected there to be a new DOE guidance in place soon, possibly within a matter of days, that would allow a return to normal operations. The new requirements will require "double bagging" of things such as X-ray films for shipping and also the encryption of some data, not just password-protected, she said. ORAU has some of those precautions in place already, she said.

—From staff reports

NRC ON ITS WAY TO NFS TO PROBE GLOVEBOX ISSUE

Company Shuttered 23 Gloveboxes in Early March

Nuclear fuel fabricator Nuclear Fuel Services has shut down 23 of its gloveboxes for handling Category 1 nuclear material after tests at the site earlier this month showed that the boxes might not be functioning properly. NFS notified the Nuclear Regulatory Commission of the issue, and the agency is planning a special inspection of the facility this week, according to a statement from NRC. "On March 4, NFS filed an event report with the NRC after a company engineer found a discrepancy between flow rate calculations of the overflow drains at the bottom of the glove boxes," NRC said in a statement last week. "NFS found that the drains may not limit the amount of liquid as designed."

NFS experience similar operational problems at its site in 2005, when a highly-enriched uranium spill discovered in an elevator shaft shut the commercial production side of the plant for several months. NRC was expected to begin its inspection of the latest issue March 23, and stay for about a week, according to the agency. "During the special inspection, the NRC inspectors will be reviewing the company's response and investigation; evaluating the adequacy of the company's root cause analysis after a similar event in 2005; and identifying any generic issues for NFS or other nuclear facilities," NRC said.

—From staff reports

At the Weapons Labs/DOE Sites

AT LOS ALAMOS LAB BEGINS SPECIALIZED TRAINING FOR FIRE FIGHTERS

Los Alamos National Laboratory has begun specialized training for members of the Los Alamos Fire Department, the latest step in a process to correct problems rooted in the 1989 transfer of firefighting responsibilities at the sprawling nuclear weapons laboratory from federal control to the local county government. The training, which began in February, is one of the steps taken in response to a December 2008 report from the Defense Nuclear Safety Board raising concerns about the adequacy of fire protection at the lab. Prior to 1989, the lab provide its own fire protection, and extended the lab fire department's services to the community of Los Alamos under a cooperative agreement. In 1989, the fire department was transferred to the county government, with the federal government, through the lab, paying a substantial portion of the costs. In 2005 the National Nuclear Security Administration, concerned about staffing levels and other issues, took over management of the relationship with the county from the lab.

In the years since, there have been ongoing discussions among the lab, the NNSA, the county and the DNFSB regarding issues like staffing levels and the county fire department's ability to respond to the specialized situations possible in fighting fires and other emergencies at a nuclear facility. The discussions culminated in a new formal agreement in September 2008 between NNSA and the county, ending 11 years without a formal agreement governing the relationship between the two on the issue of fire protection. That agreement, however, was insufficient to satisfy the DNFSB's concerns. In the December 2008 report and an accompanying letter, DNFSB officials expressed their concerns about "weaknesses in the current capability to respond to a fire or other emergency event in the unique hazard environments associated with defense nuclear facilities at LANL."

Lab Outlines Improvements Already Taken

In response to the DNFSB letter, the lab and NNSA's Los Alamos Site Office are preparing a new Baseline Needs Assessment regarding fire protection, which is due March 31. In the interim, the lab in a report to the DNFSB, outlined steps already taken to improve the situation, including:

- An increase in the on-shift fire personnel to 37;

- Increased “facility familiarization tours” for fire department personnel who might have to deal with fires or accidents at the lab; and
- A dozen “table-top exercises” to prepare for various accident scenarios.

The new training underway includes radiation protection, how to handle contaminated lab personnel, and how to move patients out of a contaminated area for medical treatment. The lab also has planned additional proficiency drills in May, according to the report.

AT SANDIA CHIP DESIGNERS CERTIFIED AS ‘TRUSTED’ BY DOD

Sandia National Laboratories has been granted “trusted” status by the Pentagon for the design of mission-critical computer chips, the labs announced March 12. The certification is part of a program developed by the Pentagon to ensure that all steps in the development of integrated circuits for mission-critical equipment used by the military come from trusted sources. The certification is part of a broader effort by the Pentagon known as the Defense Microelectronics Activity (DMEA) which was established in 2003 to ensure the critical components in military systems did not fall victim to the rapidly changing electronics world—both because of the frequent offshoring of electronics manufacturing and frequent changes in the U.S. industry. “These factors make it difficult, if not impossible, to provide reliable, long-term support for the military’s fielded systems,” the DMEA says in a statement explaining its creation.

DMEA established a certification process for both the design and manufacturing of chips. Sandia, which has long

designed and built small-lot integrated circuits for nuclear weapons and other national security applications, is now certified to provide design services for both radiation hardened and non-radiation hardened circuits that would then be built in one of the 11 foundries certified by DMEA as “trusted.”

While the program was launched to meet DoD needs, DMEA certification is now used to ensure the reliability and security of integrated circuits used by the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy, Department of Transportation, Department of Justice, as well as many defense contractors and international programs from the United Kingdom and other allies, according to DMEA. The certification should enhance Sandia’s Work For Others portfolio for federal agencies other than the National Nuclear Security Administration, according to Sandia spokesman Neal Singer.

AT OAK RIDGE UT-BATTELLE GEARING UP FOR ORNL COMPETITION

The Dept. of Energy has not yet announced plans to recompute the management contract at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, but UT-Battelle—the contractor that has run the lab since 2000—is preparing for the “likelihood” that a competition is forthcoming. In a message to staff March 13, ORNL Director Thom Mason, who is president and CEO of UT-Battelle (a partnership of the University of Tennessee and Battelle Memorial Institute), said the contractor could make a strong case for a contract extension based on its work the past nine years and the challenging times facing ORNL. The lab may take on dozens of new projects in coming months as part of the government’s economic stimulus package, he said. “Nonetheless, we must make every preparation to compete vigorously and

win a competition,” Mason said in the memorandum to staff.

Mason’s sentiments echoed those of Battelle CEO Jeff Wadsworth, who recently said he, too, expected the DOE to put the Oak Ridge contract up for bids, citing recent contract competitions. “Unless we hear something, we fully anticipate that,” Wadsworth said. “We will compete as vigorously as you can imagine to keep that contract. We think we’ve been a great team working there. I think everyone agrees with that. It’s a source of pride for both institutions, UT and Battelle.” The current contract expires at the end of March 2010, and DOE typically makes a decision on whether to recompute major contracts about a

year before expiration. Gerald Boyd, the director of DOE's Oak Ridge Operations Office, earlier this year said he'd made a recommendation on the ORNL contract package and sent it to DOE headquarters in Washington, but he wouldn't say whether or not he recommended a contract extension for UT-Battelle.

Would Stability Aid Stimulus Planning?

In his memo, Mason discussed the challenging times ahead, with a possible contract change coming at the same time as possibly historic levels of funding and many new energy projects. "In the midst of this challenge, we must also prepare for the likelihood that next year DOE will compete the management contract for ORNL, which extends through March 2010," Mason wrote. "The substantial amount of time and human resources required by a contract competition will be in addition to unprecedented levels of resources necessary to prepare multiple program proposals, manage dozens of stimulus projects, and hire hundreds of new staff. I believe that UT-Battelle's performance over the past nine years in managing the ORNL contract, when combined with unprecedented demands on time and human resources over the next 24 months, makes a strong case for the extension of the current UT-Battelle

contract. Nonetheless, we must make every preparation to compete vigorously and win a competition."

Management Changes Announced

Mason also announced a number of management changes at the top of the contractor leadership team. Jim Roberto, previously the Deputy Lab Director for Science and Technology, will now become Director of Strategic Capabilities. He'll head up the expected contract competition for the laboratory, and will be responsible for developing the lab's scientific and technical recruiting strategy.

Thomas Zacharia, the computing guru at ORNL who led the growth of scientific computing capabilities, will be the new Deputy Lab Director for Science and Technology and senior Vice President for Science and Technology. He will be responsible for coordinating major research and development programs at the Oak Ridge lab. Jeff Nichols will serve as Zacharia's interim replacement while a worldwide search is conducted. Mason said while Zacharia tries to make the most of opportunities in the Omnibus and Recovery Act funding, Debbie Mann will head up the lab's tracking and accounting of the funds.

AT OAK RIDGE B&W Y-12 INVESTIGATING TESTING INCONSISTENCIES

B&W, the contractor that manages the Y-12 National Security Complex, last week confirmed that an investigation is underway of the in-house construction organization regarding testing of personnel. "B&W Y-12 has become aware of possible testing inconsistencies in Construction personnel training and is conducting an internal evaluation of the situation," B&W spokeswoman Ellen Boatner said in an e-mail response to questions.

Boatner would not comment on reports that some personnel may have been placed on administrative leave during the investigation. She said the contractor "cannot discuss details regarding ongoing investigations or personnel actions." When asked if there were allegations of cheating on tests, Boatner said she did not know.#

Wrap Up

IN CONGRESS

Sen. Bob Bennett (R-Utah) continued his push to bar the United States from resuming nuclear weapons testing, re-introducing a bill last week that would give Congress a say in whether the nation ever again tests a nuclear weapon. Though the Obama Administration has pledged not to resume nuclear testing—and has made ratifying the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty a priority—Bennett's "Safety for Americans from Nuclear Weapons Testing Act" essentially reinforcing the nation's stance against nuclear testing. The legislation, which mirrors previous versions of the bill introduced in 2004 and 2007, would require environmental and safety analyses as part of the planning process for any new tests, increased

transparency, community involvement and the construction of radiological monitoring stations in any Utah county requesting such a facility. "Congress and Americans must have a say should any future administration decide to resume nuclear weapons testing," Bennett said in a March 16 statement. "National security should continue to be a top priority for our country, but as we work to keep Americans safe, we must not put the health and safety of our citizens at risk. Utah families have already suffered too much from exposure to atomic testing. This bill puts the safety of our citizens first." The bill is co-sponsored by Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch (R). As in years passed, Utah Rep. Jim Matheson (D) has introduced a similar bill in the House.

IN THE NNSA

National Security Technologies, LLC, the contractor that runs the Nevada Test Site, has awarded a \$42 million contract to Martin-Harris Construction of Las Vegas, Nev., for the construction of two new fire stations at the site. One fire station will be built at the site's Mercury compound in Area 23, and a second station will be constructed in Area 6. Both will replace aging fire stations that were built more than 40 years ago, NTS Fire Chief Chuck Fauerbach said. "The station designs are a significant improvement over the existing stations, which were built in 1967," Fauerbach said. "We simply have outgrown these stations."

Babcock & Wilcox's environmental efforts at the Y-12 National Security Complex were honored by the state of Tennessee last week. Jim Fyke, the commissioner of the Tennessee Dept. of Environment and Conservation, recognized B&W Y-12 for earning "Performer Level" status in the Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership program. Fyke said the achievement by B&W "demonstrates their commitment to seek our opportunities to eliminate and reduce waste, save natural resources and prevent pollution." The plant's accomplishments include reducing more than 436 metric tons of waste—including hazardous and radioactive materials. The plant also reduced energy usage by more than 93 million kilowatt hours because of 2004 modernization efforts. Since 1993, Y-12 has reportedly completed more than 800 pollution-prevention projects.

Nevada Site Office official Xavier Aponte and Los Alamos National Laboratory safety officer Lloyd Gordon were named the National Nuclear Security Administration's federal and contractor Safety Professionals of the Year earlier this month. Aponte is the NSO's functional area representative for electrical safety, while Gordon is LANL's chief electrical safety officer. The NNSA has recognized a federal worker for the past

four years, but this year instituted an award for contractor employees.

IN DOE

Howard Hall, a 45-year-old nuclear chemist and dirty bomb expert at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, has joined the UT-ORNL Governor's Chair program, where he'll have dual appointments at the University of Tennessee and Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He currently heads the radiological detection and response program at Livermore, where he has worked since 1989. Hall received his bachelor's degree in chemistry from the College of Charleston and a doctorate in nuclear chemistry from the University of California at Berkeley. "He's very good. He's well respected," Larry Satkowiak, ORNL's director of global security and nuclear nonproliferation programs at ORNL, said of Hall. "A lot of his focus recently has been in the area of [nuclear] forensics. I think it's a positive. I really think he'll add a lot to not only the University of Tennessee, in terms of his position over there, but also add to our nonproliferation team at the lab."

IN THE INDUSTRY

Richard Arkin has joined the management consulting firm Longenecker and Associates as a senior consultant. Arkin retired from the Department of Energy in March 2008, and last served as the National Nuclear Security Administration's manager at the Savannah River Site from 2004-2008. Arkin also previously served as Deputy Associate Administrator of NNSA's Office of Emergency Response and Operations; as Director of the Emergency Operations Center and Accident Response Group for DOE's Albuquerque Operations Office; and Deputy Director, Aviation Manager, Transportation Safeguards Division of DOE's Albuquerque Operations Office.#

Calendar

March

- 23 Speech: "Stewarding a Reduced Stockpile," Bruce Goodwin, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 400 Pacific Street, Monterey, Calif., 12:15-2 p.m.
- 23-24 Savannah River Site Citizen's Advisory Board meeting, Aiken, S.C.
- 25 Northern New Mexico Citizen's Advisory Board meeting, Santa Fe, N.M.

26-27 **Conference: Center for Strategic and International Studies CSIS Project on Nuclear Issues spring conference, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. Information: www.csis.org.**

31-1 Meeting: 2009 DOE Project Management Workshop; Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, 5000 Seminary Road, Alexandria, Va., 22311; Info: <http://www.2009doeworkshop.com>.

April

2 Speech: Joseph Cirincione, President of the Ploughshares Fund, at the University of Maryland, Room 1107 Van Munching Hall, 1:30 p.m.-2:15 p.m.

6-7 Conference: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Nonproliferation Conference, Reagan Building, Washington D.C.; Information: www.carnegieendowment.org.

8 Northern New Mexico Citizen's Advisory Board meeting, Santa Fe, N.M.

8 Oak Ridge Citizen's Advisory Board meeting, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

May

4-7 THE EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON CARBON CAPTURE & SEQUESTRATION

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13 Meeting: Nevada Test Site Community Advisory Board, Location TBD.

13 Meeting: Oak Ridge Citizen's Advisory Board, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

13-14 Northern New Mexico Citizen's Advisory Board meeting and retreat, Santa Fe, N.M.

13-14 Meeting: Radioactive Materials Transport Conference 2009—Into the Renaissance; The Lowry Hotel, 50 Dearmans Place, Chapel Wharf, Manchester, M3 5LH; Contact: Robert Hayman +44 20 8695 8223 or r.hayman@inuce.org.uk.

18-19 Meeting: Savannah River Site Citizen's Advisory Board meeting, Savannah, Ga.

20-21 Meeting: Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board.

25 EM PUBLS CLOSED FOR MEMORIAL DAY

26-28 Conference: Rosatom's annual "AtomExpo International Specialized Exposition and Congress"; Moscow, Russia; Information: <http://atomexpo.ru>.

June

14-18 Meeting: ANS Annual Meeting; Hyatt Regency Atlanta Hotel, Atlanta, Ga.; Information: www.ans.org/meetings.

July

3 EM PUBLS CLOSED FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

8 Meeting: Nevada Test Site Community Advisory Board.

29 Meeting: Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board.

August

11-14 Conference: 10th Annual DOE Small Business Conference; Long Beach, Calif.; Info: www.smallbusiness-outreach.doe.gov.

(Changes from previous Calendar in Bold)

MONITOR

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