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## **SECRETARY OF ENERGY INITIATES ADDITIONAL REVIEW OF UPF, CMRR-NF**

*Six-Week Study to Take Hard Look at Requirements for Multi-Billion-Dollar Facilities*

Coming on the heels of reviews by Department of Energy and Pentagon cost analysis specialists, Energy Secretary Steven Chu is in the process of initiating his own independent study on the National Nuclear Security Administration's two biggest construction projects, the agency said last week. The independent review of the requirements for the Uranium Processing Facility planned for the Y-12 National Security Complex and the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement-Nuclear Facility that is to be built at Los Alamos National Laboratory is set to kick off Nov. 22 and last six weeks, examining the requirements for the facilities as senior DOE officials try to zero in on accurate cost ranges for the projects in advance of the Administration's Fiscal Year 2012 budget request. "NNSA and DOE leadership is using best available information from the contractors and independent review teams to update estimated cost range estimates for both projects, which will be publicly available when the President submits his FY12 budget request to Congress in early February," NNSA spokeswoman Jennifer Wagner told *NW&M Monitor*.

*NW&M Monitor* has learned that at least seven respected experts in the nuclear weapons field are slated to participate in the study, including former DOE/NNSA officials and current consultants Earl Whiteman and Steve Guidice, former Under Secretary of Energy and MIT professor Ernest Moniz, former Los Alamos National Laboratory Director Siegfried Hecker, nuclear weapons expert Dick Garwin, UC Berkeley professor Raymond Jeanloz, and University of Texas-Austin professor and JASON Defense Advisory Group chair Roy Schwitters.

There has been no shortage of reviews of the projects in recent years, a testament both to their complexity and importance to efforts to modernize the nation's nuclear weapons complex. UPF will replace aging facilities at

Y-12—primarily the 9212 production complex—while CMRR-NF would shift LANL's analytical chemistry, material characterization and actinide research and development work at the lab in support of the agency's plutonium research and pit surveillance activities out of the 1940s-era Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility. The Chu-directed study is expected to complement other completed and ongoing reviews of the projects and take a hard look at whether or not current plans match the capabilities that are needed for the facilities, which has a direct impact on the cost of the projects. "It's a way to provide a realistic assessment in a relatively short amount of time to the secretary, especially given the cost of the two facilities and how much attention they've been getting," one official with knowledge of the study told *NW&M Monitor*.

### **Costs Unclear**

Both facilities are expected to be completed in 2020 and operational by 2022, but their price tags have been the subject of intense speculation among Congress, government, and industry officials. According to a three-year-old cost range, the UPF is estimated to cost between \$1.4 and \$3.5 billion, but most officials expect that the facility could cost much more. Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) suggested earlier this year that the cost of UPF could land between \$4 and \$5 billion. Fiscal Year 2011 budget documents indicated that the CMRR-NF could cost more than \$4 billion, but like UPF, most officials believe the cost of the facility could be much higher, exceeding \$5 billion.

Don Cook, the NNSA's Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, this summer initiated a review of the facilities' costs and requirements by DOE's Office of Cost Analysis (OCA) and the Pentagon's Cost Analysis and Performance Evaluation (CAPE) group—reviews that were preceded by reviews of the projects by the M&O contractors at Y-12 and Los Alamos. According to the NNSA, DOE's Office of Cost Analysis has completed its review of UPF costs and its report is being prepared. The OCA is planning to review CMRR-NF later this year. The Pentagon review of

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the projects hasn't begun yet, the agency said. Former National Ignition Facility project director Scott Samuelson also led an internal NNSA review earlier this year of the cost estimating processes for each project, and an independent review last year, while a review last year by former Defense programs chief Everett Beckner of UPF found that the facility was mostly sized appropriately for the nation's needs.

### **Increased Scrutiny Driving Reviews**

Still, there has been significant pressure on the Administration to ensure that the facilities are sized appropriately and that officials have a solid grasp on their potential costs, considering the facilities are key to efforts to modernize the nation's weapons complex and have become a touchstone in the debate over the Senate's ratification of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia. Senate Republicans have pushed the Administration for adequate funding to modernize the weapons complex and arsenal, and while the Administration earlier this year committed \$80 billion over the next decade for the effort, Vice President Joseph Biden acknowledged last month that more resources would be needed for the modernization effort and promised to update the Administration's plans later this fall. Cook suggested in a previous interview with *NW&M Monitor* that he didn't believe much could be trimmed from the highly analyzed facilities, but the increased scrutiny has necessitated additional reviews, one official said, commenting on the rationale for the new study. "It's really to see based on their current design is it based on what is absolutely essential to carry out NNSA's mission, as opposed to what might be needed capability in the future that would be desirable to have but is not necessary," the official said. "The point is could they make some minor design changes to reduce the cost and stay within schedule and achieve savings without affecting the primary mission and scope of those facilities?"

—Todd Jacobson

### **SIX MONTHS AFTER DISCLOSURE, ADMIN. MUM ON STOCKPILE, DISMANTLEMENTS**

Six months after it declassified the size of its active nuclear stockpile and disclosed how many weapons it had taken apart over the last 15 years, the Obama Administration has reverted to Cold War-era secrecy regarding its stockpile size and dismantlement practices. Since announcing to the world the size of its active stockpile at the start of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference in May, Administration officials have declined to update the size of the nation's active nuclear stockpile, and an Oct. 19 National Nuclear Security Administration release praises

the Pantex Plant for taking apart 26 percent more weapons than it had planned during Fiscal Year 2010. But the agency declined to say exactly how many warheads were dismantled, or what the plant's target was, drawing howls from the same arms control observers that applauded the move to declassify stockpile numbers in May.

Hans Kristensen, the director of the Federation of American Scientists' Nuclear Information Project, called the move to not disclose updated stockpile and dismantlement numbers "silly secrecy" and "counterproductive" to the Administration's nuclear security goals. "It's totally ridiculous and it's ironic that after they did that, everything seems to be returning to normal again," Kristensen said.

### **'There Was No Expectation or Commitment'**

The decision to keep current stockpile and dismantlement figures classified contrasts with the release of stockpile data in May at the NPT Review Conference. In an effort to appear transparent to the international community and build support for its broad nuclear security agenda, the Administration said at the start of the conference that it had dismantled 8,748 nuclear weapons from 1994 to 2009, and pegged the size of the active stockpile at 5,113 warheads as of Sept. 30, 2009. At the time, it did not say how many nuclear weapons it kept in reserve, or how many retired warheads were in its dismantlement queue. But NNSA spokesman Damien LaVera said the Administration made no promises at the time that the transparency pledge would continue. "There was no expectation or commitment to release this information on an annual basis going forward," LaVera said. "What they did was release a large amount of historical data."

At the review conference, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton explained the rationale for releasing the data. "We think it is in our national security interest to be as transparent as we can about the nuclear program of the United States," she said. "We think that builds confidence. We think it brings more people to an understanding of what President Obama and this Administration is trying to do, everything from the Prague speech to the New START Treaty to the Nuclear Security Summit."

A senior Pentagon official laid out another part of the rationale for releasing the figures in a background briefing with reporters in May. "[T]he fundamental premise was that we should declassify where possible because ... we should only classify where necessary, and there are specific guidelines for doing that," the official told reporters in May. "And also, there's an understanding ... that there is likely to be value for nonproliferation and arms control in the future for declassification." The official said that the intelligence community involved in the decision to