



An Overview of the Kansas City Plant

The Kansas City Plant (KCP) is located on approximately 122 acres of the 300-acre Bannister Federal Complex located within city limits, 12 miles south of downtown Kansas City, Missouri. It currently has ~2,700 full-time employees, but 8% of them work in New Mexico near the Sandia National Laboratories manufacturing secure trailers for nuclear weapons shipments or at the Los Alamos National Laboratory manufacturing nuclear weapons detonators for plutonium pit triggers. Department of Energy (DOE) funding for KCP for the last three years and this fiscal year's request averages slightly over 400 million dollars, with over 98% for core nuclear weapons research and production programs (especially the latter). Plant officials state that KCP receives approximately \$130 million annually for "Work For Others," virtually all for nuclear weapons as well.

KCP is run and operated by a subsidiary of Honeywell, Inc., Honeywell Federal Manufacturing and Technologies, LLC, under contract to the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency within DOE. The Plant states that it is "NNSA's highest rated production facility," and produces and/or procures more than 85 per cent of all components going into a nuclear warhead. It is also responsible for more than 85 percent of all the types of components that make up a nuclear weapon.

KCP specializes in the thousands of nonnuclear components of a nuclear weapon, such as firing and arming systems, radars, guidance systems, reservoirs for tritium (a radioactive gas used to "boost" the destructive power of nuclear weapons), setting foams and adhesives. KCP is highly productive, in the words of management, averaging 5,000 shipments a month of nuclear weapons components. Moreover, KCP also states that it is having its busiest workload in 20 years, which is expected to last until the year 2015. Much of this work is geared towards "life extension programs" costing billions to extend the active lifetimes of existing nuclear weapons 20-30 years, despite the obligation of all signatories to the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty to disarm nuclear stockpiles.

KCP and the Reliable Replacement Warhead

However, the Bush Administration's most controversial nuclear weapons proposal has been to design and build new-design nuclear weapons, the so-called Reliable Replacement Warheads (RRW). The Administration claims that future RRWs are needed even while it claims that the current "Stockpile Stewardship Program" for U.S. nuclear weapons has been successful (costing taxpayers over \$70 billion to date). This is despite the fact that independent expert scientists concluded in November 2006 that the reliable lifetimes of our existing and already extensively tested nuclear weapons are more than double what NNSA had previously accepted. In contrast, future RRWs can never be fully tested without the severe nonproliferation consequences of breaking the existing global moratorium against testing.

Nevertheless, NNSA proposes to not only design and build future RRWs but also to use them to transform and revitalize its nuclear weapons complex (and arguably to secure long-term appropriations). These intertwined issues are now being hotly debated in Congress, with an as-yet uncertain outcome. One aspect in which RRW is different is that NNSA's production plants, including KCP, have played an active role in the design process, which in the past has been the sole province of the Los Alamos, Lawrence Livermore, and Sandia nuclear weapons laboratories.

KCP strategic plans make clear the Plant's planned heavy future involvement with RRW. Some selected excerpts are:

The KCP is continuing on the path to work with the NNSA to transition from “protecting the capabilities of the past” to “creating the responsive infrastructure of the future... As the Reliable Replacement Warhead requirements emerge, strategic investments will be identified... As a minimum the plan will address the following interim RI [“Responsive Infrastructure”] goals for 2012:... Adapt weapons for new capabilities – 24 months [and] Warhead design, development, and initial production - 48 months.

A New Kansas City Plant?

NNSA now proposes to have the federal General Services Administration (GSA) build it a new half-billion dollar Kansas City Plant. Construction is to be funded by private financing, and GSA would lease the plant from the developer and NNSA would essentially sublease it from GSA. This proposal raises serious questions as to whether the duty of Congress to authorize and appropriate funds for future taxpayer obligations is met. This is compounded by the fact that Congress is now vigorously debating the nature of the future nuclear weapons complex and how far it should be consolidated. Clearly, NNSA's proposal for a new Kansas City Plant, if successful, would predetermine the outcome of that debate.

NNSA is currently conducting an “environmental assessment” (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act for the new KCP, instead of a more comprehensive “environmental impact statement.” A draft EA may be released in early November with a 30-day comment period, but no public hearing! NNSA is also conducting a national review of transforming the nuclear weapons complex, and a draft “programmatic environmental impact statement” may be released in November as well. The only NNSA site that is excluded from that broad review is the Kansas City Plant. NNSA's argument is that because KCP produces non-nuclear components for nuclear weapons, federal decisions concerning the rest of the nuclear weapons complex will not affect KCP. Not only does this argument seem specious on the face of it, but KCP was very much included in a 1996 programmatic environmental impact statement on consolidation of the nuclear weapons complex. In that review, it was decided to not consolidate KCP's mission to other NNSA sites because of the potential environmental impacts and costs of building new facilities elsewhere. But now NNSA proposes to build a new plant, hence that reasoning is no longer valid. In short, the Kansas City Plant should be included in the ongoing programmatic environmental impact statement for transformation of the nuclear weapons complex.

Cleanup at the Old Kansas City Plant

A 2006 Kansas City Plant Ten-Year Site Plan stated that, “Long term groundwater monitoring and possibly treatment is expected indefinitely at the present remediation rate” for known contamination by solvents and PCBs. A 2007 KCP Site Plan stated that \$20 million dollars in funding was needed in FYs 2007 and 2008 as cleanup responsibilities were transferred from DOE's environmental management programs to the nuclear weapons agency. NNSA has asked Congress for a combined total of \$3.7 million for those two fiscal years, which clearly doesn't meet the full needs. This suggests that NNSA will avoid full cleanup at the old plant, even as it seeks to build a new half-billion dollar weapons plant. Moreover, if NNSA leaves for the new plant, it's not clear what federal agency will remain responsible for full cleanup at the old plant.

Given the lack of need for increased nuclear weapons work, and the geopolitical need to lead the world toward global nuclear disarmament by solid example, **the U.S. should cleanup, not build up, its nuclear weapons complex!**