

# *PeaceWorks Kansas City*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:** Donna Constantineau, PeaceWorks KC, 913.281-5499, donnacharles\_1@sbcglobal.net  
Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch NM, 505.989.7342, cell 505.920.7118, jay@nukewatch.org

## **Fed Govt. Refuses to Hold Public Hearing on New Bomb Plant PeaceWorks KC Will Host Citizens' Hearing**

**January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 7:00 PM**

**All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church  
4501 Walnut St., Kansas City, MO 64111**

*Kansas City, MO* – The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency within the Department of Energy, is aggressively planning for a new half-billion dollar Kansas City Plant (KCP). KCP is responsible for producing and/or procuring 85% of all components that go into a nuclear warhead. Moreover, the plant has been experiencing its heaviest workload in twenty years. It specializes in a wide spectrum of nonnuclear components, ranging from foams and adhesives to improved fuses with selectable ground or air burst capabilities and far more accurate target guidance systems, thereby making nuclear weapons yet more effective weapons of mass destruction.

NNSA plans to have private developers build the new plant eight miles south of the existing plant. The private developers would then have guaranteed profits from a 20-year leaseback to the federal government. The old plant is located at the federal complex at Bannister and Troost Streets, owned by the federal General Services Administration (GSA). In October, on behalf of NNSA, GSA issued a solicitation for private developers, after having already acquired land development rights for NNSA's preferred location. Meanwhile, in anticipation of moving to the new plant by 2012, NNSA has ceased addressing deferred maintenance at the existing plant. In sum, NNSA has already made up its mind that there will be a new Kansas City Plant.

However, all federal agencies are required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to publicly conduct environmental reviews of its major proposals. In May 2007 over 100 citizens attended a public hearing to comment on what the scope of a draft "environmental assessment" for the new Kansas City Plant should be, and 500 citizens submitted written comment, all overwhelmingly opposing the new plant. In December, the General Services Administration quietly released a draft environmental assessment, but along with NNSA is refusing to hold a public hearing. The deadline for written public comment is January 14. Anytime after that the federal government can issue a "final" assessment and an official procedural decision to begin construction of this new nuclear weapons component production plant.

In light of the federal government's refusal to hold a hearing on the draft environmental assessment, PeaceWorks Kansas City will hold a **citizens' hearing on the new Kansas City Plant on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 7 pm, at the All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 4501 Walnut St., Kansas City, MO.**

At this citizens' hearing, PeaceWorks KC will analyze the inadequacies of the environmental assessment for the new Kansas City Plant, and advise citizens on how they can submit comment for the public record. Donna Constantineau, PeaceWorks' coordinator for its

Kansas City Plant project, noted, “If the government rejects the opportunity for taxpayers to publicly voice their opinions, then it becomes all that more important for citizens to tell the government what they think. How can we build a new plant for nuclear weapons components production while we insist that other countries can’t have nuclear weapons? Why can’t we have good paying jobs in Kansas City without resorting to the production of weapons of mass destruction?”

Jay Coghlan, Executive Director of Nuclear Watch New Mexico and consultant to PeaceWorks, commented, “The nuclear weaponeers clearly want to build up their research, testing and production complex for new bombs, but not clean it up.” Estimates for cleaning up hazardous and radioactive contamination from the Cold War range as high as \$300 billion, while the government delays compensation to its own workers for related illnesses. The existing Kansas City Plant is known to be seriously contaminated with cancer-causing PCBs, but yet the environmental assessment for the new plant intentionally omits discussion of final cleanup of the old plant, which is projected to cost \$287 million (however, DOE cleanup costs are chronically underestimated). Further, it is not yet clear what federal agency will be ultimately responsible for final cleanup, since both GSA and NNSA plan to vacate the Bannister Complex around 2012.

Nationally, the NNSA is preparing a NEPA-required environmental review for its proposal to “transform” its existing nuclear weapons complex, prompted by the need for increased security and ever-rising costs. However, the Kansas City Plant is the only NNSA site excluded from that review. NNSA’s justifies that by claiming that decisions made elsewhere in the nuclear weapons complex are not expected to affect the new Kansas City Plant. At the same time, NNSA claims there will be greater interdependency between all sites in the future “transformed” nuclear weapons complex.

Despite congressional direction to consolidate its nuclear weapons complex, the NNSA proposes to consolidate from eight active nuclear weapons sites to... exactly eight active nuclear weapons sites. In response to public scoping comment, NNSA completed a “business case” analyzing consolidating KCP missions at the Sandia National Lab in Albuquerque, NM, but concluded it would be uneconomical. However, the study’s baseline premise was fundamentally skewed in that it assumed that nonnuclear components production would take place in a stand-alone, GSA-owned facility bordering Sandia, instead of integrating KCP manufacturing missions within the Lab’s existing capabilities and facilities. Therefore, open questions remain why the nuclear weapons complex can’t be further consolidated, and the existing Kansas City Plant redirected toward addressing critical long-term national security threats, such as WMD nonproliferation and energy independence, instead of nuclear weapons components production.

The public and media are urged to attend this citizens’ hearing so that recommendations can be made to the federal government on the need or not for a new Kansas City Plant, possible economic development of the existing plant, and the elimination of long-term environmental threats to Kansas City through final comprehensive cleanup.

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The draft environmental assessment for the new Kansas City Plant and “business case” is available at <http://www.gsa.gov/kansascityplant>. Comments on the draft EA should be sent by mail to Carlos Salazar, General Services Administration, 1500 East Bannister Road, Room 2191 (6PTA), Kansas City, MO 64131, by January 14. Citizen comment can also be emailed to [NNSA-KC@gsa.gov](mailto:NNSA-KC@gsa.gov).