

Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

A national network of organizations working to address issues of nuclear weapons production and waste cleanup

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**OBAMA ADMINISTRATION PLANS FOR NEW NUCLEAR BOMB PLANT CHALLENGED;
ALLIANCE FOR NUCLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY CALLS FOR
LEGALLY REQUIRED PUBLIC REVIEW OF URANIUM PROCESSING FACILITY
IN OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE**

A national network of Department of Energy watchdog groups today called for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) to begin preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the agency's revised plans to build a new nuclear weapons production plant—the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (ANA) letter to NNSA Administrator Frank Klotz invoked National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for a public review of major federal projects, such as the UPF. Klotz will visit the UPF site on Friday, July 11.

ANA praised Klotz for his decision to back away from earlier plans for a massive “big box” UPF. That project became untenable when cost estimates soared from the previously planned \$6.5 billion to nearly \$20 billion. However, ANA said abandonment of the “big box” strategy requires NNSA to launch a new environmental review because the UPF plan has fundamentally changed. ANA cautioned Klotz about moving too quickly to implement the recommendations of the “Red Team,” which reviewed plans for the UPF and proposed relocating some current operations in existing buildings and constructing several new facilities, including a smaller UPF.

ANA's letter reminded Klotz that NNSA is required by law to conduct a full, public analysis of any major action that has the potential to significantly impact the environment. It says, “Consistent with NEPA's provisions, NNSA must announce an early date for a scoping hearing to receive and record public comments on the Red Team Plan and all reasonable alternatives.”

“We understand the NNSA is pushing forward with plans to implement the Red Team proposal,” said Ralph Hutchison, coordinator of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, a member of ANA. “But a sense of urgency does not allow them to ignore the law. The Red Team proposal is a significant change from the previous plan. It means they have to come to the public and consider *all* reasonable alternatives, of which the Red Team proposal is one. It is important they begin this process before they lock themselves into a plan they cannot revise. That's what happened last time, and it cost taxpayers nearly a billion dollars.”

The ANA letter notes the plan is not the only thing that has changed since NNSA's formal Record of Decision in 2011 that authorized the "big box" UPF. "During site preparation work, a field of radioactive debris from Cold War nuclear weapons production was uncovered," Hutchison said, "and it's quite likely there is more out there. NNSA has refused to provide much information about the dump they belatedly discovered, but its cleanup and environmental and public health risks has to be part of the overall analysis."

The UPF would produce thermonuclear secondaries and cases for US nuclear warheads and bombs. Project proponents justify the rush to move forward with the Red Team plan by a need to move current production operations out of Building 9212, a Manhattan Project era building that has been declared unsafe by the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board. Hutchison said that the new EIS must consider the potential impacts of continuing operations in an unsafe building until 2025. "They want to do a lot of work in that building, but none of it absolutely has to be done—it's all elective, modifying and upgrading weapons that already work. If the building isn't safe, the work has to stop until it can be made safe or alternatives can be prepared. NNSA legally owes the public an explanation, and the EIS process is the only way to compel that conversation."

A copy of the ANA letter to NNSA Administrator Klotz is available at <http://ananuclear.org/press> and [http:// www.orepa.org](http://www.orepa.org)