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DOD Helping Downsizing Communities Directly
Defense Communities 360
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Washington — With more than a dozen communities experiencing downsizing at neighboring military installations over the past several years and further cuts in personnel looming, DOD's Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) is planning to offer financial assistance and other support to affected communities.

The agency plans to issue an announcement next month in the Federal Register soliciting communities to apply for grants to address personnel reductions — including military and civilian — of at least 2,000 at local installations, OEA Director Patrick O'Brien said Monday during the OEA Town Hall session at the 2015 Defense Communities National Summit. Communities would be eligible if they suffered the cuts over the past three years or are slated to absorb them over the next three years.

The timing of OEA's funding notice is not directly tied to the

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Army's forthcoming announcement outlining how it will reduce its force by up to 70,000 troops, O'Brien said, but Army communities are a primary target of the agency's effort to support locales dealing with defense downsizing.

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[Nuclear Fuel Cycle Legislation Hearing](#)

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He used a list of Army growth communities to show how the fortunes had changed for 18 Army posts and their host communities over the past decade. The population — including military and civilian — at the 18 installations jumped an average of 40 percent from 2005 through 2011. The gains were mainly due to the 2005 BRAC round and the Grow the Army initiative.

Since fiscal 2011, though, the population at 13 of those installations has dropped; 12 experienced declines greater than 5 percent and five suffered drops of more than 10 percent. Hardest hit were Fort Knox, Ky., and Fort Sill, Okla. Each suffered a loss in personnel exceeding 20 percent.

The Army is expected to announce shortly a second round of cuts of 70,000 soldiers affecting up to 30 installations. Those posts could lose a total of between 2,500 and 16,000 military and civilian personnel as a result of the Army's two recent rounds of restructuring.

Air Force communities in the near future likely will need to accommodate cutbacks in personnel as well, O'Brien said.

DOE Secretary Moniz talks foreign shipments, SRS waste
Aiken Standard
June 19, 2015
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GRANITEVILLE — Germany is about 18 months away from a decision on whether the country will send shipments of highly enriched uranium from the country to the Savannah River Site.

Meanwhile, U.S. officials still are deliberating if SRS would be the proper landing place for the processing of the material.

The news was shared by Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz during an interview with the Aiken Standard on Tuesday at Aiken Technical College.

If accepted, the highly enriched uranium, would come to SRS in the form of 1 million graphite spheres – each about the size of a tennis

ball – containing highly enriched uranium from German research reactors.

Once at SRS, DOE would install in H Canyon a system capable of chemically removing the graphite from the fuel kernels using a technology being developed by Savannah River National Laboratory.

“(Tuesday), we spoke with one scientist who is leading the process development there. He indicated that they are probably 18 months away from a decision because there’s still more process to go, some pilot activities to go,” Moniz said.

In addition to the German material, Moniz reaffirmed that SRS is expected next fiscal year to accept more than 6,000 gallons of highly enriched uranium from Ontario, Canada.

The material would travel via truck to SRS. One proposed route is the Peace Bridge, an international bridge that connects the U.S. and Canada. The material would travel through western New York, and down to South Carolina on that route.

Finally, Moniz said Japan also is eager to ship weapons-grade plutonium from the country to the U.S., but SRS has not yet been chosen as a potential landing spot.

“We all hope that the material would start moving next year,” he said. “We’re just looking at what our options are.”

Moniz covered several other issues during Tuesday’s interview.

High priority on tank farms

Moniz said the Administration’s commitment to cleaning up legacy waste in the site’s Cold War-era waste tanks was put on display when it sought \$70 million more for construction of a key facility.

Unlike other sites, SRS has a treatment path forward to address high-level waste, including a Saltstone facility where lower-level waste is turned into grout, and the current construction of a Salt Waste Processing Facility, which is scheduled for operation in 2018.

Moniz said SRS and the waste work at the Hanford site in Washington state are the two major projects on DOE’s scope for environmental management.

“We try to put more resources in place to accelerate those projects,” he said. “Liquid is what’s mobile and it wasn’t supposed to be there this long, so there’s clearly some emergency to try and do it as fast as we can.”

SRS has closed out four liquid waste tanks, with its eyes set on closing two more in the next year.

Last month, a final agreement was reached to extend the tank-closure deadline to May 31, 2016, for a Savannah River Site liquid-waste tank – an eight-month extension from the initial September deadline.

Emergency preparedness

Recent emergency preparedness and other incidents at the site have given DOE reason to focus more time on readiness and safety, said Moniz.

A federal safety board recently noted that significant shortfalls in emergency preparedness occurred during simulated drills to protect nuclear facility workers at the site.

In addition, Savannah River Remediation, the site’s liquid waste contractor, in March, inadvertently transferred 6,600 gallons of high-level liquid tank waste into the incorrect tank because of degrading infrastructure.

These and related incidents have prompted SRS to ramp up their assessments and found that staff had to improve drills and execution.

Moniz said he does not foresee SRS suffering an incident similar to the one at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The plant routinely received waste shipments from SRS and other Energy Department sites, but fire and radiation incidents in February 2014 halted shipments until further notice. Thirteen workers were treated for smoke inhalation during the fire; overall, 22 workers were exposed to radiation.

Moniz said he doesn’t foresee a similar issue at SRS because of the lessons learned and the waste form.

“The WIPP waste is far less regular in its content; it’s very heterogenous,” he said. “It’s so heterogenous that one batch of material became an issue.”

MOX money, alternatives

Construction of the Savannah River Site's Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility is not the only project in the Department of Energy complex suffering from cost overruns or sequestration cuts, said Moniz.

He said it would take more than \$1 billion a year to properly fund the nation's plutonium disposition program, which includes the Savannah River Site's MOX project.

Part of the reason, he added, is that MOX can only be funded at a minimal level due to sequestration cuts and restraints on the budget.

Another cost analysis of the MOX method for plutonium disposition, and alternatives to the method, are slated for release in September. If the nation does move on from MOX, Moniz said it may be able to repurpose some of the work already done – work that totals nearly \$5 billion of the taxpayers' money.

"I think some will be for sure. A simple example is the storage building can be repurposed. And there may be some equipment that can be reused," Moniz said.

Washington state objects to extra time to empty Hanford tanks

Tri-City Herald
June 22, 2015

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The Department of Energy should not be given additional time to meet a court-enforced consent decree deadline to have the next group of Hanford waste tanks emptied, Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson said Monday.

Earlier this month, DOE proposed extending deadlines for retrieving radioactive waste from the next group of nine leak-prone underground tanks for one year, giving it until fall 2023 to complete the work.

DOE said requiring supplied air respirators for most tank farm workers as protection against chemical vapors reduces efficiency by 30 to 70 percent.

The state responded in federal court documents, calling DOE's

request another example of its lack of contingency planning.

“I will hold the Department of Energy accountable to its commitments to protect worker safety and meet agreed-upon timelines for the Hanford cleanup,” Ferguson said in a statement.

“The danger these tanks represent is well documented,” he said. “Energy should not use its responsibility to protect workers — a duty it has always had — as a reason to let critical deadlines to clean up Hanford slip further into the distant future.”

DOE and the state have filed competing proposals to amend the 2010 consent decree after DOE said most of the remaining deadlines were at serious risk of being missed.

The consent decree covers work to retrieve waste from some of Hanford’s 149 single-shell tanks and to build and have the vitrification plant at full operation in 2022 to treat much of the 56 million gallons of waste held in underground tanks to prepare it for disposal.

Issues with worker exposure to chemical vapors have been known for decades, said Jeff Lyon of the Washington State Department of Ecology, in a court document filed Friday. At the very least, DOE should have been acutely aware of the issue in October 2014 when results of an independent investigation led by the Savannah River National Laboratory in South Carolina became available, he said.

As part of the response to that investigation, Hanford tank farm workers are wearing supplied air respirators for most work until DOE’s tank farm contractor finds less cumbersome ways to protect them. DOE indicated in court documents that it expects the supplied air respirators to be needed, slowing work, through fall 2016.

DOE has not said what alternatives it evaluated to have nine more tanks emptied on time, Lyons said. It did not discuss alternatives to the respirators or if additional crews or shifts of workers could offset the lost efficiency.

It also has not indicated why it could not catch up the schedule over the next seven years, Lyons said.

If workers are not able to come off supplied air respirators in 2016, DOE is likely to propose more delays rather than adequately planning for and addressing efficiency issues to allow it to remain on schedule, Lyons said.

The state also objects to DOE waiting until little more than a month before a July 23 hearing on proposed consent decree changes to propose a later deadline.

DOE originally had asked the court to make changes to the consent decree schedule for emptying tanks, moving some work closer to 2022 but not changing the 2022 deadline.

DOE did not notify the state that the 2022 tank deadline was at risk until less than an hour before DOE asked the court to change the deadline, the state said in court documents.

The consent decree requires parties proposing an amendment to allow 10 days for the other party to respond to consider if the amendment is acceptable, the state said.

U.S. Judge Rosanna Malouf Peterson should not allow DOE to add the proposed later deadline to its current amendment proposal for the consent decree, the state said.

But if she does, the state should be given more time to file information with the court, the state said. That could delay the July 23 hearing.

In first, woman headed to lead national security lab

The Hill
June 23, 2015
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An engineer with three decades of experience in the field is slated to become the first woman to lead a key national security research and development laboratory.

Jill Hruby will take over as the president and director of Sandia National Laboratories next month, the lab announced on Monday.

The decision places Hruby atop the nation's largest national security lab, which performs research and development into nuclear weapons issues as well as other security areas.

The lab is a wholly owned subsidiary of mega-contractor Lockheed Martin, and performs work for the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

Hruby will be the first woman to lead any of the nation's three

national security labs, including Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore as well as Sandia.

“I embrace the opportunity to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrent and lead Sandia in solving the difficult security challenges we face as a nation,” Hruby said in a statement. “I’m proud to be the first woman to lead an NNSA laboratory, but mostly I’m proud to represent the people and work of this great lab.”

She has been a staffer and manager at Sandia for the last 32 years, most recently overseeing its work on nuclear, biological and chemical security; counterterrorism; homeland security; and energy security.

Hruby will take over the labs on July 17, to replace retiring president Paul Hommert.

Regional Coalition of LANL Communities Announces Support of Tech Transfer Bills

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Coalition offers support for Microlab Technology Commercialization Act and the National Laboratory Technology Maturation Program to Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The Regional Coalition of LANL Communities is pleased to announce their support of Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) in his sponsorship of bills S.784 the Microlab Technology Commercialization Act, and S.1259 the National Laboratory Technology Maturation Program Act. Both bills would be a major source of economic development potential for communities represented by the Coalition.

Senator Heinrich attended a hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on June 9th, 2015 where he presented testimony on both bills and his efforts to encourage technology transfer of Laboratory generated technologies that have the potential to be commercialized and licensed to private companies. This development program would generate workforce development and opportunities for startups to utilize these technologies throughout the state of New Mexico.

The Microlab Technology Commercialization Act focuses on establishing a program that would set up microlabs in close proximity to National Laboratories, allowing innovators to move technologies to the marketplace while working alongside the scientists and engineers who developed them. Dovetailing the Microlab Bill, the National Laboratory Technology Maturation Program Act would provide vouchers up to \$250,000 to entrepreneurs, enabling them to collaborate with the scientists and engineers of the national laboratories to assist in the development of licensed technology as it is moved toward commercialization.

"Through these Bills, the entrepreneurs in our local communities will have the opportunity to tap into technology at the Lab, providing us access to exceptional world-class science and technology," Chair of the Regional Coalition of LANL Communities, Mayor Alice Lucero stated. "This gives our communities a great advantage in developing new jobs, companies and the future of innovation."

In enthusiastic support of this effort the Coalition applauded the efforts of the sponsors of the bills and emphasized the opportunities for regional economic development that the passage of the legislation would entail for the communities of Northern New Mexico. The Coalition requested the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee support the bills in part of their ongoing mission to ensure that state and federal policies protect and promote local interests.

The hearing record for both bills is open until June 23rd. The Coalition joins the Energy Communities Alliance, an organization comprised of local governments impacted by Department of Energy activities in expressing support for both tech transfer bills and their sponsors.