



Savannah River Site Watch

Documentation from the U.S. Department of Energy that the 2030 Target Date for Production of 50 Pits Per Year at the Proposed SRS Plutonium Bomb Plant (PBP) - for New, Costly and Provocative Nuclear Weapons - has Slipped Up to Five Years and that the Cost has Doubled to \$11.1 Billion and Expected to Go Higher

June 14, 2021

1. See the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Plutonium Pit Production at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina (SRS Pit Production EIS) (DOE/EIS-0541)*, September 2020 - <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2020/09/f79/final-eis-0541-srs-pit-production-summary-2020-09.pdf> - for a planning basis for the SRS Plutonium Bomb Plant of a production rate of 50 pits per year in 2030, which is made clear on page S-8:

S.2.1 Proposed Action—Repurpose the Mixed-Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility into the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility

“NNSA’s Proposed Action is to repurpose the MFFF to produce a minimum of 50 war reserve pits per year at SRS and to develop the ability to implement a short-term surge capacity to enable NNSA to meet the requirements of producing pits at a rate of not less than 80 war reserve pits per year beginning during 2030 for the nuclear weapons stockpile.”

2. At a [Senate Armed Services hearing on May 26, 2021](#), on DOE nominations, Ms. Jill Hruby, nominee to be administrator of DOE’s National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), testified that the 2030 planning date for the SRS pit plant would not be met.

Concerning the 2-site pit-production approach, in response to a question from Senator Jack Reed, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Ms. Hruby thus responds at about 55’:

“This is the biggest issue, I think, facing NNSA today is delivering the pit-production capability for our nation for the first time in many decades. The current plan that NNSA has developed and that I support includes producing pits at both Los Alamos and Savannah River - 30 pits per year minimum at Los Alamos, 50 pits per year minimum at Savannah River. The 30 pits per year at Los Alamos is on track to be delivered in 2026. The 50 pits per year at Savannah River, originally planned for 2030, is likely to now be somewhere between 2030 and 2035, a decision that will be made at the Critical Decision-2 point.”

3. In a June 10, 2021 [hearing entitled “FY22 Budget Request for Nuclear Forces and Atomic Energy Defense Activities,”](#) before the House Strategic Forces Subcommittee (of Armed

Services), Dr. Charlie Verdon, Acting Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, testified that the 2030 date has slipped to between 2032 and 2035, in response to a question by subcommittee chairman Rep. Jim Cooper, chairman, at 1'28":

"So based on our latest information we assess that meeting that 2030 particularly at Savannah River is not going to be achievable. Right now our estimate will be between 32 and 35 based on our Critical Decision-1 information. Los Alamos we still have high confidence of achieving 30 pits a year by 2026. It's what we've learned in putting the 30% design-complete on Savannah River and being able to work closely with the vendors and starting to engage them on the details of the design that we identified that getting Savannah River to produce war reserve pits by 2030 just doesn't look achievable at this time."

Thus, it appears that far from producing 50 pits in 2030 that the production rate for the SRS pit plant in 2030 will be zero.

4. And, note that the [NNSA budget request for Fiscal Year 2022, of May 28, 2021](#) affirms slippage in the 2030 date, to 2032-2035 and that the current cost estimate has jumped to \$11.1 billion (page 157):

"Based on information developed to support the CD-1 milestone, NNSA has determined that achieving the required 50 war reserve pit production rate at the Savannah River Site in 2030 is not likely. Establishing required SRPPF pit production capacity as close as possible to 2030 remains a high priority and is required for sustaining the effectiveness of the Nation's nuclear deterrent. Further design activities conducted in support of CD-2 will identify multiple opportunities to achieve required production capacity closer to 2030....The scope, cost and schedule estimates developed for the CD-1 approval package include an estimated high end of the cost range at \$11.1B and a CD-4 schedule range of 1st Quarter FY 2032 to 4th Quarter FY 2035."

The budget request also states in footnotes on pages 164 and 168 that the \$11.1 billion cost estimate "does not represent the CD-1 approved high end of the range." It is thus expected that the SRS pit plant cost estimate will have a cost range above \$11.1 billion when the Critical Decision-1 document ("Approve Alternative Selection and Cost Range") is released, which is anticipated in mid-June 2021. No estimated date for CD-2 is given in the budget request.

The earlier projected cost of the SRS pit plant had been \$4.6 billion ([see NNSA budget request to Congress for Fiscal Year 2021](#), pages 200 & 203). Thus, the cost has more than doubled and the schedule admittedly slipped up to five years, all in a single one-week period.

Warning: With the bungled plutonium fuel (MOX) project at SRS as a guideline and as DOE has little ability to manage costly and complex projects, watch for more delays and cost overruns. DOE's chronic weakness of over promising and under delivering is already the operative with the SRS Plutonium Bomb Plant.