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The National Nuclear Security Administration has circulated a proposal on Capitol Hill that threatens to turn the Uranium Processing Facility bomb plant into a budget buster once again according to critics of the multi-billion bomb plant planned for the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The document, circulated to Hill staffers by Jed D’Ercole, head of National Nuclear Security Administration Legislative Affairs appears to backtrack on the plan to modernize aging weapons facilities at Y12 for something less than \$6.5 billion, a commitment made by NNSA as it adopted the recommendations of the Red Team this summer.

The NNSA proposal proposes to change the statutory definition headlined “Cost Containment For Uranium Processing Facility Project” to limit Phase I of the project to the replacement of “processes and capabilities associated with building 9212” and defers all other phases indefinitely.

“It appears we are back on the train to \$19 billion,” said Ralph Hutchison, coordinator of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance. “Six and a half to start, and untold billions on down the track.”

Sources in Washington, DC, who have asked not to be identified indicated the House of Representatives Armed Services committee received and rejected the proposal from NNSA.

“This attempt to cordon off Phase I and apply all available funding to it simply underscores the need for public accountability,” Hutchison said. “We need to see the UPF Plan that NNSA has spent millions developing. We need to see the numbers they claim they have. We’ve already been around this bush twice—NNSA consistently low-balls the project costs.

“It’s time to turn off the funding tap until we have an independent cost estimate by the Government Accountability Office or the Defense Department’s Cost Assessment and Project Evaluation office. It’s clear nothing less will get NNSA’s attention.”

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CURRENT STATUTORY DEFINITION

SEC. 3123. COST CONTAINMENT FOR URANIUM CAPABILITIES REPLACEMENT PROJECT.

(a) EXECUTION PHASES FOR PROJECT.—Project 06-D-141 for the Y-12 Uranium Processing Facility, Y-12 National Security Complex, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, shall be hereafter known as the “Uranium Capabilities Replacement Project”. The project shall be broken into separate execution phases as follows:

(1) Phase I, which shall consist of—

(A) processes and capabilities associated with building 9212, including uranium casting and uranium chemical processing; and

(B) the support, administration, and logistics facilities and the building structure and building-level utilities needed to carry out Phases II and III.

(2) Phase II, which shall consist of processes and capabilities associated with buildings 9215 and 9998, including uranium metal-working, machining, and inspection.

(3) Phase III, which shall consist of processes and capabilities associated with building 9204-2E, including radiography, assembly, disassembly, quality evaluation, and production certification operations of nuclear weapon secondaries.

PROPOSED DEFINITION

SEC. 3123. COST CONTAINMENT FOR URANIUM PROCESSING FACILITY PROJECT.

(a) EXECUTION PHASES FOR PROJECT.—Project 06-D-141 for the Y-12 Uranium Processing Facility, Y-12 National Security Complex, Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The project shall be broken into separate execution phases as follows:

(1) Phase I, which shall be designated as the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) shall consist of—

(A) Processes and capabilities associated with building 9212, including but not limited to enriched uranium casting, special oxide production, salvage and accountability, administration, security, and logistics facilities for these capabilities.

(2) Subsequent phases will consist of the processes and capabilities associated with buildings 9204-2E, 9215 and 9998, including but not limited to enriched uranium purification, metal production, machining, chip processing, radiography, assembly, disassembly, and quality evaluation capabilities.