

Will the **Red Team** decide the future of the **UPF?**

CONGRESS FINALLY passed a budget for this year, FY 2014, in January (only four months late!). The budget included \$300 million for the Uranium Processing Facility bomb plant in Oak Ridge—this was a modest 14% cut from the previous year's "sequester" budget of \$347 million.

More importantly, Congress attached language that required the National Nuclear Security Administration to examine alternatives to the currently planned UPF. Congress did not do this because someone woke up and said, "Why are we building a massive bomb plant when we are trying to rid the world of nuclear weapons?" They did it because the price-tag for the UPF, even after they cut out all the operations except bomb production, had gone up to \$19 billion.

NNSA turned around and announced the formation of a "Red Team" to review the UPF plans and appointed Thom Mason, director of Oak Ridge National Lab, to head the Red Team. He plans to assemble the team with people from around the DOE weapons complex. (Red Teams are "independent" teams organized to analyze plans and processes to improve efficiency and correct deficiencies; they are used by corporations and government agencies.)

WHAT THE RED TEAM WILL AND WON'T DO

Mason has given a couple of interviews in which he has described what he sees as the Red Team's mission; it agrees with the mission as the Administrator (Director) of the NNSA sees it. The Red Team is *not* going to review fundamental assumptions (Do we even need this bomb plant?) or develop new data points—it is going to review existing in-

formation, look at plans with an eye toward saving money, and may or may not make a recommendation.

At this point, it looks like the Red Team won't be doing several things:

- involving the public in its review
- developing "outside-the-box" ideas
- asking, "What will the nation need in 2030?"
- considering secure facility designs (below grade)
- conducting an open and transparent process
- prioritizing safety over cost and schedule pressures.

What the Red Team will do, we predict, is propose some further breakdown of the UPF design—possibly a "modular" approach similar to the one being talked about at Los Alamos since the death of their grand plutonium bomb plant scheme.

The Red Team will project a cost in the range of \$7 billion but will have no documentation for the number—it will be imaginary, based on what they think Congress will find palatable and with the understanding that it is a flexible figure, though they will not say that.

The Red Team will ask for more money up front in order to compress the construction schedule and get the UPF operational sooner.

The Red Team won't address DOE Guidance which cautions against efforts to accelerate major construction projects by increasing funding—DOE's Guidance says efforts to speed up projects by throwing money at them increases project risk, ends up

costing more, and extends the project schedule.

The Red Team will also propose some technology adjustments such as reducing the use of glove boxes—some of these adjustments will compromise safety in order to save money.

The Red Team won't prioritize modernization of dismantlement operations or address them at all.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

President Obama's budget for *next* year (FY 2015) includes a \$10 million increase for the UPF—the President is asking for \$335 million for the bomb plant that has no design. This projected funding will not take into account the Red Team Review—because the Red Team won't start until March 10 and is not expected to report its findings until mid-April.

In the meantime, millions of dollars continue to be spent on the current design of the UPF even though the only thing we



About the only thing we know for certain about the UPF is that it will not look like this—the current, \$19 billion proposal.

are reasonably certain of is the current design will not be built. Even the project director, John Eschenberg, has admitted this, though he says the design team will focus on parts of the design that will be used no matter the outcome of the Red Team review. If this beggars your imagination, don't worry—you are not the one who is crazy.

IS THE FIX IN?

There is strong possibility that the fix is already in. The Red Team Review is not the only process moving forward—in Congress, regular meetings are being held between Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander, who is the ranking Republican on the Senate's Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee (key to the funding of the UPF), Senator Barbara Feinstein, who chairs the subcommittee, and NNSA and contractor officials responsible for the UPF. It is likely they are also painting a picture of the UPF of the future—one they think is fundable.

There are billions of dollars riding on the outcome. It seems likely that the Red Team, composed of all team players, after all, will at least include in its gallery of possibilities the painting that is being composed on the Senate E&W easel.

CREDIBILITY

Here are some baseline indicators of a credible Red Team review. If the answer to these questions is "No," we will know the Red Team is simply an expensive exercise

to satisfy the budget language rather than a serious effort to provide real-world alternatives that meet mission requirements in the safest possible way at the least possible cost to taxpayers.

1. Did the Red Team look at the possibility of performing Life Extension work (replacement of limited lifetime components) at the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, TX, thereby saving time and money and eliminating risks (and cost) of transportation of thermonuclear weapon cores to Oak Ridge and back?

2. Did the Red Team incorporate the DOE acknowledgement in the Y12 Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement that Y12 can meet its mission requirements with an annual production capacity of less than 10 warheads/year (rather than the 80 warheads/year capacity of the currently planned UPF)?

3. Did the Red Team incorporate critiques and assessments from sources other than NNSA, including the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, the DOE's Office of Health, Safety and Security, the DOE's Inspector General's office, the Government Accountability Office, the Project on Government Oversight, and the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance?

- Did the Red Team consider consolidating downsized (right-sized) production operations in the Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility as suggested by POGO?
- Did the Red Team consider maximizing security and safety with a below-grade design for production operations as recommended by OREPA and POGO and supported

by the DOE's Inspector General's office?

- Did the Red Team re-evaluate priorities for future Oak Ridge Operations in light of declining production capacity needs and increasing dismantlement capacity needs?

- Did the Red Team welcome and incorporate input from the public in an open and transparent process?

- Did the Red Team assume a baseline cost of \$6.5 billion is acceptable, or did it consider alternatives that would cost less, in line with earlier NNSA predictions for the UPF?

- Does the Red Team report recommend suspension of design activities until a decision-making process is completed, including a new Environmental Impact Statement if necessary?

NOT THAT THEY'VE ASKED, BUT...

The fact that the Red Team has not asked for public input into their process does not preclude the public offering suggestions and comments. OREPA recommends people submit comments to the Red Team but suggests, in the interest of efficiency and efficacy, that comments be directed toward the Red Team mission—considering alternatives to the UPF.

In the interest of openness and transparency, we ask that you copy anything you send to the Red Team to OREPA (orep@earthlink.net) and your elected representatives in the Senate and the House of Representatives, or to TN Senator Lamar Alexander who has staff tracking the UPF progress.

Thom Mason, leader of the Red Team, can be reached here:

email:
masont@ornl.gov

earthbound mail:
Thom Mason
Red Team Leader
Oak Ridge National Lab
P O Box 2008 MS 6255
Oak Ridge, TN 37831-6255

Prepared by the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance. You can support OREPA's work with contributions sent to P O Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831. Contributions to OREPA are tax deductible. You can keep up with the latest on the UPF at www.orepa.org. Check for the UPF Updates at the bottom of the page. You can contact the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance at orep@earthlink.net.