

End US-Germany Cooperation Aimed at Importing, Dumping Highly Radioactive German Spent Fuel at DOE's Savannah River Site

Time to Terminate SRS-JEN Cooperation Aimed at Importing Highly Radioactive German Spent Fuel to DOE's Savannah River Site; Storage at Jülich Only Viable Option

COLUMBIA, SC, USA, February 21, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Columbia, South Carolina – Cooperation between the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site (SRS) and a German nuclear waste management company to import, reprocess and dump highly radioactive German spent fuel at SRS must be terminated, according to a [letter sent by the public interest group Savannah River Site Watch](#) to U.S. Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette.



Savannah River Site Watch

SRS Watch is a non-profit organization working on sound policies and projects by the U.S. Department of Energy. Since 2013, SRS Watch has opposed the dumping of AVR and THTR spent fuel in Germany on SRS.

The proposal to ship highly radioactive spent fuel from two long-closed experimental gas-cooled reactors in Germany to SRS, a 310-square mile facility located near Aiken, South Carolina, has been dragging on since 2012. The two reactors in question, AVR and THTR-300, were fueled with graphite spheres impregnated with uranium. The 900,000+ irradiated spheres in question, some with highly enriched uranium and some with low-enriched uranium, are stored in 457 casks at the Forschungszentrum Jülich (FZJ) and at Ahaus, Germany, both located in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

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There is no need for this dumping-for-profit scheme to be further pursued; it's time to implement new options for the secure management of the AVR spent fuel in Jülich, Germany, where it's now stored.”

*Tom Clements, Director,
Savannah River Site Watch*

The materials would be shipped by sea via port facilities Charleston, South Carolina to SRS, where the graphite spheres would be reprocessed and removed uranium disposed of as waste and high-level waste possibly dumped into the SRS waste tanks, increasing the waste burden at the site. The research work into technical

aspects of the proposal is being conducted by the Savannah River National Laboratory, which is managed by private contractor Savannah River Nuclear Solutions.

“The scheme to dump highly radioactive German spent fuel at SRS would needlessly increase the amount of hard-to-manage nuclear waste at the site and must be terminated,” said Tom Clements, director of the public interest watchdog group Savannah River Site Watch (SRS Watch -

<https://srswatch.org/>). "It's clear that there is no need for this dumping-for-profit project to be dragged out any longer and it's time to implement new options for the safe, secure management of the spent fuel in question at the Jülich site in Germany, where it's now stored."

Cooperation between SRS and the entity managing 152 CASTOR casks at Jülich, the Jülicher Entsorgungsgesellschaft für Nuklearanlagen (JEN), has been under a [Work for Others agreement that has been modified six times](#), with the most recent modification from September 2019. That version expires on February 29, 2020 and should not be renewed, according to SRS Watch. The current version of the agreement and two attachments concerning plans to import 33 unirradiated spheres and some irradiated material were obtained by SRS Watch via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. (See documents in "notes" below).

The spent fuel at in Jülich is currently stored in a facility with an expired license, so authorities are considering building a new storage facility at the site. Though it has come under increasing criticism and would be illegal under German law, the option to ship the fuel to SRS remains barely alive. Also under consideration is its shipment to the Ahaus storage facility.

"After thorough public review of the options for management of the AVR spent fuel, it is abundantly clear that the safest option from environmental and non-proliferation perspectives is to immediately build a new storage facility at Jülich," said Clements. "It's time for foot dragging by JEN to end and for plans for the new storage building construction to be implemented at Jülich as rapidly as possible," added Clements.

In the February 20, 2020 letter to DOE, SRS Watch points out DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration made a determination in 2013 that there is no nuclear non-proliferation reason to ship the spent fuel to SRS and, thus,



SRS Watch protests proposed export of spent fuel by the Jülicher Entsorgungsgesellschaft für Nuklearanlagen (JEN) from Forschungszentrum Jülich to US DOE's Savannah River Site in South Carolina. A new safe and secure storage facility must immediately be built at Jülich.



No shipment of AVR highly radioactive spent fuel by JEN from Jülich to SRS in South Carolina or Ahaus, Germany! Time to move forward with a safe, secure storage facility at Jülich.

there is no need to explore export or reprocessing of it. (See NNSA memo "Proliferation Attractiveness of Jülich Graphite Spheres" here:

https://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/doe_memo_on_no_proliferation_risk_of_avr_spent_fuel_august_1_2013.pdf)

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Notes:

SRS Watch letter to DOE officials, Feb. 20, 2020, posted here: <https://srswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/letter-to-DOE-terminate-SRS-JEN-agreement-Feb-20-2020.pdf>

SRS-JEN Work for Others Agreement Modification 6 and Attachments, Obtained Under FOIA Request, in SRS Watch DOE documents library:

<https://srswatch.org/savannah-river-site-watch-document-library/savannah-river-site-watch-doe-documents/>

Freedom of Information Act response to SRS Watch, cover letter, November 21, 2019:

<https://srswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FOIA-response-cover-SRS-JEN-Nov-21-2019.pdf>

FOIA response with Work for Other agreement, modification 6, dated Sept. 3, 2019:

<https://srswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FOIA-response-SRS-JEN-WFO-agreement-signed-Sep-3-2019.pdf>

FOIA attachment, export of 33 unirradiated graphite balls to SRS, Oct. 15, 2019:

<https://srswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FOIA-response-SRS-JEN-attachment-unirradiated-balls-signed-Oct-15-2019.pdf>

FOIA attachment, export of irradiated graphite material to SRS, Oct. 15, 2019:

<https://srswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FOIA-response-SRS-JEN-WFO-attachment-2-irradiated-balls-signed-Oct-15-2019.pdf>

Statement of intent between German and the US, 2014:

http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/statement_of_intent_march_april_2014.pdf

Initial "Work for Others" agreement between SRS and Germany, December 2012:

https://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/work_for_others_agreement_december_2012_doc_6_redacted.pdf

Tom Clements of SRS Watch visited the Jülich storage facility in 2014 and observed the CASTOR casks containing AVR spent fuel. Clements publicly revealed the US-Germany cooperation to the U.S. public in 2013, forcing DOE to admit that the dumping scheme was under discussion.

For more documents and information on the matter, search for "Germany" on the SRS Watch website: <https://srswatch.org/>

SRS Watch Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SavannahRiverSiteWatch>

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