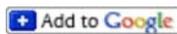


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Final contract for US MOX

27 May 2008

A \$2.7 billion final contract has been signed for the US facility to recycle weapons-grade plutonium into reactor fuel for power generation. Shaw Areva MOX Services is carrying out the construction.

The agreement covers the actual construction of the main plant and all its support facilities; cold start-up of the mixed-oxide (MOX) nuclear fuel plant; and support of the licensing process under the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The plant is to be licensed to operate for 20 years.



How the finished plant should look

Construction of the facility began at Savannah River in August last year, but the final signing of a contract modification to complete construction has been delayed until now by hold-ups at the corresponding Russian facility.

Shaw Areva MOX Services is a joint venture between construction group Shaw (70%) and France's national nuclear company Areva (30%). The Savannah River plant design is to be based on Areva reprocessing plant at La Hague and its Melox MOX fabrication plant. Similar facilities based on Areva designs are nearing completion at Rokkasho in Japan. Shaw said the confirmation of the deal would add 'approximately \$2 billion' to its third quarter fiscal 2008 backlog.

The facility, at the Department of Energy's Savannah River near Aiken, South Carolina, will accept 34 tonnes of 'surplus' weapons plutonium from US stockpiles. Former plutonium weapons components will be taken apart and purified before being converted to plutonium oxide powder and mixed with uranium oxide. The resulting mixed-oxide (MOX) nuclear fuel will be manufactured into pellets and assemblies suitable for use in light-water reactors.

In total, 34 tonnes of former US military material will be converted, matching an equal commitment from Russia. Some 400 billion kWh of electricity could be produced by the resulting MOX fuel in both countries.

More MOX subcontracting

Separately, Areva has announced more MOX nuclear fuel work as a subcontractor for Britain's Sellafield site. Long-running commissioning problems at Sellafield MOX Plant (SMP) have meant it cannot meet contractual commitments to customers.

In the past, Areva has used plutonium belonging to its own nuclear fuel reprocessing customers to meet SMP commitments and been repaid with equivalent plutonium oxide from UK civilian stockpiles.

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Areva said on 19 May that it would accept a shipment of plutonium from Britain, repackage it at La Hague and then transport it to the Melox plant where it will be used to fabricate MOX fuel for Sellafield customers. Details of the shipment remain confidential in line with strict security requirements.

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