

Kansas City Plant

TODAY'S COMPLEX

The U.S. nuclear weapons complex—the laboratories and facilities that research, design, produce, maintain, and dismantle such weapons—must ensure that the arsenal is reliable, safe from accidents, secure from unauthorized use, and no larger than needed to maintain national security. To fulfill those goals, the complex needs resources and facilities to extend the life of nuclear warheads, assess their reliability and safety, understand how aging and modifications affect weapons, and retain employees with essential expertise. It also requires the capacity to dismantle retired weapons in a timely fashion, and methods for verifying further reductions in nuclear weapons. Additionally, the complex must minimize security risks of storing, transporting, and disposing of weapons-usable materials.

The administration and Congress will make important decisions over the next few years on how the complex can use limited resources to best meet these challenges. Doing so requires smart choices based on strict attention to priorities.

The Kansas City Plant (KCP) produces or procures about 85 percent of the non-nuclear components for U.S. nuclear weapons. The remaining components are produced at Sandia National Laboratories. The site, which dates to 1943, originally assembled aircraft engines for Navy fighters during World War II, but in 1949 the facility was taken over by Bendix Corporation and began producing non-nuclear components for the Atomic Energy Commission.

Like the other sites in the nuclear weapons complex, the KCP is overseen by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a semi-autonomous agency within the Department of Energy (DOE).

The KCP is currently in the midst of a move from its original location at the larger Bannister Federal Complex, in Kansas City, MO, to the new National Security Campus about eight miles south. The NNSA decided to build the new site because of aging facilities and increasing maintenance and operations costs at the old site. Construction on the National Security Campus was completed in late 2012, and the initial transfer of workers and equipment began in late January 2013. The original facility will continue to operate through FY 2014, when the transfer of all NNSA-related production will be complete.

The KCP also has satellite operations in New Mexico and Arkansas that provide support to other NNSA facilities involved in nuclear weapons activities.

The KCP Today

With the end of the cold war and a 1992 moratorium on nuclear explosive testing, the KCP's mission shifted from producing parts for new nuclear weapons to supplying new components for existing weapons in support of their life extension programs. The KCP produces or procures more than 100,000 parts annually, including a wide range of mechanical, electronic, electromechanical, metal, and plastic components. It is also responsible for testing and evaluating the parts it produces.

In addition, the KCP participates in the Limited Life Component Exchange Program for stockpile weapons, in which components with a limited lifetime—such as power sources—are replaced before they expire. No special nuclear material (i.e., weapons-usable plutonium or highly enriched uranium) is kept on site.

The KCP is operated by Honeywell Federal Manufacturing and Technologies. It employs a total of about 2,500 workers across its locations, with about 2,300 of those at its Kansas City site.

Budget

The KCP's total FY 2013 funding from the DOE is \$535 million, of which nearly all (\$532 million) is for weapons activities. Within that category, the largest

amount (\$234 million) is for directed stockpile work, which includes evaluation, maintenance, and refurbishment of the nuclear stockpile. An additional \$183 million in weapons activities funding is for operation and maintenance of NNSA program facilities. The remaining funds outside the weapons activities category are largely for defense nuclear nonproliferation (\$2.7 million).

For FY 2014 the KCP requested a total of \$579 million, with nearly all (\$562 million) of this total for weapons activities. The KCP's FY 2014 request for defense nuclear nonproliferation funding increased to \$17 million. Rather than indicating increased work in this area, however, this is due to a reorganization of the NNSA budget. The jump in requested funding for site stewardship (that is, the operation and maintenance of NNSA facilities) from \$2 million in FY 2013 to \$180 million in FY 2014 also reflects a change in NNSA budgeting categories.

Current Issues

KANSAS CITY RESPONSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE MANUFACTURING AND SOURCING (KCRIMS)

As noted above, in light of aging facilities (Bannister Federal Complex was built in 1943) and increasing maintenance and operations costs, the NNSA decided to build a new site for the KCP.

The new facility is part of the KCRIMS project, which is designed to reduce operating costs and increase the plant's flexibility in meeting NNSA's demand for non-nuclear components. The NNSA states that the new facility will reduce the cost of non-nuclear component production by 25 percent, from \$400 million to \$300 million annually, and reduce the plant's footprint by two-thirds, from about 3 million square feet to about 1 million square feet. These changes make the KCP a smaller facility, in keeping with reductions in planned weapons production rates, but maintain flexibility so that the plant can quickly respond to changes in production requirements.

The plant produces or procures a wide range of electromechanical, electronic, mechanical, metal, and plastic components.

In an effort to reduce costs, the NNSA plans to outsource production for commercially available capabilities when possible. As part of the KCRIMS project, the percentage of outsourced components will increase from about 54 percent to about 70 percent.

A 2009 Government Accountability Office report raised concerns that relying more on commercial outsourcing for components could potentially harm U.S. security. The report found that current outsourcing procedures at the KCP do not make an adequate distinction between simple components that are common in commercial industry and those that are more specialized and complex. Outsourcing the production of specialized components may pose a higher proliferation risk because information about their design and manufacture could get into the hands of potential adversaries and thus help them increase their own nuclear capabilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION

Once the KCP has relocated to the new National Security Campus, the NNSA and the General Services Administration will sell the Bannister Federal Complex (which the agencies co-own) to a private company for potential development.

Before that can happen, a comprehensive environmental assessment and remediation must be performed. The assessment will identify environmental contaminants still on site (which include volatile organic compounds and polychlorinated biphenyls) and recommend steps to contain or properly dispose of them, as well as address other potential threats to the environment.

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