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Comments of Paul Leventhal
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on
DOE's Program Acquisition Strategy for
MOX Plutonium Disposition

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[DOE's long-awaited Program Acquisition Strategy \(PAS\)](#), which outlines an implementation plan for military plutonium disposition by irradiation of MOX fuel in commercial nuclear power reactors, raises more questions than it answers. It appears that DOE is more interested in a "fast track" for MOX fuel than in a "dual-track" approach to weapons plutonium disposition.

For example, the PAS specifies no limits on financial subsidies to nuclear utilities participating in a MOX disposition program, other than saying that reduced capacity factors that might result from changes in cycle lengths between fuel reloads would not be compensated.

The option of utilizing European MOX fuel fabrication facilities is also treated ambiguously. The PAS states at one point that bids "shall not rely on the use of MOX fuel fabricated in Europe," but later indicates that "the consortium may also propose European sources of fuel for qualification if significant cost or schedule savings result.

The PAS requests that reactor safety and performance information be included in bids, but provides no specification of minimum acceptable safety or performance records for utilities interested in using MOX fuel. Thus, a utility with as poor a safety record as Commonwealth Edison, with half of its 12 reactors on NRC's "Watch List," is free to bid for MOX work.

Finally, implementation of security and safeguards at MOX fuel fabrication plants and reactor sites is particularly vague. The PAS states that MOX disposition activities "must accomodate IAEA activities," but does not specify what sort of IAEA safeguards would be required for MOX. The PAS also fails to deal with the important question of whether use of deadly force will be authorized to protect plutonium-based MOX fuel.



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