DEPLETED URANIUM

DOE moves on sale, disposal of DU stockpiles

The Department of Energy has signed an amendment to a 2016 sales agreement with Global Laser Enrichment (GLE) that will provide the company with access to large stockpiles of DOE-owned depleted uranium hexafluoride (DUF₆) tails as GLE looks to build its proposed uranium enrichment facility at the DOE’s Paducah site in Kentucky. As announced on June 5, the amendment is one of the conditions of a 2019 agreement among Australia’s Silex Systems Limited, Canada’s Cameco Corporation, and GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy for the restructuring of GLE, the exclusive licensee of Silex’s laser uranium enrichment technology.

Separately, the DOE announced on June 5 that it has issued a formal record of decision for the shipment and disposal of depleted uranium oxide from the former gaseous diffusion plants at the department’s Paducah and Portsmouth, Ohio, sites to one or more disposal facilities in the western United States.

According to Silex, the availability of the DOE’s DUF₆ inventories is critical to GLE’s proposed Paducah Laser Enrichment Facility (PLEF), which would use Silex’s laser enrichment technology to re-enrich the DOE’s stockpiles of depleted uranium tails. GLE would sell the resulting natural grade uranium in the form of UF₆ on the global uranium market at a production rate of around 2,000 metric tons per year, equivalent to a uranium mine producing an annual output of around 5.2 million pounds of uranium.

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