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**OAK RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL PEACE ALLIANCE SAYS LAX SECURITY AT Y12
NUCLEAR WEAPONS COMPLEX “COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE,” CALLS ON
CONGRESS TO TAKE ACTION TO FIX IT**

**Y12 RESPONSE TO LATEST SECURITY BREACH DEMONSTRATES NEED FOR
CHANGE IN CULTURE**

**“THEY WOULD RATHER HARASS PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATORS THAN
DEVOTING TIME AND ENERGY TO MAKING Y12 SECURE.”**

On Thursday, June 6, 2013, security officers at the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, TN, waved a 62-year-old lost driver through the security checkpoint and, according to police reports, she drove the length of Bear Creek Road, passing within a stone’s throw of buildings producing thermonuclear weapons components and a warehouse storing hundreds of tons of weapons grade highly enriched uranium. NNSA spokesman Steven Wyatt, following the regular script, claimed the woman was apprehended “quickly” and that there was no significant security risk.

It’s that script that is the heart of the problem. NNSA is culturally incapable of establishing true security or requiring its contractors to do it. Even as security breaches continue to occur, NNSA responds in the same way: low level personnel are fired, spokesmen deliver half-true public statements, management continues on. Real security risks are downplayed or dismissed (Hint: The measure of security risk is not whether she did anything, it’s whether she *could have done something* if she were someone else).

OREPA realizes NNSA is in a difficult place. Y12 is almost impossible to secure. It is a sprawling complex located in a narrow valley between two heavily wooded ridges with dozens of access points and many miles of perimeter to patrol. It’s a terrible place for a bomb plant.

Still, some things could be done—like designing future facilities as below-grade facilities to maximize security. NNSA prefers to rely on denial—“It won’t happen; everything will be okay”—even when that posture has been discredited.

“We live here,” said Ralph Hutchison, coordinator of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance. “The time to fix security at Y12 is now, not when the plant lies in smoke and ruin and everyone around here has highly enriched uranium in their lungs.

“Fixing security will require asking some big, hard questions. We know Y12 can’t be made 100% secure, but if it is as crucial to the United States national

defense as they claim, they must do everything they can to make it as secure as possible. That includes redesigning the UPF and putting it underground. It also includes removing the NNSA—it's an unnecessary level of management that was supposed to make things more efficient. It has done the opposite. Every oversight body that looks at NNSA walks away shaking its head—the Government Accountability Office, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, the DOE's own Inspector General's office and DOE's Office of Health, Safety and Security.

“It is past time for Congress to take action. Senator Alexander last week said he had about had it with projects that have out-of-control budgets. Senator, we deserve to have a least minimal security at Y12, and it's your job, along with the rest of Congress to find out why we don't *and to fix it.*”

Security was broken, badly, at the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, TN, long before the incursion of three Transform Now Plowshares activists last July. But their early morning incursion through the ultra-high-security zone and the peace messages they left in paint and blood on the walls of the nation's storehouse for weapons grade highly enriched uranium stripped away the aura of invincibility that had long been relied upon as a substitute for real security at Y12.

OREPA pointed out that barely noticed in the sound and fury after July 28, 2012, was the fact that had the Plowshares activists made a left turn after they crossed the lethal force perimeter zone at Y12, they would have entered the warren of buildings that house ongoing nuclear weapons production at Y12 and, shielded by the buildings, they well might have had hours to offer prayers and compose peace messages. And had they been someone else—

Or had the misdirected driver pulled to side of Bear Creek Road halfway down the valley and reached into the backseat for an RPG launcher, within twenty seconds she could have wreaked irreversible havoc on the weapons production facilities at Building 9212, wiping out US production capacity and leaving the landscape blanketed with contaminants, including highly enriched uranium.

Or had the bicyclist last February pulled off the patrol road and headed over the low ridge toward Y12 with weapons, he could have similarly created a catastrophe.

Security at Y12 cannot continue to depend on everyone who gets through being an errant traveler or a peace messenger.

“Y12 has chosen not to address real security issues,” Hutchison said. “They have instead launched a campaign of harassment against peace demonstrators, enlisting local police and putting up outrageously expensive and completely useless fences. They arrested a man who accidently stepped over a painted line on the road to read small print on a sign a quarter mile from the guardhouse, but waved through a woman in a vehicle and allowed her to drive right to the production area.

“It is impossible to make excuses for this failure to take appropriate action to institute real security. Enough with harassing demonstrators—that’s the mark of a misdirected culture and a completely incompetent management. It’s time to put people in place who understand what security is, to train them and test them without cheating, to have spokespeople who tell the truth, and to have managers over them who are accountable for the work being done.”

for more information

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