

Comments to Blue Ribbon Commission
Vice Admiral Charles L Munns, USN/ret
7 January 2011
Aiken SC.

General Scowcroft, Commissioners welcome to our home (Aiken – Augusta). I hope that you enjoyed both your tour of the Savannah River Site and your meeting with some of the local area residents last night. You have a very important task, and we appreciate that you will listen to our perspective.

To put my remarks in context, I am Charles Munns a private citizen living in Aiken. I have lived here for three years and hope to remain here forever. My motivation for talking today is to help this country stay strong and free. I desire that my Grandchildren's lives will be as good as mine. I own no allegiance to any company, only to this lovely community and this great nation, allegiance only to intellectual integrity and political honesty.

I do have certain pertinent experiences which have formed my thoughts and lend credence to my remarks. I spent 34 years as a submarine officer, finishing my service as a 3 star Admiral and in charge of all US submarines – to include our 74 nuclear reactors and the men who operate them. I enjoyed 2 ½ years as CEO of the company operating the DOE Savannah River Site. Now, like you, I am a special government employee working w/o compensation – in my case advising US Strategic Command. We help with cyber issues, provide insight into nuclear arms control, advise on non-proliferation and report on the health of our Nuclear Weapons stock pile.

I'd like to offer 3 imperatives for your consideration – 1) We need nuclear energy both for our nation's energy security and our national security. 2) We must have a clear, holistic and executable energy policy. That policy should remove the uncertainty in storage and disposal and present a path for reuse. 3) This region – the CSRA – has much to offer in implementation of that strategy and it can be a template for future siting decisions.

1) Nuclear Power provides for both energy security and national security:

Our future requires efficient, clean energy. Energy demand is growing in the South East more than any other region. Our nation's energy creation, distribution and use must help mitigate climate change. We are best served from many sources of power, certainly to include renewable and conservation... BUT a very large part of this nation's electrical base-load power must be nuclear – there is just no other choice. Otherwise we risk diluting the resources our corporations and citizens need for continued growth, strength and quality of life. We also risk a

loss of world leadership in the advanced and challenging fields of science, engineering, manufacturing, construction and operations that are associated with the nuclear cycle.

2) Policy must remove the uncertainty in storage and disposal and present a path for reuse:

The USA needs a comprehensive, supportive and executable energy policy. This policy must consider all the parts -- the whole cycle. Just as our parent's generation created a complete interstate highway system, a national train system and a series of locks and dams which fundamentally improved and strengthened our Nation, so to must we develop a comprehensive system for nuclear power -- from raw materials, construction and operations to disposal and renewal... to include research, development, regulation, education and training.

The US policy should close the fuel cycle – it no longer makes sense to advocate a once through process. It is natural that as the understanding of a “system” matures the elements of that system close back on themselves. As a system manager improves the use of system resources; they invariable move to complete the cycle. They move to feed lessons back across each part of the cycle, to improve resource utilization in every phase, to initiate resource reuse in the process. As varied examples look at: what BMW has done up the road in Spartanburg to close the cycle of automobile manufacturing; what Boeing is doing in Charleston to the system of Airplane manufacturing; what the US did as we stopped conscription and moved to the all volunteer force; what the timber industry has done to no longer permanently strip large areas of land but to reforest and replenish. All of these activities have closed what started as a once through process. So to the nuclear industry must close its cycle, it must re-use the huge amounts of energy remaining in nuclear fuel after the first pass. SRS has already started in a small and limited way, having processed nuclear materials through H-canyon for reuse in commercial nuclear power plants -- enough so far to power all of South Carolina for 11 years.

Imperative two is to create a comprehensive energy policy which pulls together all parts of the nuclear system, which takes the uncertainty out of disposal, and which advocates reuse by closing the cycle.

3) Central Savannah River Area is a part of the nuclear solution.

Lastly, the CSRA will be an important and pivotal part of the solution as our Nation creates a more secure energy future. Let me suggest 6 parameters which make that so: geography, geology, groups, government, culture and a proven safety record.

1. Geography – SRS was selected in the beginning because of geography and geology. We are ideally situated in the rapidly growing southeastern US and we have a secure 300 square mile area of un-encroached space.
2. Geology – this area is one of the best studied and monitored areas in the country.

3. Groups – you saw last night and in front of you today the many enabling groups that understand what it takes to keep our county strong and are willing to work to make it so. Groups like: Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness, Community Re-use Organization, DOE’s Citizen’s Advisory Board, Aiken Technical College, USC- Aiken, Fort Gordon, and many more.
4. Government: Our four senators (SC-GA), our federal congressional representatives, the Savannah River National Laboratory, the state environmental agencies, and local governments have a long and successful history of working toward an improved nuclear future.
5. Culture: This region -- more than any other I have seen -- has resident in its citizens the necessary culture for safely working with nuclear materials. This has been developed over 60 years, and it continues to be nurtured today.
6. Record of safety: That culture for working with nuclear materials has delivered a safety record better than any other in the country. The DOE sites produce a safety record which is an order of magnitude more safe than traditional manufacturing, and the SRS is always among the safest of all those DOE sites.

Summary:

You have a difficult task – but your success will contribute to both a more secure nation and a better life for its citizens. Please use your energy and intellect to reach consensus on a useful product that will influence this and future administrations.

The United States needs nuclear energy for both its energy security and its national security. We must have a clear, holistic and executable energy policy. That policy should remove the uncertainty in storage and disposal and present a path for reuse. This region – the CSRA – has much to offer in implementation of that strategy.

Now is the time to act. There is less risk to our way of life by moving forward than by staying stagnant. To remain stagnate in existing circumstances risks decline of global leadership and decay in our quality of life.

Thank you for visiting, and thank you for your service.