

# Energy Secretary Vows to Prevent Security Breaches

LUCAS L. JOHNSON II, Associated Press

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. (AP) — The nation's new energy secretary said Monday that a breach in security at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant was unacceptable and he's taking steps to make sure it isn't compromised again.

Ernest Moniz, who was sworn in last month, made the Oak Ridge National Laboratory his first official trip in office. Later in the day he planned to visit the Y-12 National Security Complex, which was broken into by a nun and two other protesters last year.

"Clearly this was an unacceptable breach of security," Moniz told reporters after a brief tour of the lab's \$1.4 billion Spallation Neutron Source facility.

"With or without the Y-12 incident, safety and security are essential core elements of our mission. I'm in discussion in the department, in the administration and in the Congress right now, talking about how we will move forward on some organizational changes."

Sister Megan Rice and protesters Michael Walli and Greg Boertje-Obed were convicted last month of sabotaging the plant and damaging federal property. The facility has had a hand in making, maintaining or dismantling parts of every nuclear weapon in the country's arsenal.

Federal authorities alleged they used bolt cutters last July to cut through fences and spent about two hours inside, splashing human blood on the walls of fortress-like Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility and painting phrases on its walls like: "Woe to the empire of blood."

For decades, protesters have rallied at the gates of Y-12 around the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Some deliberately trespass or block traffic to provoke arrest and call more attention to their cause. In some years, authorities have tried to deprive them of the notoriety by refusing to prosecute. In previous prosecutions, the stiffest sentence ever meted out was less than a year in prison.

A judge has ruled the recently convicted protesters must remain in jail until they are sentenced in September. The sabotage charge carries a maximum prison term of up to 20 years. The damaged property charge has a penalty of up to 10 years.

The trio's actions were lauded by some members of Congress, who said the incursion called attention to flawed security at Y-12, first built as part of the Manhattan Project during World War II that provided enriched uranium for the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.

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A report by the Department of Energy's inspector general said Y-12 security failures included broken detection equipment, poor response from security guards and insufficient federal oversight of private contractors running the complex.

Moniz didn't go into detail on Monday about what changes were being considered, but he said he planned to take a close look at management.

"Safety and security ultimately is the responsibility of the line managers," he said.

Security issues aside, Moniz said he was pleased with the work of the Oak Ridge facilities and said he visited because it allows him to get a "broad panorama of what the department is doing," particularly in the case of neutron exploration.

The Spallation Neutron Source's 1,000-foot linear accelerator produces a proton beam that strikes a mercury target and creates a stream of subatomic neutrons that can reveal the composition and structure of materials. Researchers from around the world conduct experiments at the facility.

"Oak Ridge is really the center for this, and for much more that we do in science and in energy," Moniz said.

Researcher Hassina Bilheux has been at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory for almost 15 years and said Moniz's visit makes her proud of the work she and others do at the lab.

"It's a great opportunity to show the science we do, and we're very passionate about what we do," she said.

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