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Destruction plant's first nerve agent rocket disassembly machine approved for shipment

**May 21, 2012
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RICHMOND, Ky. – Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) systems contractor Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass is bringing BGCAPP's first nerve agent rocket disassembly machine, known as the Rocket Cutting Machine, to central Kentucky this month.

"This is a significant milestone," said Tom McKinney, Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass project manager. "The Rocket Cutting Machine is specifically designed for the BGCAPP project. Successfully demonstrating the machine's capabilities during factory testing provides confidence the machine will perform during plant operations."

During BGCAPP plant operations, the remotely-controlled Rocket Cutting Machine will safely separate the rocket motor from the warhead section. The rocket warhead, which contains the agent and explosive components (energetics), is further processed to destroy the chemical agent and energetics. The machine will reside inside one of the Munitions Demilitarization Building's (MDB) blast-proof rooms behind steel-laced concrete walls measuring more than 2-feet thick. The MDB is where an automated process will remove the weapons' energetics and chemical agents for destruction in separate processes.

"This achievement is another indication that we are steadily moving forward to safely destroy the Blue Grass chemical weapons stockpile," said Jeff Brubaker, BGCAPP site project manager. "The agent and energetics neutralization equipment and the equipment to thermally decontaminate the remaining metal parts have already been successfully installed in the plant. The Rocket Cutting Machine is the first BGCAPP machine built that was specifically designed to take the munitions apart so that the energetics and agent can be safely removed for neutralization."

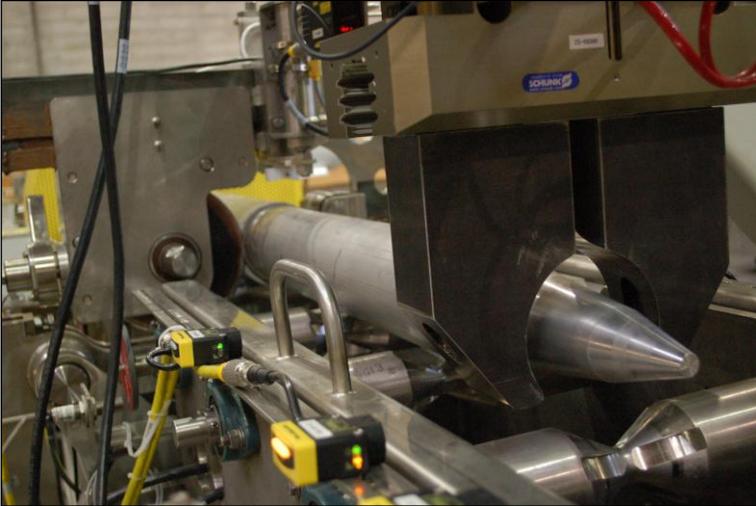
Following a rigorous 2-year long fabrication and testing period in Pasco, Wash., the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (ACWA) Program Executive Office recently granted Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass approval to transport the Rocket Cutting Machine to Kentucky for future installation in the BGCAPP facility. The testing period alone involved the machine disassembling more than 2,600 mock rockets.

The Rocket Cutting Machine is made of more than 12,000 customized components designed and fabricated by Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass. The machine is the seventh of 11 large pieces of equipment specifically designed, fabricated, and successfully tested as components of BGCAPP's neutralization followed by supercritical water oxidation process. The remaining four are at different stages of fabrication or testing at facilities in Pasco, and San Diego, Calif.

BGCAPP is being built to safely and efficiently destroy a stockpile of chemical weapons currently in storage at the Blue Grass Army Depot. The plant will destroy 523 tons of munitions containing blister and nerve agents. Currently, pilot plant construction is more than 51 percent complete and work is progressing on a variety of facilities to support chemical demilitarization operations.

For more information on the project, please visit the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives website at www.pmacwa.army.mil.

-30-



Following a 2-year fabrication and testing period, the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant's first nerve agent rocket disassembly machine, known as the Rocket Cutting Machine, is being transported from a shop in Washington state to central Kentucky this month.



Construction on the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant is 51 percent complete. The large Munitions Demilitarization Building (shown at right) is where the Rocket Cutting Machine will be housed during plant operations in a blast-proof room behind steel-laced concrete walls measuring more than 2-feet thick.