

# US-owned, privately developed uranium facility planned for Paducah

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Paducah might soon be going back to its nuclear heyday.

A California-based nuclear startup first made public its plan to build a uranium enrichment facility last week in Western Kentucky's McCracken County. The company, General Matter, has ties to PayPal co-founder, billionaire and Trump ally Peter Thiel and Scott Nolan, an early SpaceX engineer.

In an email sent to the Herald-Leader, the company said it was planning to "establish the nation's first U.S.-owned, privately developed uranium enrichment facility." The email said a formal program will be held Aug. 5 in Paducah with state leaders in tow like Gov. Andy Beshear, Sens. Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, Rep. James Comer and others.

"Seventy-five years ago, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission selected Paducah to help lead the nation's original enrichment efforts," the email said. "We are proud to return to and rebuild this historic site to power a new era of American energy independence."

The General Matter project announcement is separate but not unrelated from other nuclear energy development talks generating from Paducah.

The Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant was recently tapped by a federal agency as one prime for the White House's artificial intelligence and energy plan. It is one of the nation's largest former uranium enrichment facilities and is undergoing the necessary preparation for future redevelopment.

**WHAT IS GENERAL MATTER?**

In April 2025, the California company launched itself on X, formerly known as Twitter. In a post, the company said it intended to enrich uranium — a process done to concentrate the element to power nuclear reactors for energy generation — because the country looks abroad for nuclear fuel when it shouldn't.

In the year leading up to launch, the company was founded and funded within the San Francisco-based venture capital firm Founders Fund. The post said the launch team was made up of people from the fund's defense tech company Anduril, Elon Musk's SpaceX and Tesla, nation-

al labs and the Department of Defense.

Founders Fund was co-founded by Peter Thiel, who, Bloomberg reported, joined the General Matter board after the company launched. Thiel is listed as the company's director in its July 22 filing to do business in the state, according to the Kentucky Secretary of State's office.

He previously founded PayPal in the late 1990s and then launched a data-mining firm. The firm, Palantir, was recently under fire when former staff said it was working with the Trump administration to track migrants in real-time.

Thiel was a prominent supporter of now President Donald Trump and contributed to his 2016 campaign. Thiel said before the 2024 election he wouldn't vote for Trump, but still has deep connections with the administration's staff in the Department of Government Efficiency, the Department of Defense and others, according to Bloomberg.

As part of the former Biden administration's Investing in America agenda, the Department of Energy said in December 2024 General Matter was on its list of compa-

nies the federal government can contract with "to procure low enriched uranium in order to incentivize the build-out of new uranium production capacity in the United States."

**PADUCAH SITE COULD BE NEXT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY PROJECT**

In July, the Department of Energy dwindled down a list of potential sites across the country it could tap to lower energy costs and power artificial intelligence. Four pieces of federal land, including the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, are well-situated for a large-scale data center and new power generation, the U.S. Department of Energy said July 24.

The energy department is still considering which site to pick and which data companies it wants to partner with. By the end of the year, the department said, it will have more details on project scope and may have selected a site as well as a developer, tenant and energy company partners.

Other sites on the department's radar include the Idaho National Laboratory, Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee and the Savannah River Site in

South Carolina.

Energy's announcement comes after the Trump administration accelerated its plan to build the nation's AI infrastructure, including the energy necessary to power it. In May, Trump signed a series of executive orders calling for reform at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that would speed up the approval process for new nuclear reactors and reconsider radiation standards.

**STATE AGENCY VISITS PADUCAH SITE**

In mid-July, the Portsmouth Paducah Project Office met for the first time at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant with the Kentucky Nuclear Energy Development Authority. Earlier this year, lawmakers passed legislation to fund the authority they created in 2024.

The authority is meant to serve as a nonregulatory state agency on nuclear energy issues and development, according to Senate Bill 198, the 2024 piece of legislation that created it.

Governed by an advisory board of 22 voting and eight nonvoting members, the authority exists to aid interested communities in understanding nuclear energy, including the economic benefits associated with employment and tax revenue.

The authority provides information to the public

on the state's past and present nuclear energy sources and has other responsibilities to "Develop the capacity for nuclear energy economic development in the Commonwealth," SB 198 said.

The authority's recent visit to the Paducah site, according to a news release from the U.S. Department of Energy, was meant to establish the site's "growing role in the nation's energy renaissance" and connect its position for reindustrialization with the community's and the state's economic development vision.

"We knew it was important to host the first in-person Kentucky Nuclear Energy Development Authority in Paducah, where nuclear in Kentucky got its start," said Rodney Andrews, the authority's chair, in the release. "We felt it was important for (the authority's) members to start our visit with a tour of the Paducah Site, where we learned about its important role in our nation's history, as well as the work currently done at the site for redevelopment and expanded economic opportunities."

At a facility adjacent to the gaseous diffusion plant, Global Laser Enrichment is building a uranium enrichment facility it hopes will be operational by 2030, according to WPSD.

# Reports: Netanyahu decides on 'full occupation' of Gaza Strip

BY GREGOR MAYER  
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TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided that his forces should occupy the entire Gaza Strip, media reports said on Monday, amid mounting criticism of the dire humanitarian situation in the coastal territory.

Netanyahu reportedly plans to consult with his Cabinet and military leadership in the coming days to garner support for the plan.

News portal Ynetnews.com quoted a senior official said to be close to Netanyahu as saying: "The die is cast, we are going for a full occupation of the Gaza Strip."

The Israeli prime minister himself said earlier that he was planning to convene the Security Cabinet to discuss further actions in Gaza, as the conflict nears 22 months.

In a video message published on Sunday, Netanyahu said that Palestinian extremist group Hamas refuses to agree to a negotiated solution.

Netanyahu launched a military campaign in the Gaza Strip in October 2023 in response to the Hamas-led attacks on Israel, which killed more than 1,200 people and saw another 250 abducted into Gaza.

Efforts to secure a ceasefire and the release of hostages through indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas have dragged on for months without results.

More than 60,000 Palestinians have reportedly been killed by Israeli attacks in Gaza. Meanwhile, a global outcry is growing as the embattled territory appears on the brink of famine after Israel imposed a near-total blockade on aid in March.

Israeli forces currently control about 75% of Gaza. The remaining 50 hostages, of whom about 20 are believed to be still alive, are suspected to be held in areas still under the control of Hamas.

**MILITARY CRITICAL OF FULL OCCUPATION**

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have repeatedly opposed a full occupa-

tion of the Gaza Strip, warning that demolishing all Hamas tunnels and bunkers could take years, according to the Times of Israel newspaper.

Military leaders have also warned that an offensive aimed at capturing all of Gaza could endanger the lives of the hostages, who they fear might be killed as soon as Israeli troops approach.

According to the reports, Netanyahu is now willing to accept that risk, however.

"There will be activity also in areas where hostages are being held," the official quoted by ynetnews.com goes on to say. "If this doesn't suit the IDF chief of staff [Eyal Zamir], he can resign."

Until now, it was primarily ministers from the far-right and ultra-religious coalition partners in Netanyahu's government who had called for the complete capture of the Gaza Strip.

They also demand the deportation of the Palestinian population to other countries and the establishment of Jewish settlements in the coastal strip.

According to media reports, Zamir is said to have engaged in heated discussions with the ultra-right ministers at previous meetings of the Security Cabinet.

**FORMER SECURITY CHIEFS CALL FOR WAR TO END**

Meanwhile, more than a dozen former Israeli security officials issued a video appeal on Monday calling for an immediate end to the war in Gaza.

"This war started as a just war. It was a defensive war," says Ami Ayalon, former director of the Shin Bet domestic intelligence service, in the video.

"But once we achieved all its military objectives, once we achieved a brilliant military victory against all our enemies, this war stopped being a just war."

"It is leading the State of Israel to the loss of its security and identity," he adds.

The video shows the men sat around a long table in what appears to be an empty office. Among the 19 former senior offi-

cials featured are former chief of staff and prime minister Ehud Barak, former chiefs of staff Moshe Ya'alon and Dan Halutz, and three former heads of the Mossad foreign intelligence service.

In the video, the men say the war is being continued for political reasons only and called for an agreement that returns all of the 50 remaining hostages in one go.

"We are on the precipice of defeat," former Mossad director Tamir Pardo warns.

Several of them say Israel is being led by a fundamentalist, extremist government that no longer has the support of the majority.

**HOUSE DEMOCRATS RENEW EFFORT CALLING FOR PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD**

More than a dozen House Democrats have signed a draft letter urging the Trump administration to recognize a Palestinian state, and the leader of the effort said Monday that he planned to introduce a resolution to codify the push.

"We believe recognizing Palestinian statehood and obligating Palestinian leaders to abide by the international law binding on states and their governments will make that far more achievable and sustainable than decades of statelessness and repression have," said the letter, which 13 progressive lawmakers have signed so far.

The letter is expected to gather additional signatures before it is sent to President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio next month. No Republicans have joined the effort or signaled their support, making it unlikely that the letter will influence policy decisions from the president or the State Department.

The effort began last week, when Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., circulated a draft, a standard practice to build consensus before a public announcement. Khanna said the letter, which was reported earlier by Jewish Insider, was leaked in an attempt to derail the effort, a move he



GIL COHEN-MAGEN GIL COHEN-MAGEN/AFP TNS

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks during an event at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Jerusalem on July 27.

criticized but said would not slow him down.

"You cannot sabotage an idea whose time has come," he said in a statement Monday.

The push builds on similar efforts in the last Congress, and lawmakers leading the effort said they expected it would draw additional support from colleagues alarmed by the worsening humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip who have become more willing to publicly criticize the actions of the Israeli government.

The letter also reflects recent actions by some of Israel's closest Western allies. The leaders of Britain, Canada and France have announced in recent weeks that they intend to recognize a Palestinian state.

**UK WON'T SAY IF PALESTINE TO BE RECOGNIZED WITH HAMAS IN POWER**

The office of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer declined to say whether Britain would recognize Palestine with Hamas still in power after the militant group reportedly described statehood as "one of the fruits of October 7."

It also refused to be drawn on whether the release of all Israeli hostages was a condition for recognition, but insisted they must be freed "unconditionally and immediately."

Concerns have been raised over the U.K.'s plans to recognize a Palestinian state after Hamas member Ghazi Hamad appeared to claim the "fruits" of October 7 had caused the world to "open its eyes to the Palestinian issue."

Asked on Monday whether formalizing the move without a ceasefire could embolden Hamas to hold onto Israeli captives, Starmer's official spokes-

man said the government would assess the situation in September.

"The prime minister has been absolutely clear that, on October 7, Hamas perpetrated the worst massacre in Israel's history," he said.

"Every day since then that horror has continued ... as the Foreign Secretary [David Lammy] said over the weekend, Hamas are rightly pariahs who can have no role in Gaza's future."

Asked whether a Palestinian state could be recognized while Hamas are still holding hostages, the spokesman said, "We'll make an assessment ahead of the UN General Assembly on how far the parties have met the steps that we've set out."

"We've been very clear that Hamas can have no role in the future governments of Gaza ... We've also been clear that they must disarm, must release all the hostages.

On whether the step could be taken while Hamas remain in power, the official said the government was clear that "Hamas are not the Palestinian people."

"It is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to have recognition along the lines and the steps that we've previously set out," he said. "We've also been very clear it cannot be in the hands of Hamas, a terrorist group, to have a veto over recognition of Palestine."

Videos released by militant groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad last week appeared to show Israeli hostages in a visibly fragile state. Starmer's office condemned the images as "completely abhorrent."

Meanwhile, Hamad reportedly told the Al Jazeera news outlet: "The

initiative by several countries to recognize a Palestinian state is one of the fruits of October 7."

**NETANYAHU'S GOVERNMENT VOTES TO FIRE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Israel's right-wing government voted on Monday to dismiss Gali Baharav-Miara as attorney general, citing a lack of confidence in her ability to perform the job's duties.

The decision was unanimous, although Netanyahu did not participate in the vote, local media reported.

Her removal is expected to be reviewed by the Supreme Court, with many observers anticipating it will be overturned.

The attorney general plays a crucial role in overseeing the legality of government actions, and Baharav-Miara has frequently clashed with Netanyahu over measures she deemed unlawful.

Tensions escalated earlier this year when Baharav-Miara challenged the legality of Netanyahu's appointment of David Zini as head of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence agency.

In her view, Netanyahu faced a conflict of interest in this decision because Shin Bet was looking into the prime minister's advisers as part of a corruption case. The investigation centres on allegations that these associates were paid by Qatar for lobbying efforts.

Qatar is highly controversial due to its backing of Hamas.

Netanyahu denies any wrongdoing and has dismissed the proceedings as a "judicial witch hunt."

Netanyahu and his allies have long accused Israel's judiciary of wielding excessive power and interfering in executive decisions.

His government's controversial push for a judicial overhaul sparked months of mass protests in 2023, with critics warning it would erode the country's democratic checks and balances. The reform effort was put on hold after the outbreak of the Gaza war.

Baharav-Miara, appointed under a previous government, has remained a central figure in the defence of judicial independence amid the current administration's efforts to curtail it.

*The New York Times contributed to this report.*