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2nd Employee Dismissed by Contractor

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A second employee of the Savannah River nuclear installation in South Carolina has filed a formal complaint contending that she was fired by a federal contractor seeking to smother reports of widespread drug abuse at the weapons-production facility.

Joy M. Adams, a former clerk at the federal plant near Aiken, S.C., contends in a complaint filed with the Labor Department this week that she was laid off Dec. 31 because she corroborated a coworker's allegations of open drug use at Savannah River. The rownker, Roger D. Wensil, was fired as a pilotter in October 1985.

Adams and Wensil were employed by B.F. Shaw Co., a subcontractor at the plant. B.F. Shaw maintains that both were dismissed as part of routine reductions in force.

In their complaints, however, Adams and Wensil contend that their dismissals were ordered by Shaw managers in an effort to hide a major drug-abuse problem at the federal reservation, which produces plutonium for use in nuclear warheads and does other work for Defense Department weapons programs.

Last October, Energy Secretary John S. Herrington said he had ordered the department's inspector general to investigate Wensil's allegations that workers and manag-

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ers were openly using and selling drugs in a part of the plant that handles highly radioactive nuclear waste.

"DOE is not going to tolerate drugs in the workplace," Herrington said at the time. "I will not tolerate any vindictiveness against a whistle-blower."

An official in the inspector general's office said yesterday that the inquiry was "ongoing" and declined to comment further. Other DOE officials said that a report was under review and could be released within two weeks.

A spokesman for Savannah River, however, said he knew of no such investigation. Adams and Wensil said they had not been contacted by anyone from the Energy Department's inspector general's office.

In her complaint, Adams contends that she has been "harassed and intimidated" by Shaw managers since December 1985, when she supported Wensil's allegations in testimony to an Energy Department panel investigating Wensil's dismissal.

In a later interview with a Labor Department investigator, Adams said a senior Shaw supervisor, A.O. White, warned her she had left herself "open for a slander suit" by naming a Shaw employee who had told her of using drugs on the job.

In an interview yesterday, Adams said she had worked for 16 months

at Savannah River without incident before her testimony. "I never got a reprimand. My record was clean," she said.

After her testimony, she said, she was reduced in grade and salary and told she would be put on six months' probation. Last Dec. 12, she was called into her immediate supervisor's office and told she would be dismissed at the end of the year.

Three days later, she said, White summoned her to his office and asked if she had discussed the Wensil case with colleagues or "solicited information concerning Wensil from people on site."

Adams said she acknowledged giving Wensil's telephone number to a colleague who had reported

seeing workers openly using drugs on a plant roof. "Al [White] said, 'You know you're being terminated Dec. 31 and to keep you on, you have to promise me you won't solicit any more information concerning Wensil,'" she said.

Adams said White also forbade her to make or receive personal calls, confined her to her work area and told her to talk to no one except about work.

"I've been threatened and harassed and discriminated against because I told the truth to those people [federal investigators]," Adams said. "I knew when I went in there I could either lie and keep my job or I could tell the truth and take the consequences. I chose to tell the truth."

After Alleging Drug Use at Nuclear Plant

White acknowledged having a discussion with Adams, but said he could not elaborate on it on the advice of company attorneys. The statements Adams cited were taken "out of text," he said. "That was not the substance of our conversation, which was that she had a job to do and I'd appreciate it if she'd do it."

Savannah River spokesman Cliff Webb said it was "premature and inappropriate" to comment on Adams' allegations because she was likely to appeal her dismissal through an internal DOE procedure.

Adams filed first with the Labor Department, citing a provision in the Energy Security Act that gives that department jurisdiction in DOE whistle-blower cases.

Wensil made appeals through

both departments, and a special DOE panel concluded last year that he was not fired improperly. The panel said it could think of "no motive" for Shaw to fire Wensil because his complaints about drug abuse "did not expose Shaw to citations or fines."

In a separate report, the Labor Department's investigator disagreed, suggesting that Savannah River managers were motivated by a desire to "hide the extent of the drug problem." The Labor Department report was later dropped in department headquarters when officials ceded jurisdiction in the case to the Energy Department.

Stephen M. Kohn, a Government Accountability Project lawyer who is representing Wensil and Adams,

has appealed the jurisdiction decision to Labor Secretary William E. Brock.

Six weeks after Wensil's complaints, the Energy Department started a drug-screening program for new employees at the Savannah River Plant. The company also conducts "random" tests of the work force, a method that Adams said some employees consider "a sham" because the most frequent targets are employees who are known to be free of drugs.

According to Adams, one employee was "randomly" tested eight times in a year, each time showing negative results. "I've taken the drug test three times and never failed it," she said.