



Los Alamos Study Group

Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability

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Environmental Analysis Begins for Warhead Factory Plan

Plan to maintain & improve warhead stockpile, labs, and production plants changes little from previous Bush plans, conceals alternatives

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ALBUQUERQUE – Today the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register to prepare an analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for NNSA's latest plan for reconfiguring the U.S. nuclear weapons complex.

Comments on the scope of this analysis are now open and public hearings are announced for 12 cities, to take place between November 9 (North Augusta, GA) and December 12 (Washington, DC).

The current plan is designed to produce a modernized production complex that which is supposed to function without interruption while being continuously upgraded until 2030. The most difficult aspect of nuclear warhead manufacture is the production of plutonium warhead cores or "pits." NNSA's plans involve the capacity to produce 125 pits per year at one of five sites: Los Alamos, NM; the Nevada Test Site; the Pantex Plant near Amarillo, TX; the Y-12 Complex near Oak Ridge, TN; and the Savannah River Site near Aiken, SC.

All major nuclear weapons sites are to be retained in NNSA's plan, an assumption which the House Appropriations Committee and the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board (SEAB) have opposed. NNSA offers only two alternatives: 1) a somewhat reduced level of manufacturing expansion accompanied some consolidation within sites and elimination of unspecified duplicate facilities; and 2) implementation of plans in place today, involve manufacturing expansion as well.

Today's announcement is the first step in NEPA analysis for what is approximately the eighth plan for rebuilding the U.S. nuclear weapons complex issued since late 1988.

The NNSA did not say how it plans to reconcile U.S. disarmament requirements with its plan (see below, "Disarmament Obligations Ignored").

Neither did NNSA provide cost figures for its plan. Continuing current operations at current spending rates would cost about \$153 billion through 2030.

NNSA's plans (described elsewhere) to build thousands of new warheads in the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program over the next quarter century, which have not been endorsed by the Department of Defense or approved by Congress, while at the same time maintaining and extending the working life of existing warheads until the new RRW warheads could take their place, appears to underlie the choice of alternatives in the Complex 2030 Plan.

Study Group Director Greg Mello said "Today NNSA announced its latest plans for shiny new nuclear bomb factories of the future. These plans ignore binding U.S. treaty commitments for complete nuclear disarmament. They break the very treaties we are trying to use to prevent nuclear proliferation. Why in the world would we need or want new factories to make more of them? How could this possibly make us safer?"

Mello remarked further: "There is little hope of stopping a new generation of factories for nuclear weapons, or the new weapons that will come out of them, or of achieving other desirable

outcomes such as the ratification and entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), until there is a working consensus in the liberal community that nuclear disarmament, already required by law, is also a good idea. With new factories for nuclear weapons, it's 'in for a dime, in for a dollar'; there's no middle ground. Nuclear weapons harm our security and we need to get rid of them as we have promised, not plan for their retention decades from now."

Disarmament Obligations Ignored

The United States and 187 other countries (that is, all but four) are bound by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), ratified by the U.S. in 1969 and which entered into force in 1970. The NPT, at Article VI, requires that "each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament..."

In 1995 the NPT was extended indefinitely in the face of considerable controversy over the question of whether the nuclear weapon states would comply with Article VI. Agreement was finally reached via set of decisions, including: "the nuclear-weapons States reaffirm their commitment, as stated in article VI, to pursue in good faith negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament."

In 1996, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) unanimously ruled that "[t]here exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

In 2000, the United States and all other NPT signatories formally committed to a "Thirteen Point Plan" that laid the groundwork for systematic and progressively disarmament of the world's nuclear weapons, including "an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed under Article VI."

The U.S. does not contest these requirements but has not yet complied with them.

This situation has given rise to a situation in which statements like this find sympathy in many parts of the world:

At a dinner in New York in September, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran looked supremely confident... "Before stopping enrichment by others, why don't you stop building the next generation of nuclear weapons?" he asked his American hosts. (*New York Times*, 10/15/06, "Restraints Fray and Risks Grow as Nuclear Club Gains Members," William Broad and David Sanger)

Mello: "We cannot preach nuclear temperance from a bar stool. We can't face the security needs of the 21st century with Cold War mentality and Cold War commitments. The nuclear arsenal best suited to U.S. security needs today, considered from a pragmatic as well as from moral and legal perspectives, is no nuclear arsenal at all."

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