



# Los Alamos Study Group

*Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability*

## **Note on critical NNSA infrastructure planning decisions pending before Congress, Late August and September 2007**

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**1. Is it possible to clarify the intent of Congress, this week or as soon as possible, regarding work on the “Complex 2030” planning process in FY2008? (FY08 savings from request: none.<sup>1</sup>)**

If it is the intent of Congress to end this work, it is likely that this simple clarification would also end the preparation, printing, and mailing of the Complex 2030 Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (SPEIS) this fiscal year.

The SPEIS is now in its final stages of preparation, and is to be printed and mailed by some time in late September. There would be no need to do that if the project were being terminated. Both House and Senate Energy and Water Development (EWD) FY08 markups appear to do so, both saying “Complex 2030” planning is premature. Allowing Complex 2030 to continue past this month would in effect endorse NNSA’s “short-cut” planning process and implicitly NNSA’s preferred alternative as well, whatever that may be.

That process substantially pre-empts the more careful policy, posture, and planning that Congress, including all four relevant committees, wants.<sup>2</sup> The Complex 2030 “vision” is already guiding major investment decisions despite a lack of underlying nuclear policy, posture, and detailed planning studies.

One of those major investments is the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement (CMRR) project at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). If the CMRR is not *also* stopped, the central part of the Complex 2030 process will simply continue in its parallel, *implementation* phase. That is, if the CMRR is not stopped, a Consolidated Plutonium Center (CPC) will be built at LANL composed of Building PF-4, the CMRR, and a half-dozen other existing ancillary facilities and current line item projects.

If such a CPC is built it would be used. It would make pits of new types, since there would be no point in making more pits of existing types. New warhead component production at various NNSA sites would need to start up, greatly complicating consolidation, downsizing, or in some cases (e.g. PF-4) even refurbishment.

Without congressional endorsement of production of the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) or its equivalent, there is no need for, and no value from, production of new physics components (e.g. pits).

It is difficult to believe that the DoD Cost Analysis and Improvement Group (CAIG) will have had time to prepare appropriately detailed analyses of infrastructure options under current stockpile requirements, let alone under a range of future posture and policy scenarios. It is very unlikely that the CAIG has analyzed even the simple option of maintaining a stockpile, even a large and diverse stockpile, for many decades to come *without pit manufacture*, which is not needed.

For these reasons halting the CMRR and halting the Complex 2030 SPEIS should be viewed as two parts of one decision. It makes little sense to halt “Complex 2030” without halting the implementation of it.

**2. Halt funding for the CMRR facility at LANL. FY08 savings from request: \$95,586,000.**

The House markup, debated and passed by a wide margin in the whole House, requires such a halt.

As noted above, if the CMRR continues it would become, along with other facilities at LANL's TA-55 and nearby, the *de facto* CPC. Neither House nor Senate EWD markups support a CPC project.

The Senate EWD markup supported the CMRR project along with all requested related projects, but the full Senate has not acted on this bill.

Informed sources suggest that failure to halt the CMRR right now could result in near-term CMRR project expansion in order to add capacity to its Nuclear Facility (NF) component, the largest part.

If the CMRR is allowed to go forward, additional significant capital investments, not yet visible in congressional budget requests, also will be required at PF-4 and elsewhere at LANL just to maintain safety and security.

Increases in facility operating expenses are also to be expected, due not only to mission expansion but also to increasing building age (PF-4 has been operating for 29 years).

The CMRR project is substantially determinative of the future of the weapons complex. Its completion will strongly bias future consolidation efforts toward LANL, arguably the worst-managed site in the weapons complex. Changes in operating contractor, dividing LANL into two or more parts, or other similar measures will not solve LANL's unique problems.

CMRR NF project total costs have doubled and its design may not be final even prior to expansion, as the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) has mentioned. Several CMRR design and project management issues remain unresolved; some of which (by no means all) are discussed in the House EWD markup.

Both the safety and utility of the CMRR depend on a suite of other LANL facilities, some of which are old (e.g. PF-4), others temporary (e.g. all solid transuranic and low-level waste handling and processing facilities at Area G, TA-54), and still others not yet been funded by Congress (e.g. Nuclear Materials Safety and Security Upgrades, NMSSUP).

All LANL nuclear facilities are subject to a new set of contingencies resulting from NNSA's brand-new increased seismic hazard estimate for LANL, which has necessitated a site-wide "Justification for Continued Operation" pending a detailed facility-by-facility evaluation. The outcome of this process is not certain given the paucity of "as-built" records, quality assurance, and other issues.

**3. Halt the LANL NMSSUP project. FY08 savings from request: \$49,496,000.**

The House would terminate this project. It is closely related to (and appears to have split off from) the CMRR project. Its separation from the CMRR project lowers the latter's apparent cost.

**4. Cut pit production operating funds along the lines suggested by the House. FY08 savings from request: \$131,230,000, as per the House bill.**

These "operating" expenses are partly directed to upgrade pit production capacity at TA-55 as part of a "modernization-in-place" strategy for the complex. The House cuts them accordingly.

**Note: this memo addresses only key infrastructure projects that are *most* determinative of policy choices. It is not all-inclusive. Other than at item 4. above, it does not address program funding, e.g. the very important RRW program, the important question of Weapons Activities spending overall, or many other issues.**

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<sup>1</sup> Complex 2030 planning can be found in many Weapons Activities line items. Eliminating \$14.9 M from Directed Stockpile Activities and \$24.9 M for CPC planning has been proposed by both the House and Senate, but the more detailed planning required in the House bill would also be costly, as would the planning proposed by other committees.

<sup>2</sup> Nuclear policy and posture planning is also the focus of S. 1914 (Feinstein, Collins, others), introduced on August 3.