



Los Alamos Study Group

Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability

Plutonium pit production and related issues in the New Mexico and national press

Print media only, November 1989 through December 2006

January 17, 2007

Today's popular opposition to pit production in New Mexico is just the latest phase of an opposition that began in 1989. Opposition is certainly not confined to the immediate context of the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA's) "Complex 2030" proposal. Public opposition to pit production at LANL has been vocal, consistent, and strong in New Mexico for 17 years so far. At the present, there is no publicly-expressed support for pit production at LANL whatsoever, even in Los Alamos.

Easily-accessed evidence of widespread popular opposition to pit production can be found at www.lasg.org; see especially the *Call for Nuclear Disarmament* there.

For the most part this compilation includes only those articles which mention or otherwise involve the Los Alamos Study Group. The Study Group began formal operation in May 1992, and prior to this our media files are spotty. To compensate for this, this compilation includes a broader range of materials from 1989 to 1992. Opposition to warhead core ("pit") production at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) began in the fall of 1989, just a few months after pit production ceased at the Rocky Flats Plant.

This compilation does not include all the New Mexico press articles on this subject, although it includes most of them. National coverage is also incomplete. We have not included our own publications or any listing of radio and television programming (local, national, and foreign) on the subject of pit production at LANL.

Investigation

Bush budget plan would benefit New Mexico labs

By JEFF TOLLEFSON
The New Mexican

The Bush administration is proposing across-the-board increases in federal defense spending, a trend that is likely to boost record budgets at the nation's nuclear laboratories to even higher levels next year.

If Congress goes along, the U.S. Department of Energy would spend \$3.8 billion — an increase of \$190 million — at its main facilities in New Mexico next year, according to the budget proposal rolled out by the Bush administration on Monday.

That figure includes \$1.7 billion at Los Alamos National Laboratory (an increase of \$142 million over last year's request), \$1.5 billion at Sandia National Laboratories (an increase of \$106 million) and \$225 million at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (an increase of \$4 million), according to figures provided by U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.

Despite Monday's unveiling of the administration's budget proposals for next year, Congress has yet to pass this year's appropriations bill to fund the labs and other federal activities. For the past several months, the labs have been operating under a continuing resolution that temporarily

keeps the bills until Congress can complete its work.

DOE proposed to spend \$6.4 billion on Stockpile Stewardship, a program intended to maintain the nation's nuclear weapons without nuclear testing. The budget proposal would increase spending on the program by about \$538 million over the president's request for the current fiscal year and \$269 million over the Senate's appropriations bill.

Domenici called the president's budget the "best that we have had, ever, since we started the program that we call science-based Stockpile Stewardship."

The budget proposal for Los Alamos includes \$50 million to begin construction of a new National Security Science Building as well as \$21 million to begin work on a replacement for the Chemical and Metallurgy Research Facility, according to Domenici.

The budget proposal includes \$320 million, up \$84 million over last year's request and \$33 million over the Senate appropriation, for the current plutonium-pit production program at Los Alamos. The project is billed as a small-scale, experimental effort to produce and certify the first plutonium pit — the heart of a modern thermonuclear bomb — since

DOE shut down its Rocky Flats facility in Colorado a decade ago.

By 2007, when the first pit is scheduled for completion, Los Alamos will have spent \$1.7 billion on the program. Addressing skepticism, Los Alamos officials have said the program is especially difficult because no one has ever had to certify a nuclear weapon without an explosion.

For nuclear activists such as Greg Mello, who heads the Los Alamos Study Project, the project raises serious questions about DOE's nuclear-weapons program.

"They used to make pits all the time. Why they can't make one now is a little beyond my imagination," Mello said. He believes the lab is either squandering the money or building up a larger pit program that would be capable of producing triggers for entirely new bomb designs.

In general, nuclear activists were quick to question defense increases in the proposed budget. They cite an increased emphasis on nuclear weapons in the nation's defense policies, efforts to design a new nuclear bomb, increasing talk of a return to nuclear testing and the administration's proposal to build a new facility for manufacturing plutonium triggers.

Monitor
2/9/03

The Update

Senator touts facility as site for plutonium pit plant

By BETSY BLANEY

Associated Press Writer

The Pantex nuclear facility in Amarillo would be the ideal choice for a new site to develop plutonium pits that provide trigger material for nuclear bombs, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said Wednesday.

Several facilities, including two in New Mexico, are vying to become home for the Department of Energy's proposed Modern Pit Facility. The facility would process, manufacture and assemble plutonium pits for use at Pantex.

Pantex is the nation's primary assembly and disassembly plant for nuclear warheads and currently repackages old plutonium pits to meet new safety standards. Pantex stores more than 12,000 plutonium pits.

Other possible sites are the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad; Los Alamos National Laboratory; Nevada Test Site; and Savannah River Site in South Carolina.

Los Alamos is developing an interim pit production facility that will begin making as many as 50 certified plutonium pits a year by 2007.

"Building the MPF at Pantex would eliminate the need to transport the plutonium pits, increasing safety, and reducing environmental concerns," Cornyn said in a news release. "Pantex is the most cost-effective site in the nuclear weapons program, and every operation is designed to protect human health and safety, the environment, and against the threat of theft or accidental exposure."

But some people who live nearby don't want Pantex to get the facility, which would create about 1,000 jobs.

"We do not need to build those (pits) in an area that is primarily agricultural, breadbasket to the world, and over a major aquifer," said Jeri Osborne, who lives near the plant and calls Cornyn's safety claims "hogwash."

"We've got problems with the Ogallala Aquifer already," she said, referring to contamination and depletion of the aquifer.

The environmental group Greenpeace also has opposed plans to build the pit facility.

But Cornyn, who serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee's Strategic Forces subcommittee and the Environment and the Public Works Committee's subcommittee responsible for nuclear safety, says safety is the key attraction for Pantex.

He met Tuesday with acting administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, Linton S. Brooks, and wrote a letter outlining benefits of locating the MPF in the Panhandle.

The facility would begin initial operations in 2018, with full production slated for 2020.

It would have a production capacity of at least 125 pits annually and the ability to expand as needed.

The United States' pit production operations were shut down in 1989 at the energy department's Rocky Flats facility near Denver in response to alleged violations of environmental statutes that were made after a raid by the FBI and the Environmental Protection Agency, according to the EPA's Web site.

Paper: Santa Fe New Mexican, The (NM)
Title: LAB BUILDS NEW NUKE 'PIT'
Author: JEFF TOLLEFSON
Date: April 23, 2003
Section: Main
Page: A-5

Los Alamos National Laboratory has built the first nuclear pit — the heart of a modern thermonuclear bomb — in nearly 14 years, officials announced Tuesday.

“Los Alamos National Laboratory has restored the nation’s ability to make nuclear weapons,” said Pete Nanos, interim director of the lab. “It will now be up to the Department of Energy to examine our work very carefully, which they will do over the next few weeks.”

Nanos joined Linton Brooks, chief of nuclear weapons for the U.S. Department of Energy, in making the announcement during the lab’s 60th-anniversary celebrations Tuesday.

The lab must now work on the certification process to ensure that any new pits will work before they are placed in the stockpile. Around 700 to 800 employees are working on the project. The first certified pit, ready for use in the Trident Submarine’s W-88 warhead, is scheduled for completion by 2007 at a cost of more than \$1.5 billion.

The United States has been unable to build nuclear pits since 1989, when DOE shut down Rocky Flats in Colorado. In 1996, DOE decided to re-establish an interim pit-manufacturing center at Technical Area 55 in Los Alamos. It has taken six years to produce the first certifiable pit.

“From 1989 to today, we were the only nuclear power that couldn’t make pits. ... Now we have that capability,” Brooks said, stressing that DOE is not planning to build new weapons.

“What it means is that we now have the capability if something goes wrong with the stockpile to fix it,” he said. “That is what Stockpile Stewardship is all about: being able to diagnose problems and being able to do something about them.”

The Stockpile Stewardship program is billed as an effort to maintain the nuclear arsenal without testing, which was halted in 1992 as the Cold War came to an end.

Lab officials say the nuclear-testing moratorium, combined with new environmental regulations that banned the use of certain chemicals and processes used at Rocky Flats, has made the pit-manufacturing process more difficult than it used to be. All of the lab’s tools — from supercomputers to materials analysis and X-ray imaging of mock tests — will be put to work on the process, since certifying a nuclear pit without nuclear testing is similar to certifying an entire nuclear weapon.

Greg Mello, a nuclear-disarmament activist with the **Los Alamos Study Group**, greeted Tuesday’s announcement with skepticism. He noted that the United States has about 23,000 pits — 10,600 in the current nuclear arsenal and an additional 12,000 to 14,000 pits stockpiled at DOE’s Pantex plant in Amarillo, Texas.

“It would be nice if Los Alamos declared victory and put this program on the back burner, because we don’t need new pits,” he said.

As far as the W-88 warhead goes, lab officials have said Rocky Flats failed to make enough spare pits before closing. The lab says it plans to build about six pits annually from now until 2007.

Along with Carlsbad, Los Alamos is one of five sites in the running for a "modern pit facility." Scheduled for completion by 2020, this permanent plant could cost anywhere from \$2 billion to \$4 billion and would be capable of manufacturing at least 250 pits annually, according to DOE.

Brooks said his agency expects to make a decision on the placement of the facility next year. In an initial DOE review, Los Alamos ranked as the best site for such a facility. Los Alamos officials, however, have repeatedly said they see the lab more in terms of nuclear-weapons research than large-scale manufacturing.

Tuesday's celebrations also included the dedication of the Nonproliferation and International Security Center. The facility cost \$54 million and will house about 400 employees working on everything from nuclear-security agreements with Russia to the development of new ways to detect nuclear materials.

Author: JEFF TOLLEFSON

Section: Main

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Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jun 3, 2003; Section: Journal North; Page: 3



Date:-06/03/2003 Section:-News Edition:-Journal North Page:-1

LANL On List to Make Nuke Pits

Adam Rankin Journal Staff Writer

Carlsbad Area's WIPP Considered

A report released Monday confirms that the federal government wants to build a new nuclear weapons plant but does not say whether the facility should be located at Los Alamos, near Carlsbad or three other sites under consideration around the country.

The Department of Energy and National Nuclear Security Administration officials have decided to delay announcing a preferred location for the proposed "Modern Pit Facility," which would make the plutonium triggers for nuclear bombs.

"(The preferred site) will be in the final environmental impact statement," said NNSA spokesman Bryan Wilkes.

He said the report made public Monday -- a draft environmental impact statement -- "just basically says these are the five places we are considering and we are holding public meetings so you can tell us what you think."

The proposed nuclear weapons plant would build replacement plutonium "triggers," or pits, for the existing arsenal and would be operational by 2020, producing between 125 to 450 pits per year.

The potential sites include Los Alamos National Laboratory; the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad; the Pantex facility near Amarillo; the Nevada Test Site; and the Savannah River weapons complex in South Carolina.

"All locations have strengths and weaknesses and there is not one that is grandly above the rest and that is the whole reason for this NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process," Wilkes said.

Since the Rocky Flats plant near Denver was closed in 1989, the U.S. has been unable to manufacture pits. An interim facility at Los Alamos, designed to produce about 20 pits per year, was initiated in 1996 and is expected to be fully operational by 2007. LANL produced its first potentially "certifiable" pit in April.

Issue of security

DOE officials argue starting work now on a new pit facility is prudent risk management, should the pits in reserve and in the nuclear arsenal degrade quicker than expected. The "life-span" of existing pits is estimated at about 45 to 60 years and the average age of pits in the arsenal is about 19 years, according to DOE.

"This issue is an important one since it deals directly with the national security of the U.S. and our ability to keep our nuclear stockpile safe, reliable and secure," Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham said in a prepared statement.

Monday's draft environmental impact statement said a new facility is required to produce enough pits to meet future contingencies and to build all the necessary types of pits -- possibly including new designs -- in a relatively short period of time.

The new facility would cost between \$2.2 billion and \$4.4 billion depending on its capacity and would require about 80 acres of land, the report says.

Construction would generate between 770 and 1,100 jobs, and between 990 and 1,800 jobs are expected during its 50-year operation.

Once a location is identified, a site-specific environmental analysis will be conducted to determine the exact location of the new facility at the preferred site, Wilkes said.

Carlsbad Mayor Bob Forrest said the proposed facility could take up the economic slack for his town after WIPP closes, which is scheduled to take place in about 15 years.

Public comment

Anti-nuclear activists and critics of the proposed Modern Pit Facility say they are concerned the delay in naming the preferred site for the new plant will reduce the volume and quality of public comment on the proposed facility.

"They advertised that step one was whether to proceed, and if so where to locate it," said Jay Coghlan, director of Santa Fe-based Nuclear Watch New Mexico. "We already knew they wanted to build it, so they confirmed that, but they made no site selection."

"It makes one's comments a crap shoot," said Greg Mello, head of the Los Alamos Study Group, a nuclear watchdog. "Some might choose not to comment," he said, because they don't know whether their comments are really necessary, since they don't know whether the plant will be located in their area.

"I think it is an abridgement of the process set up by Congress and DOE's own NEPA regulations," he said. "It is a political move by the department -- they are supposed to play this game in a straighter way than they are."

Wilkes explained that while there will be no formal public hearings after issuance of the final environmental impact statement, the public can submit comments at any time, including during a monthlong period after the site is announced.

"The process is long enough that everyone will get a chance to have a voice in it," Wilkes said. "It just allows for a more thorough decision-making process."

Critics say the draft environmental impact statement confirms their suspicions that the Bush administration is looking at building new types of nuclear weapons and on a large scale. Both houses of Congress have given approval to renewing research on development of so-called "mini-nukes."

The document leaves open the possibility of manufacturing more than 450 pits per year, a rate Mello says is unnecessary given recent disarmament treaties signed with Russia.

"The ultimate justification for this facility is making weapons of new design primarily and secondarily maintaining a very large arsenal on the assumption that (disarmament treaties) don't require destruction of arms," he said.

The impact statement found one alternative to a new facility could be upgrading LANL's Technical Area 55, site of the current interim pit manufacturing facility, so that it could produce 80 pits a year.

"This provides a 'hedge' in the event of unforeseeable changes in stockpile size or pit lifetime result(ing) in a significantly smaller pit production capacity requirement," according to the document.

Public hearings on the draft environmental impact statement will be held June 30 in Carlsbad at the DOE's Carlsbad office and July 1 at the Cities of Gold Hotel in Pojoaque.

Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jun 3, 2003; Section: Final; Page: 78



Date:-06/03/2003 Section:-New Mexico Edition:-Final Page:-D3

N.M. In Line For Weapons Plant

Adam Rankin Journal Northern Bureau

Site To Develop Plutonium Pits

SANTA FE -- A report released Monday confirms that the federal government wants to build a new nuclear weapons plant but does not say whether the facility should be located at Los Alamos, near Carlsbad or three other sites under consideration around the country.

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Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jun 3, 2003; Section: State; Page: 90



**Date:-06/03/2003 Section:-News
Edition:-State Page:-A1**

Nuke Plant Site Still In Question

Adam Rankin Journal Northern Bureau

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Paper: Santa Fe New Mexican, The (NM)
Title: PROTESTING PLUTONIUM
Author: JEFF TOLLEFSON, Photos by Luis Sanchez Saturno
Date: July 2, 2003
Section: Main
Page: A-1

Activists dominate hearing on possible nuclear-pit factory in Los Alamos or Carlsbad

POJOAQUE PUEBLO Dozens of loud and often unruly demonstrators on Tuesday protested a new nuclear-weapons factory under consideration by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Both Carlsbad and Los Alamos National Laboratory are on the list of possible sites for the proposed Modern Pit Facility. The manufacturing plant would purify and cast plutonium into round "pits" similar to the bomb dropped on Nagasaki at the end of World War II.

The orbs of plutonium - a highly dangerous substance developed for nuclear bombs - provide the initial explosion, triggering further nuclear reactions, in a modern thermonuclear weapon.

The National Nuclear Security Administration, a DOE branch in charge of nuclear weapons, is conducting an environmental impact statement analyzing whether and where to build the Modern Pit Facility, estimated to cost between \$2 billion and \$4 billion. Tuesday's hearing, dominated by anti-nuclear activists, was one of several in an ongoing series.

While much of the discussion focused on international efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, many also cited environmental and safety concerns associated with plutonium.

Sue Dayton, an activist with the Albuquerque-based watchdog group Citizen Action, questioned DOE's interpretation of its own information on the risk to nuclear workers at such a facility.

A DOE risk analysis in the environmental impact statement indicates that radiation could cause a fatal case of cancer in one worker every five years in a facility with 1,100 workers capable of producing 450 pits annually.

DOE's Jay Rose downplayed these statistics as highly conservative estimates involving a large number of people. Workers at the proposed site would receive one-tenth the annual radiation allowed under DOE regulations and would, individually, incur an extremely low risk, he said in an interview.

"Do we think that every four or five years a worker will get a latent cancer? Absolutely not," he said, citing DOE estimates that a worker would have to work 4,500 years before getting a lethal form of cancer.

DOE documents also indicate that a modern pit facility, depending on its size, would produce between 3,000 and 5,600 drums of plutonium laden nuclear waste annually.

Many at the hearing questioned the need for more bombs in the first place, pointing out that the United States agreed to bring its nuclear arsenal below 2,200 weapons in the coming decade. Miles Nelson, assistant medical director for the Emergency Department at St. Vincent Hospital, said the proposal flies in the face of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and other international agreements meant to head off nuclear weapons.

"I believe this modern pit facility violates the promises we have made to the rest of the world," Nelson said.

DOE officials insist that the nation has a right to maintain its current arsenal.

The United States has been unable to build pits since DOE shut down its only pit facility at Rocky Flats near Denver in 1989. Although Los Alamos National Laboratory expects to be able to build a limited number of new pits by 2007, DOE officials maintain that the United States needs a full-scale pit production facility to replace aging nuclear warheads and potentially build new ones.

DOE estimates that the current nuclear warheads will last a minimum of 45 to 60 years, so the modern pit facility should be operational by 2020 in case problems arise in the stockpile. None has been found as of yet, but DOE officials say there is no way to predict the future.

Mary Riseley, a founder of the **Los Alamos Study Group** who is no longer active in the group, said a study by a University of California physicist indicated that pits might actually improve with age. She cited that as evidence that there is no need to build a facility now.

The agency wants the facility operational by 2020. Also on the list of potential sites for the modern pit facility are the Savannah River Site in South Carolina; the Nevada Test Site; and the Pantex Site near Amarillo, Texas.

According to the current schedule, DOE expects to make a decision whether to move forward, and if so where to put the facility, by April 2004. DOE would further consider environmental impacts at the site chosen and decide how big the facility will be in a second analysis.

DOE will accept comments on the proposal through Aug. 5. Write to the MPF EIS Document Manager, U.S. Department of Energy/NNSA, 1000 Independence Ave. S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585; fax (202) 586-5324; or submit comments via e-mail at the Modern Pit Facility Internet site, <http://www.mpfeis.com>.

Author: JEFF TOLLEFSON, Photos by Luis Sanchez Saturno
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Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jul 7, 2003; Section: Journal North; Page: 48



**Date:-07/07/2003 Edition:-Journal North
Page:-1**

Lawmakers' Fiat Shocks Activists

Adam Rankin Journal Staff Writer

* State's congressional delegates all signed letter backing Carlsbad for new nuke factory

Many anti-nuclear activists were surprised to learn that all five of New Mexico's congressional delegates recently signed a letter endorsing Carlsbad as the proposed site of a new nuclear weapons factory.

"Everybody is a little shocked by (Sen. Jeff Bingaman) and majorly shocked by (Rep. Tom Udall)," said Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group.

In a strong, bipartisan show of support, Democrats Bingaman and Udall, along with their Republican counterparts, Sen. Pete Domenici and Reps. Heather Wilson and Steve Pearce, signed a June 30 letter to Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham supporting Carlsbad as the proposed location of the "Modern Pit Facility," a \$2 billion to \$4 billion factory under consideration by the Department of Energy.

For the people of Carlsbad, many of whom are in favor of hosting the facility, the endorsements are political capital in a decision that may come down to politics and which community most favors the project.

The pit facility, which could be sited at Los Alamos, Carlsbad or three other locations, would build plutonium "triggers," or pits, to replace the nation's aging nuclear stockpile. The pits set off a larger, second-stage blast in nuclear weapons.

But Bingaman and Udall only signed the letter on the condition that it contain a qualifier.

"It was originally written as if the Modern Pit Facility was a foregone conclusion," said Udall spokesman Glen Loveland. "Congressman Udall insisted that we add an initial paragraph that says they should consider Carlsbad only if it is found this facility is really needed."

In the final version of the letter to Abraham, the second sentence now reads: "If it is determined such a facility is necessary, we believe the WIPP site in Carlsbad, New Mexico, provides the best option ... "

"We just wanted to stress the debate is still going on, and no final decisions have been made," Loveland said. "We know they don't want it in northern New Mexico, and at this point, that is our primary concern."

In Bingaman's case, he also wrote a separate letter to Abraham expanding on the group's statement.

"If the Department determines that such a facility is necessary, and has carefully informed the public and the Congress of all the safety, environmental and fiscal consequences of the Facility, then I believe that the WIPP facility at Carlsbad should be seriously considered as the best option for its location," Bingaman wrote.

Domenici spokesman Chris Gallegos and a policy official with Pearce said both lawmakers considered the language added by Udall and Bingaman to be implicit in the original wording because the pit facility is not a certainty. The final decision rests with Abraham.

Regardless of the qualifiers, Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce President Mark Schinnerer said having all five delegates sign the letter translates into "tremendous support."

Having the pit facility "would be a big economic boost, not just for Carlsbad," but for neighboring communities, such as Hobbs, he said.

Hosting the pit facility would mean an infusion of cash and jobs -- yearly operations are estimated to cost \$200 million to \$300 million, and the facility would support about 1,000 jobs over a 50-year period -- at a time when Carlsbad's other government mainstay, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, is scheduled to begin closing.

But New Mexico's delegates should be thinking about more than economic or community development when it comes to endorsing such weighty projects, said Joni Arends with Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety.

"The congressional delegates should be looking at these larger issues -- like violations of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty -- before they start endorsing sites," she said.

Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jul 8, 2003; Section: Final; Page: 76



**Date:-07/08/2003 Section:-News
Edition:-Final Page:-A2**

Lawmakers' Support Shocks Groups

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SANTA FE -- Many anti-nuclear activists were surprised to learn that all five of New Mexico's congressional delegates recently signed a letter endorsing Carlsbad as the proposed site of a new nuclear weapons factory.

"Everybody is a little shocked by (Sen. Jeff Bingaman) and majorly shocked by (Rep. Tom Udall)," said Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group.

In a strong, bipartisan show of support, Democrats Bingaman and Udall, along with their Republican counterparts, Sen. Pete Domenici and Reps. Heather Wilson and Steve Pearce, signed a June 30 letter to Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham supporting Carlsbad as the proposed location of the "Modern Pit Facility," a \$2 billion to \$4 billion factory under consideration by the Department of Energy.

For the people of Carlsbad, many of whom are in favor of hosting the facility, the endorsements are political capital in a decision that may come down to politics and which community most favors the project.

The pit facility, which could be sited at Los Alamos, Carlsbad or three other locations, would build plutonium "triggers," or pits, to replace the nation's aging nuclear stockpile. The pits set off a larger, second-stage blast in nuclear weapons.

But Bingaman and Udall only signed the letter on the condition that it contain a qualifier.

"It was originally written as if the Modern Pit Facility was a foregone conclusion," said Udall spokesman Glen Loveland. "Congressman Udall insisted that we add an initial paragraph that says they should consider Carlsbad only if it is found this facility is really needed."

In the final version of the letter to Abraham, the second sentence now reads: "If it is determined such a facility is necessary, we believe the WIPP site in Carlsbad, New Mexico, provides the best option."

"We just wanted to stress the debate is still going on, and no final decisions have been made," Loveland said. "We know they don't want it in northern New Mexico, and at this point, that is our primary concern."

In Bingaman's case, he also wrote a separate letter to Abraham expanding on the group's statement.

"If the Department determines that such a facility is necessary, and has carefully informed the

public and the Congress of all the safety, environmental and fiscal consequences of the Facility, then I believe that the WIPP facility at Carlsbad should be seriously considered as the best option for its location," Bingaman wrote.

Domenici spokesman Chris Gallegos and a policy official with Pearce said both lawmakers considered the language added by Udall and Bingaman to be implicit in the original wording because the pit facility is not a certainty. The final decision rests with Abraham.

Regardless of the qualifiers, Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce President Mark Schinnerer said having all five delegates sign the letter translates into "tremendous support."

Having the pit facility "would be a big economic boost, not just for Carlsbad" but for neighboring communities, such as Hobbs, he said.

Hosting the pit facility would mean an infusion of cash and jobs -- yearly operations are estimated to cost \$200 million to \$300 million, and the facility would support about 1,000 jobs over a 50-year period -- at a time when Carlsbad's other government mainstay, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, is scheduled to begin closing.

But New Mexico's delegates should be thinking about more than economic or community development when it comes to endorsing such weighty projects, said Joni Arends with Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety.

"The congressional delegates should be looking at these larger issues -- like violations of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty -- before they start endorsing sites," she said.

Paper: Santa Fe New Mexican, The (NM)
Title: WEAPONS BUDGET UP \$367 MILLION
Author: JEFF TOLLEFSON
Date: November 9, 2003
Section: Santa Fe/El Norte
Page: B-1

Bill will pay for nuclear-weapons work at LANL

Congressional conferees agreed on a \$27.3 billion appropriations bill that funds everything from nuclear-stockpile work at national labs to water projects throughout the West, U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., announced last week.

The bill provides \$22.1 billion to the U.S. Department of Energy, including more than \$6.3 billion for work on the nuclear-weapons stockpile at Los Alamos and the other two primary nuclear-weapons laboratories, according to Domenici, who led the negotiations on the Senate side as chairman of the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

Domenici spokesman Chris Gallegos could not provide a breakdown on the total budget for Los Alamos lab, but Gallegos said the \$6.3 billion would be split fairly equally among Los Alamos, Sandia National Laboratories and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California.

The bill boosts the nuclear-stockpile budget by \$367 million while providing nearly \$1.4 billion, an increase of \$196 million, for nuclear-nonproliferation activities within DOE.

"We've done a good job to craft a bill that meets the national-security mission needs for our labs and moves the nation forward in terms of water projects," Domenici said in a statement.

Los Alamos funding includes \$50 million for the new headquarters building and \$10 million for preliminary work to replace the Chemical and Metallurgy Research Facility. The bill provides \$230.5 million to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant and DOE's field office in Carlsbad.

Nuclear activists were upbeat about one provision in the bill: Congress cut by more than half the funding for preliminary studies on the Modern Pit Facility, a multibillion-dollar factory that DOE is proposing to build new pits, or cores, for nuclear bombs.

Jay Coghlan, who heads Nuclear Watch of New Mexico, cited that as evidence the proposal could be defeated.

The agreement also cut funding for research into the "Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator," the so-called nuclear bunker buster, from \$15 million to \$7.5 million.

The legislation provides nearly \$25 million for DOE to shorten the time that would be necessary to conduct a nuclear test, if such a decision were made.

While the administration sought to shorten that schedule to 18 months, the bill stipulates that DOE should work toward a 24-month "test-readiness" capability.

Meanwhile, a conference-committee agreement on separate Defense Department legislation last week repealed a decade-long prohibition on research into low-yield nuclear weapons, often called mininukes or battlefield nukes. Although Congress ultimately must sign off on any new projects,

the decision opens the door to research and development of new bombs, said Greg Mello, who heads the **Los Alamos Study Group**.

"The biggest, clearest signal to the lab and to the world is that they can make mininukes now, and they will want to do that," he said.

"Everybody should sit up and take notice that these aren't weapons which are designed not to be used. The reason they are being requested is that their use is said to be credible. That's why they are supposedly a better deterrent against small tyrants."

The energy and water appropriations bill provides \$35 million to the Bureau of Reclamation for various work along the Rio Grande, \$3 million for desalination research in Otero County and funding to the Army Corps of Engineers for work throughout New Mexico.

Both the Senate and House must approve the conference-committee report, which will then be sent to the president.

Author: JEFF TOLLEFSON

Section: Santa Fe/EI Norte

Page: B-1

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Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Dec 12, 2003; Section: Final; Page: 85



Date:-12/12/2003 Section:-New Mexico Edition:-Final Page:-B4

Nuke Factory Funding Cut Worries Agency

John Fleck Journal Staff Writer

* Two N.M. cities considered for plutonium plant

The National Nuclear Security Administration is wrestling with a deep cut in the fiscal year 2004 budget for construction of a factory to build plutonium parts for nuclear weapons. Two New Mexico cities are being considered as sites for the factory.

The Bush Administration asked Congress for \$23 million for the plant, but at the end of complex negotiations over the nuclear weapons budget, House and Senate appropriators agreed to give the project only \$11 million in fiscal year 2004.

"We're assessing the situation," said NNSA spokesman Bryan Wilkes.

Rep. Dave Hobson, R-Ohio, pushed for the cuts. The chairman of the House subcommittee in charge of the DOE's budget, Hobson has expressed repeated skepticism about the size of the nuclear weapons budget.

"Unfortunately, the Department of Energy continues to ask Congress to fund a Cold War nuclear arsenal, and the nuclear weapons complex necessary to maintain that arsenal, even though we no longer face a Cold War adversary. The Cold War ended over a decade ago," Hobson said during a July 8 hearing.

Carlsbad and Los Alamos are among five sites around the country being considered for the project, which has been estimated to cost as much as \$5 billion.

Carlsbad leaders are lobbying heavily to try to win the project because of the jobs it would create, while officials at Los Alamos National Laboratory have said they don't want it.

Supporters and critics of the plant say they expect the budget cut to have little effect because the money was only for early planning. Actual high-dollar construction is still years away.

"This will have very little impact on actual schedule," said Alex Flint, a senior aide to Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.

Greg Mello, head of the anti-nuclear Los Alamos Study Group and a leading critic of the plant, agreed that the budget cut was not likely to significantly delay the project.

The NNSA is in the midst of a lengthy environmental study required under federal law. Actual construction of the plant was not scheduled to begin until 2011, with bomb-making not to begin until some time around 2018.

Government backers of the project say it is needed to replace aging plutonium parts in U.S. nuclear weapons. The parts used to be made at the Rocky Flats plant in Colorado, which was closed in 1989 because of environmental problems.

Critics say the plant is an unnecessary contribution to nuclear proliferation.

"It signals to ourselves and to the world our intention to retain a huge nuclear arsenal," Mello said.



Date:-12/24/2003 Edition:-Journal North Page:-1

Nuke Plant Doubts Voiced

Adam Rankin Journal Staff Writer

Richardson Not Sure N.M. Being Seriously Considered

Gov. Bill Richardson on Tuesday expressed misgivings about government plans to possibly build a \$2 billion to \$4 billion nuclear weapons plant in New Mexico.

His comments come months after all five of the state's congressional delegates joined in a bipartisan message to say they favored siting the plant in Carlsbad.

"I have serious reservations about that project," Richardson said Tuesday at a news conference.

The governor had remained mum on the subject until now.

"I am not even sure we are being seriously considered (for the plant)," Richardson said during a news conference in Santa Fe.

As former secretary of the Department of Energy in the Clinton administration, Richardson may have some inside knowledge on the matter -- at least, that is what some critics of the proposal to build the plant say.

"We're very pleased that the governor thinks this way, but it's not enough," said Greg Mello, director of the Los Alamos Study Group, which opposes the plant. Mello has said the plant would allow the U.S. nuclear arsenal to swell and new designs to be built at a time when such weapons should be dismantled.

"The important decision about the 'Modern Pit Facility' is not where to site it, but whether to build it," Mello said.

The Modern Pit Facility, which could be built at Los Alamos, Carlsbad or one of three other locations elsewhere in the country, would produce plutonium triggers, or pits, to replace the nation's aging nuclear stockpile. The pits set off a larger, second-stage blast in nuclear weapons.

In June, Democrats Sen. Jeff Bingaman and Rep. Tom Udall signed a letter to DOE chief Spencer Abraham endorsing Carlsbad as a potential site for the plant only if the DOE deems the facility necessary. They joined Republicans Sen. Pete Domenici, Rep. Heather Wilson and Rep. Steve Pearce in recommending Carlsbad be given preference over other sites for the project that would bring with it about 1,000 jobs.

Carlsbad officials and local leaders have voiced strong support for hosting the nuclear weapons facility, citing its economic benefits and DOE's good reputation for running Carlsbad's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

Richardson spokesman Gilbert Gallegos said the governor, who refrained from endorsing Carlsbad with the congressional delegation, has remained neutral on the issue until now.

"All he's really said on that as of late is that he has serious reservations," Gallegos said.

During the news conference, Richardson said he wants to settle another issue with DOE before dealing with the matter of the pit plant.

Louisiana Energy Services announced in September its intention to build the National Enrichment Facility in Lea County to process uranium so it can be used as fuel in nuclear power plants.

Richardson has expressed concern that waste tailings from the enrichment plant will be left in the state.

"I am very insistent that there be legislative language in the Congress that prohibits the disposal of waste in New Mexico or by the Department of Energy in New Mexico," Richardson said. "I am supportive of the project only if those restrictions are accomplished."

PHOTO: Color

RICHARDSON: "I have serious reservations about that project"

Facility Bothers Governor

Doubts Expressed About Nuke Plant

12/24/03
BY ADAM RANKIN

Journal Northern Bureau

SANTA FE — Gov. Bill Richardson on Tuesday expressed misgivings about government plans to possibly build a \$2 billion to \$4 billion nuclear weapons plant in New Mexico, months after all five of the state's congressional delegates joined in a bipartisan message to say they favored siting the plant in Carlsbad.

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THE YEAR THAT WAS

RISING STARS

These 10 stories of success in Albuquerque show how natural talent and hard work in 2003 laid foundations for big success in 2004

ACTIVISM

Greg Mello

Rising concerns over extensive changes the Bush administration is making in U.S. nuclear weapons policy are raising the star of Greg Mello, head of the Los Alamos Study Group, based in Albuquerque.



Mello

Mello, 53, born in Northern California, co-founded the group in 1989 to pursue "nuclear disarmament in a just and sustainable world." Its focus is the national laboratories, primarily Los Alamos and Sandia in Albuquerque.

Mello, who has written for The Trib's Insight & Opinion section, concedes he is getting more inquiries and national attention lately as a voice balancing the Bush administration on nukes.

Of particular concern to Mello lately are the administration's efforts to develop low-yield "mini-nukes" and other "advanced concepts" in nuclear weapons and to build new nuclear weapons production plants; refusal to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; decision to back out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; and foot dragging on complying with biological and chemical weapons conventions and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Expect to hear more from him as the administration proceeds.

Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jan 29, 2004; Section: Journal North; Page: 2



**Date:-01/29/2004 Section:-News
Edition:-Journal North Page:-1**

Plans For Pits Plant Delayed

John Fleck Journal Staff Writer

Carlsbad Leaders Trying To Lure Bomb Factory to N.M.

Federal officials announced Wednesday an indefinite delay in work on a new plutonium bomb factory because of congressional questions about whether it is needed.

The factory, which may be built in New Mexico, would manufacture new plutonium cores for U.S. nuclear weapons. Arms control activists oppose it, picking up unusual support last year from Republicans in the House of Representatives who questioned its need.

The cores, also called pits, are at the heart of modern nuclear weapons, triggering a thermonuclear explosion with a Nagasaki-sized blast.

A decision on a site for the plant, the Modern Pit Facility, had been scheduled for this spring. Carlsbad is one of five sites under consideration.

The head of the National Nuclear Security Administration announced the delay in a statement issued Wednesday afternoon.

"While there is widespread support in Congress for this project, I believe we need to pause to respond to concerns that some committees have raised about its scope and timing," said Linton Brooks, head of the NNSA.

The congressional criticism largely came from the Republican-led House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

Without a better idea of how many new nuclear weapons the nation will need, decisions on where to build the plant and how big it should be are "premature," concluded a report accompanying the 2004 nuclear weapons budget. The subcommittee voted to cut the project's budget this year by more than half.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said he supports the plutonium factory because it will be needed to maintain the future U.S. nuclear stockpile. But he agreed with the delay.

"It is important to know what the demand for pits will be in the decades to come. The delay the NNSA has announced will give the agency time to undertake the analysis needed," Bingaman said in a statement issued by his office.

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said he is not concerned by the delay.

"I am not troubled by this delay because DOE and the NNSA both know that the United States eventually needs to construct a modern pit facility to maintain our nuclear stockpile," Domenici said in a statement.

Arms control activists praised the delay.

"That's great news," said Greg Mello, head of the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group.

Mello and others in the arms control community have argued that the plant sends a dangerous signal to other nations about the United States' continued reliance on nuclear weapons.

The arms control community also has argued that the factory would give the United States the ability to manufacture large numbers of new, next-generation nuclear weapons.

"They don't need the production levels," said Jay Coghlan, head of Nuclear Watch New Mexico. "They don't need the capability for new designs."

Civic leaders in Carlsbad have been pushing hard to bring the project to southeastern New Mexico.

"We're kind of disappointed but really not that surprised," said Carlsbad Mayor Bob Forrest Wednesday.

Forrest said he believes the final decision has come down to a contest between Carlsbad and a site in South Carolina where the NNSA currently does nuclear weapons work.

Bomb Factory Plans Delayed

Carlsbad Could Be
Home for Project

BY JOHN FLECK
Journal Staff Writer

1/29/04

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See PIT on PAGE A2

••• THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2004

Pit Factory Delay Affects New Mexico

from PAGE A1

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Forrest said he believes the final decision has come down to a contest between Carlsbad and a site in South Carolina where the NNSA currently does nuclear weapons work.

Los Alamos National Laboratory also is on the list of potential sites, but lab officials have said they do not want the factory to be built there.



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

FEBRUARY 2004

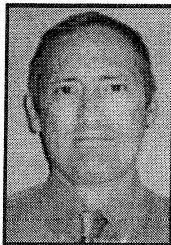
VOLUME 32, NUMBER 2

STRATCOM'S NEW GLOBAL THREAT SUBJECT OF 2004 ANNUAL PEACE CONFERENCE

The man who blew the whistle on last August's secret meeting at StratCom to plan a new generation of nuclear weapons will be the keynote speaker at the 2004 Annual Peace Conference Saturday, February 14. Greg Mello, Executive Director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a disarmament-oriented research and advocacy organization headquartered in Albuquerque, New Mexico, will speak on the topic "StratCom's New Mission: Full Global Strike." As has become traditional, a selection of Peace & Justice Workshops on topics ranging from Fair Trade to Whiteclay to the USA PATRIOT Act will also be featured.

The all-day conference, which is jointly sponsored by Nebraskans for Peace and the UNO School of Social Work, will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island, from 9:30 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. Registration is \$25 per person before February 11; \$30 per person at the door. (A student/low-income rate of \$10 is also available.) Coffee, juice and rolls and lunch catered by Valentino's are included in the registration cost. Child care will be provided, and up to four-and-one-half CEUs will be offered to certified Masters Social Workers and Licensed Mental Health Practitioners who attend.

Greg Mello's talk on StratCom's expanded focus and mission in the aftermath of 9/11 could not be more timely.



Greg Mello
Keynote Speaker

Over the past two years, StratCom has seen its limited role of maintaining America's nuclear deterrent grow to where it now serves as the command center for every conventional military intervention undertaken by the U.S. government. It was the Study Group's disclosure in January 2003 of a secret Stockpile Stewardship Conference at StratCom, however, that ultimately helped draw public attention to this dramatic shift in mission. In discussions that were closed to congressional representatives and the public, laboratory and production-plant contractors, Pentagon staff, and StratCom officers convened last August for a policy discussion on the proposed use of nuclear weapons in conventional conflicts (the so-called "mini-nukes"), and how in turn to sell their proposal to a reluctant Congress.

Greg Mello is uniquely qualified to weigh in on this discussion. Since co-founding the Study Group in 1989, he has led the Study Group in its research on the activities of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex and in environmental review and analysis.

Other Study Group programs led by him include congressional education and lobbying, community organizing, litigation, and advertising (Study Group billboards can be found between the Albuquerque airport and Los Alamos National Laboratory). From time to time, he has also served as a consulting analyst and writer for other nuclear policy organizations as well.

In 2002, Mello was a Visiting Research Fellow at Princeton's Program on Science and Global Security. He is a member of the Governing Council of the worldwide Abolition 2000 nuclear disarmament organization. This year, the *Albuquerque Tribune* recognized Mello as one of its ten

"rising stars" for 2004. He has provided key information to NGOs and diplomats at treaty conferences in New York and Geneva.

Mello's research, analysis, and opinions have been published in the *Washington Post*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *Issues in Science and Technology*, the *New Mexico* press and elsewhere.

Over the past decade, he has led the Study Group in bringing to the attention of Congress and the news media a number of clandestine nuclear projects and programs. These include: a new earth-penetrating nuclear bomb; a nuclear glide bomb; the planned upgrade of more than 3,200 submarine warheads into ground-burst, first-strike weapons, significantly affecting U.S./Russian strategic stability; above-ground testing of plutonium cores ("pits") in steel tanks; a laboratory program to "share" nuclear weapons secrets with "friendly" nuclear nations; and others.

Study Group work has delayed and downscaled production of plutonium pits, and has saved hundreds of millions of dollars in a variety of other wasteful and unsafe projects at Los Alamos National Laboratory—projects later found to be unnecessary from any perspective. In the course of his work, Mello and the Study Group have generated hundreds of news articles and segments in the regional, national and international press and in broadcast media.

His education is that of an engineer (B.S. with distinction, Harvey Mudd College, 1971) and regional planner (Harvard, 1975, HUD Fellow in Urban Studies). Greg and his wife Trish (also an activist, formerly with Serious Texans Against Nuclear Dumping [STAND] in Amarillo) live and work in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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Los Alamos Study Group

Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability

Bush Nuclear Agenda at Crossroads

KUNM commentary 6/15/04 gm

On June 3, Linton Brooks, President Bush's top nuclear weapons czar and the guy theoretically in charge of New Mexico's labs, announced that the Administration had approved a 40% cut in the total number of U.S. nuclear weapons by 2012, from about 10,400 to about 6,100.

Never mind for a moment that this plan has no transparency, milestones, or accountability, could be reversed with a stroke of the President's pen, and that these cuts don't go nearly as far as Russia – still the only U.S. nuclear rival – would like. It is still very good news.

But it is tempered with the knowledge that it's only the "dead wood" which is to be retired, and that the remaining weapons, under current plans *not* being debated in Congress, will become more capable and flexible, with more accurate warheads and precision, ground-burst fuzes to attack a greater range of targets. What is being debated are the new earth-penetrating weapons now under active development, and the low-yield "mininukes" which could be made from existing weapons at any time, now that Congress has removed the legal restrictions from doing so.

"In recommending this stockpile plan to the President," Mr. Brooks said, "we recognize that maintaining the nation's nuclear deterrence with a much smaller stockpile means that we must continue Administration efforts to restore the nuclear weapons infrastructure."

In other words, Mr. Brooks wants new factories – especially, as he says, a new factory for plutonium weapons cores, or "pits." Making pits is the most expensive, most dangerous to workers, and most waste-producing step in making nuclear weapons. He and the other weapons bureaucrats clearly hope that Congress will fully fund a new pit factories.

Factories, *plural*? This year about 9/10s of the pit production money is being spent in Los Alamos. LANL has spent a billion dollars so far gearing up for pit production – whatever have they done with all that money, since they had the buildings and equipment in place when they started? – and LANL will spend a couple of hundred million more this year on it. There's no debate in Congress about allocating this money. But Los Alamos does not have the physical capacity to make all the pits Mr. Brooks wants – *unless it expands a little bit*. Still, Brooks wants a bigger factory, in addition to the one being brought on line in Los Alamos.

Will he get it? Maybe. Last Wednesday, a House subcommittee said, "No, thank you," and zeroed out that big factory. The Republican chair of that committee will now have to do some horse-trading with his Senate counterpart, Pete Domenici. Will Senator Domenici trade away needed water projects in New Mexico for a big nuclear weapons factory, almost certainly to be located in South Carolina, just because the nukemeisters want him to carry *their* political water? We'll see. One thing is sure: Los Alamos pit production is growing. To what ultimate scale depends on many factors, not the least of which is citizen resistance.

This is Greg Mello, with the Los Alamos Study Group.

lamonitor.com

The Online News Source for Los Alamos

[Print Page](#)

Wednesday, August 4, 2004

Last modified Wednesday, August 4, 2004 4:59 PM MDT

Anti-nuke group makes annual visit to town

ROGER SNODGRASS, roger@lamonitor.com, Monitor Assistant Editor

Northern New Mexico activist and their supporters will be in town for several activities Thursday. Organized by the Los Alamos Study Group, a public interest organization, the visit will cap several days of activities that began with workshops in Santa Fe and Albuquerque earlier in the week.

The program focusing on Los Alamos National Laboratory is called "citizen inspections" and will include aerial and walk-around tours.

A release by the group says, "(C)itizens can see for themselves some of the facilities involved in the Los Alamos weapons programs, barring interruptions by LANL security forces."

The laboratory has alerted its workforce of the visit, warning that the visitors may try to interact with LANL personnel.

"We have informed our employees and it's entirely up to them if they choose to interact or not," said Linn Tytler, a laboratory spokesperson, this morning. "We have asked them to be polite, as they would be to any citizens. They can choose to discuss unclassified information with anyone or they can choose not to."

LASG's invitations have noted the lab's current safety and security crises.

"True nonviolence does not capitalize on this event," Mellow wrote. "We will learn, listen and gently engage. It is, for some, a teachable moment, a moment when they begin to see what the lab is all about."

The core of the group arrives from Albuquerque, where LASG moved its headquarters several months ago, and from Santa Fe by car and van.

A couple of aerial tours that will avoid restricted air space will also bring special guests including journalists to the Hill.

In past years members of the group have been involved in non-violent demonstrations in which some members of the group were symbolically arrested and later released without charges.

This year, no written understanding has been reached between the group and the laboratory, according to LASG Director Greg Mello.

Writing to the laboratory in June, Mello requested permission to inspect several facilities, including "the interiors of the Plutonium Facility (PF-4) and Nuclear Materials Storage Facility (never used) in TA-55, and the site of the proposed Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Facility, also in TA-55."

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LASG proposes to hold a press conference at Sigma Facility parking lot south of the MSL building at 3 p.m. on Thursday.

"They have no authority to hold a press conference on lab property," Tytler said. "They have been told they don't have authority to hold a press conference on lab property."

She said that roadways and sidewalks on Diamond Drive and East and West Jemez roads are public property, but that signage clearly delineates government property. There are signs that say "No Trespassing," about every hundred feet in proprietary areas.

"We've had no indications that the Study Group or its adherents are looking to be arrested," Tytler said.

The proposed press conference will be followed later in the day by a public discussion at Fuller Lodge from 6-8 p.m., focusing on LANL's current and future role in the nation's nuclear pit production plans.

Special guests, joining Mello on a panel, will include

Jacque Breaver, a former Rocky Flats worker and Ron Avery a former pit production supervisor.

Laboratory spokespeople have been invited to participate, but Mellow said on Tuesday, that he had not yet found anybody to represent the laboratory.

Scientists who study the aging nuclear stockpile say new nuclear pits, the plutonium-based packages that provide the triggers for nuclear weapons, may be required in the next several decades.

Formerly, pits were made at the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado, until the FBI closed it down in 1989 because of health and environmental problems.

Subsequently, LANL was given the mission to develop a temporary pit-making capability, and was one of five locations under consideration for a new pit factory.

An environmental impact statement for the Modern Pit Facility was withdrawn last year, when a key House committee requested more information on the administration's pit requirements.

UC and LANL officials have not shown enthusiasm for bringing the facility to Los Alamos, and the New Mexico congressional delegation has favored Carlsbad as a location.

But Mello believes that Los Alamos, which was the Department of Energy's highest rated location for the production, may get the facility after all.

"People in Los Alamos don't understand that they are moving back into the bulls eye," for the pit facility, Mello said.

Anti-nuke group makes annual visit to town

ROGER SNODGRASS
roger@lamonitor.com
Monitor Assistant Editor

8/1/04

Northern New Mexico activist and their supporters will be in town for several activities Thursday. Organized by the Los Alamos Study Group, a public interest organization, the visit will cap several days of activities that began with workshops in Santa Fe and Albuquerque earlier in the week.

The program focusing on Los Alamos National Laboratory is called "citizen inspections" and will include aerial and walk-around tours.

A release by the group says, "(C)iti-

zens can see for themselves some of the facilities involved in the Los Alamos weapons programs, barring interruptions by LANL security forces."

The laboratory has alerted its workforce of the visit, warning that the visitors may try to interact with LANL personnel.

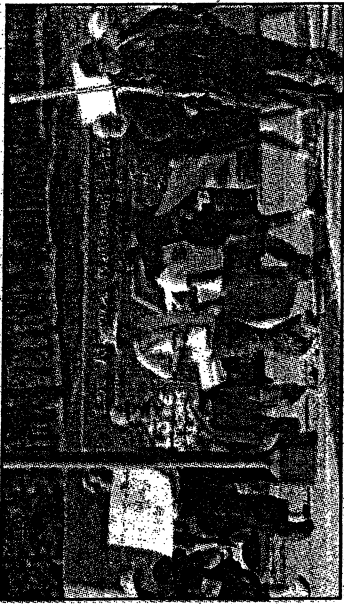
"We have informed our employees and it's entirely up to them if they choose to interact or not," said Linn Tytler, a laboratory spokesperson, this morning. "We have asked them to be polite, as they would be to any citizens. They can choose to discuss unclassified information with anyone or they can choose not to."

LASG's invitations have noted the lab's current safety and security crises. "True nonviolence does not capitalize on this event," Mello wrote. "We will learn, listen and gently engage. It is, for some, a teachable moment, a moment when they begin to see what the lab is all about."

The core of the group arrives from Albuquerque, where LASG moved its headquarters several months ago, and from Santa Fe by car and van.

A couple of aerial tours that will avoid restricted air space will also bring special guests including journalists to the

See VISIT, 2



GARY WARREN/Monitor
Anti-nuclear and peace activists marched on Diamond Drive last year on the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

VISIT Nuke group to come

From Page 1

Hill.

In past years members of the group have been involved in non-violent demonstrations in which some members of the group were symbolically arrested and later released without charges.

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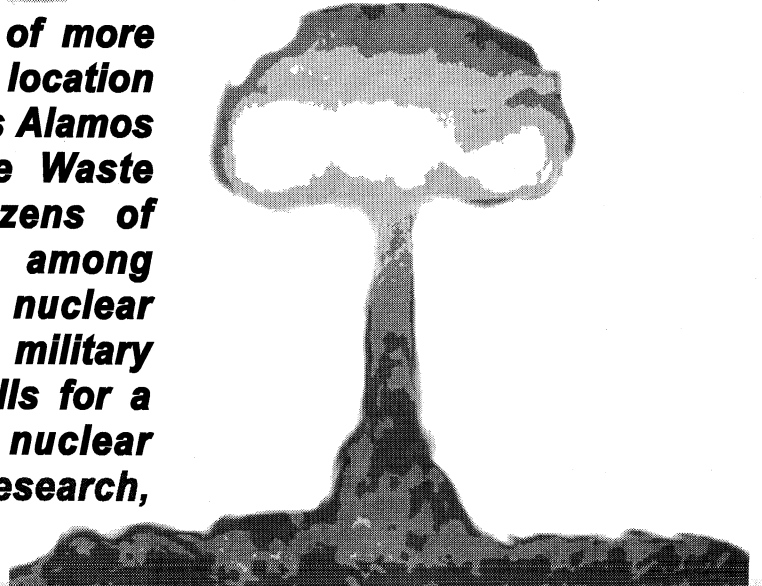
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Nuclear Weapons, Military Research and the University of New Mexico

Albuquerque holds a stockpile of more nuclear weapons than any other location on earth. New Mexico hosts Los Alamos National Lab, Sandia Lab, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, and dozens of military-industrial corporations among other facilities of the national nuclear weapons complex. Current US military and nuclear weapons policy calls for a renewed expansion of the nuclear weapons complex, weapons research, and military spending.



Where do UNM and New Mexico fit into this picture?

The Bush Administration's Nuclear Weapons Policy

Los Alamos National Lab

Universities and Weapons Research

New Nuclear Weapons

The Modern Pit Facility

"More Useable" Nuclear Weapons

WHEN: Wednesday October 8th at 7PM

WHERE: 'Lobo B' on the 3rd Floor of the Student Union Building

With Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, and Darwin BondGraham & Emily Hell of Fiat Pax (a California based group focused on the militarization of universities, science, and education).

***Sponsored by the Progressive Student Alliance
and the UNM Campus Greens***

Publication: Santa Fe New Mexican; Date: Nov 23, 2004; Section: News; Page: 5



Activists rejoice after funding turned down for new weapons

By DIANA HEIL The New Mexican

Anti-nuclear groups declared a victory last weekend after Congress rejected funds for new weapons.

Although the Department of Energy got more money than President Bush requested, the most controversial projects either weren't funded or were funded at reduced levels. The moves came after some members of Congress questioned justifications for designing new weapons, building a new nuclear-weapons manufacturing plant and shortening the time it would take to resume nuclear testing.

Greg Mello, head of the Los Alamos Study Group in Albuquerque, counted it as a victory because the Bush administration did not get an endorsement for new nukes in the spending bill.

"No doubt there was real growth in the weapons program despite these cuts, and there will be real new weapons designed this year and upgraded weapons built — don't doubt this for a minute — but these important symbolic projects, which carry messages about the legitimacy of the whole, were stopped for now," Mello said.

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, with the help of engineers at Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico, was poised to design a so-called "nuclear bunker buster." This new nuclear bomb would burrow beneath ground and hit targets much deeper than possible with current technology.

The Bush administration asked for \$27.6 million for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, as it's called in Washington. But in the end, the bunker buster got nothing.

The Bush administration also wanted \$9 million for scientists to explore advanced concepts in weapons design, which could have included new nuclear weapons. But U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., who chairs the senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, helped change the program's direction and give it a new title.

The newly named Reliability Replacement Warhead Program — which Congress gave \$9 million last weekend — will encourage scientists to focus on refurbishing existing weapons instead, according to Domenici's office. Weapons designers, including those at Los Alamos, will be challenged to make existing weapons more reliable, easier to certify without testing and safer to store over time. Hypothetically, a brand new version of an existing warhead could be built.

Another project that took a hit was the administration's \$29.8 million request for a new facility to build plutonium pits for nuclear weapons. It was cut to \$7 million. The Energy Department can use the money to evaluate different sites for the facility and conduct environmental-impact studies.

Meanwhile, the Energy Department is wrapping up a major study on the life span of pits that will give legislators more information before they decide whether to build a new pit facility, according to Domenici's office.

What's more, part of the millions that would have gone for pit manufacturing and certification at Los Alamos National Laboratory went for another cause. Congress agreed to spend \$236 million to refurbish

W76, a submarine-launched warhead, according to Domenici's office.

The final bill provides \$23.3 billion overall for DOE in 2005. That is \$150 million more than President Bush requested and \$1.34 billion more than the agency received this year. It awaits his signature.

"The fight against the Bush administration's nuclearweapons program was the No. 1 legislative priority of the arms-control community this year," said John Isaacs of the Council for a Livable World based in Washington, D.C.

He attributed the budget victory to Rep. David Hobson, an Ohio Republican who worked to kill these programs; the federal budget deficit; the need to find funds for the Yucca Mountain nuclear-waste dump in Nevada; and the hard work of arms-control advocates.

Hobson, chairman of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, has battled with Domenici, a supporter of the president's policies and an advocate for Los Alamos National Laboratory and other nuclear labs.

Our daily tsunami

Each day we pour thousands of people — including New Mexicans — into maintaining a flood of nuclear weapons. When will we stop this folly?

By Greg Mello

1/6/05

The latest is the south Asian tsunami will claim 150,000 or more lives. It is by any measure a terrible disaster.

U.N. and private relief officials say famine, thirst and disease could claim as many lives as the sea if basic needs are not quickly provided. Many nations are pledging aid; President Bush has increased the initial U.S. offer from \$15 million to \$350 million.

Let us imagine, if we can, a catastrophe of this scale caused by human negligence. It would be a great crime. Unspeakably worse, however, it would be a planned catastrophe. Who could contemplate creating such a catastrophe or put the machinery in place to make it happen?

Actually, thousands of people in the United States do so every day. These are the men and women who lead and work in the government's nuclear weapons industry, including several thousand in New Mexico. Their job is to produce the threat of great danger to others through awesome weapons.

It has been done already. On Aug. 6, 1945, an atomic bomb with an explosive yield of 15 kilotons of TNT was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. Before Japanese authorities could digest this event, a second, 20-kiloton bomb was detonated above Nagasaki on Aug. 9. By the end of that year, 210,000 people had died from these two explosions; roughly another 90,000 prematurely died as a result of these bombs since then.

Those deaths were fully premeditated. Even before a full-scale test was conducted in July of that year in New Mexico, there was little practical uncertainty about the blast, heat and radiation effects of these bombs. What uncertainty might have remained was thoroughly dispelled by the Trinity test near Alamogordo.

Like the invasion of Iraq, which has also

TODAY'S BYLINE

Mello is director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a nuclear weapons monitoring group in Albuquerque.

caused civilian casualties comparable to this week's tsunami, the atomic bombing of Japan was a clear crime under existing law.

So let's call a spade a damn shovel. Our two nuclear labs, Los Alamos and Sandia National laboratories, are the world's foremost facilities for the production of mass death on demand.

Their weapons are like portable death camps; instead of laboriously bringing victims to gas chambers and ovens, the ovens can be brought to the victims in a matter of minutes — once all the preliminary work is done by so many willing hands.

These labs help provide our rulers a way to inflict on as many others as possible the most extreme opposite of what we would like others to do to us — the most extreme opposite of the Golden Rule.

Evangelicals, take note: This arguably makes nuclear weapons the central exemplar and metaphor for all that is upside down in our scale of values today. If it's OK to threaten complete annihilation for millions, surely far lesser forms of violence, both overt and structural, also are justified.

Over the past 60 years, our country has spent \$7 trillion of its citizens' labor and money to generate 70,000 nuclear warheads at an average cost of about \$100 million apiece. We retain 10,400 such weapons today in our nuclear arsenal.

The \$35 million promised in initially in relief for hard-hit Asian nations represents about one-third of what it historically has cost us for a single nuclear weapon — the casualties from which would likely exceed those from this week's tsunami.

Morality, and even law, are somewhat out of fashion in the hallowed halls of the

national security state, and so we ask only this: Which of what follows is the better national security investment?

This year, Los Alamos Lab will spend about \$200 million to produce plutonium bomb cores ("pits"). After spending about \$1.7 billion over a decade-long period, the lab hopes to start manufacturing pits in earnest in 2007 in order to augment the 23,000 pits the U.S. already has. If the lab slowed down these grotesque efforts to build that 23,001st pit by just 20 percent for just one year we could double our aid to the hundreds of thousands of people who are now in mortal danger. Which is the better security investment?

This year's budget for Los Alamos Lab is more than twice as much as will be spent on all the programs of the World Health Organization for the entire world. And the Iraq war costs more than 100 times as much.

Which is the better security investment, aggressively creating hatred against us while killing and maiming thousands of our own people in an unprecedented invasion of a foreign country? Or providing clean water, child immunization programs and increasing food security all over the world?

It is tragic that any of this has to be asked, and asked in a guest article like this one. It is too obvious.

If newspaper editors could find the courage in their hearts to speak up clearly and reporters to ask obvious but embarrassing questions, we would not be in Iraq, nor would Los Alamos be making plutonium pits.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. aid would be flowing to these stricken countries, and you and I need not cry out in shame for what our country has become.

Where will those editors find the courage to speak for basic human values? Dear reader, from our own, from our own.



Bush budget would mean more for LANL, less for Sandia

[print](#)

DIANA HEIL | The New Mexican
February 8, 2005

The Bush Administration dished out a few surprises for the Energy Department with its Monday budget proposal.

"While there are some positive elements to this budget proposal, overall New Mexico's labs don't fare as well as I would like them to," U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman,

D-N.M., said in a news release.

If Congress goes along with it, spending for the Energy Department would fall 2 percent to

\$23.4 billion.

New Mexico would see a \$6 million decrease over current funding, which is at \$4.5 billion.

"It's possible, even likely, that the nuclear-weapons budget may decline for the first time since 1995 in projected constant-dollar terms," according to Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group in Albuquerque.

But Mello and other anti-nuke activists aren't celebrating.

The proposed budget is streaked with "misplaced priorities," according to Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, a watchdog group in Santa Fe.

Back on the table are four controversial nuclear weapons programs that Congress last year either completely cut, substantially reduced or redirected, Coghlan said. Of the increased funding, \$4 million, would go toward studying "bunker busters," a new weapon that could destroy hardened, deeply buried targets.

Meanwhile, a program to stop the spread of nuclear materials throughout the world got a 15 percent increase, to \$1.6 billion, a boost both senators Bingaman and Pete Domenici, R-N.M., praised.

New Mexico workers, however, may wonder what the 2006 budget proposal means for them. Some programs in the state would swell while others would shrink.

Los Alamos National Laboratory stands to gain more: \$1.8 billion, up \$29 million over this year.

Funding at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque would decrease to \$1.381 billion. That's \$121 million below what it got this year, according to Domenici.

"It's too early to speculate on what it would mean," Sandia spokesman John German said, noting that the proposed budget has a long road ahead through Congress.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad also would take a hit. The budget proposal includes

\$226 million for WIPP, down

\$11.5 million from this year, according to Domenici.

WIPP, which accepted its first radioactive shipment in March 1999, is designed to permanently store plutonium-contaminated waste more than 2,100 feet underground in ancient salt beds.

Within the LANL budget is money for programs to stop the spread of nuclear materials in the world, make plutonium triggers for nuclear weapons, build the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility, upgrade the power infrastructure and accelerate cleanup of contamination on lab grounds.

There's also \$27 million for the controversial and vastly over-budget Dual Axis Radiographic Hydrodynamic Test facility, an X-ray machine intended to produce three-dimensional images of materials during an explosion.

"Accelerated" waste cleanup at Los Alamos would receive \$142 million, up \$23 million from this year. The state is prepared to sign a massive environmental cleanup order with the Energy Department and Los Alamos lab. But Ron Curry, the New Mexico environment secretary, said he isn't sure what the budget means by accelerated cleanup and he plans to talk to lab Director Pete Nanos about it.

"There's a possibility that the funding the Department of Energy needs to push forward on this order could be cut," Curry said in an interview Monday.



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Questions? Comments? Send an email to webeditor@sfnewmexican.com

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF JEAN LAMBERT

PROMINENT PEACE ACTIVIST TO VISIT LONDON

8 March 2005

Jean Lambert, London's Green MEP is hosting a landmark visit to the UK by Greg Mello, one of the US's most prominent peace activists, especially around the area of US nuclear weapons plans and policies. In the USA, Greg Mello is well known for conducting citizens' inspections of nuclear facilities, demanding greater transparency and accountability from the nuclear industry.

The European Parliament will vote today on whether to accept measures on nuclear disarmament ahead of a conference on New York in May of this year.

Jean Lambert said; **"We want more money for weapons inspectors and a UN backed body to oversee nuclear disarmament, as well as restating the EU's commitment to the elimination of all nuclear weapons."**

Mr. Mello's trip to London and Brussels next week stems from his view that American nuclear policy needs a closer review by leaders in other democracies. **"You can't understand what's going on in U.S. nuclear policy by reading the U.S. newspapers, or even by following the debates in Congress, such as they are. On the one hand, U.S. nuclear policies are substantially driven by institutional factors which are poorly understood in the capital, and on the other, they are expressions of military imperatives which are seldom if ever openly discussed in those places,"** said Mello.

"As a result, there is a widespread, serious misapprehension that identifies Bush Administration rhetoric and programs with some kind of dramatic change in U.S. nuclear policy. There has been no such change, only a gradual intensification and ripening of programs and imperatives already in place and at work."

"We need help from western democracies less given over to the imperial thinking. The direction of U.S. nuclear policy is quite dangerous, and the state of debate in the U.S. is utterly incapable of restraining these dangers."

Jean concluded, **"It is essential that peace campaigners across the globe co-operate to explain and expose the reality of WMDs. Greg's trip will bring new information in this important 60th anniversary year."**

Press Contact Alex Rowe 020 7407 6280 alexrowe@greenmeps.org.uk

Notes to Editors

- 1) Mr. Mello lives and works in New Mexico, where the world's two best-funded nuclear weapons facilities (Los Alamos and Sandia laboratories) are to be found. A former engineer, for the past decade thirteen years, he has directed the Los Alamos Study Group, a nongovernmental organization devoted to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.
- 2) This year is the 60th anniversary of the nuclear bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- 3) Both Jean Lambert and Greg Mello are available for interview in the UK from Saturday 12 March and in Brussels on 16th and 17th March.

The Nuclear Disarmament Imperative

by Claire Long and Emily Strabbing,
Los Alamos Study Group

We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values.... A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." The words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. ring with a relevance in this crucial time when the Bush administration has sent Congress the most massive military budget in our nation's history or the history of the world, including expenditures for a new generation of nuclear weaponry. This "spiritual death" referred to by Dr. King is not something ethereal and vague; rather, it is well within our power to transcend. One crucial component in the effort to decrease military spending and bolster citizens' well-being is to take a stand against nuclear weapons.

Nuclear proliferation, that is, the research and manufacture of nuclear weapons, is alive and well here in New Mexico, the birthplace of the atomic bomb. The continued possession, further development and manufacture of nuclear weapons by the United States undermines the ethical basis of our society, breaks treaties our nation has signed, wastes our nation's wealth, and permanently contaminates our environment, while providing no real contribution to U.S. national security.

This concrete manifestation of what Dr. King calls "spiritual death," this black hole of military spending, ironically provides us with a unique opportunity for "spiritual resurrection," if we choose to take the road of action with confidence. This means saying *no* to nuclear proliferation and *yes* to nuclear disarmament on behalf of humanity and the planet. The Los Alamos Study Group asks you to join more than 1000 New Mexicans and 200 New Mexico businesses and organizations that have made this choice by signing the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament." It is up to citizens to disrupt the trend of socio-political isolation and revitalize public discourse about the *illegal* production of nuclear weapons.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION ILLEGAL

Illegal? Yes, nuclear proliferation is indeed illegal, as stated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), ratified in 1970 by the United States and 187 other countries. The U.S. and other nuclear powers are therefore legally bound to abide by all articles within the treaty, including Article VI of the NPT, which clearly calls for all parties of the treaty to pursue "... complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

GUEST EDITORIAL . . .

Silence in the face of nuclear proliferation communicates support for the illegal, immoral industry of maintaining, researching, creating and deploying nuclear and other weapons.

The growing international spotlight on nuclear proliferation has also activated a worldwide groundswell of voices calling for disarmament. In addition to individuals, hundreds of national and international organizations have formed to work for nuclear disarmament. Members include political leaders, military personnel, business professionals, physicians, scientists, lawyers, religious leaders, communities of faith, artists, musicians, actors, students and concerned citizens everywhere. General Charles Horner, former President Jimmy Carter, Maya Angelou and Dr. Jane Goodall are just a few prestigious public figures who support nuclear abolition (<http://www.gsinstitute.org/gsi/you.html>).

Heads of government and political figures are also beginning to heed the call for disarmament. As stated by the World Court Project, "The vast majority of governments across the globe support nuclear abolition, but have not been strong, loud, or coordinated enough to help achieve it" (<http://wcp.gn.apc.org/>). One successful example is Mayors for Peace, a coalition of mayors from 714 cities representing 110 countries so far, working toward peace and nonviolent solutions to international conflicts. In the United States, mayors of 57 cities are now part of Mayors for Peace, including our mayor of Santa Fe, Larry Delgado, who we hope is leading the way for other New Mexico mayors to follow. This is no small feat! Using Mayors for Peace as inspiration, we must work with our allies and pressure our own political leaders and other important public figures to heed the call for nuclear disarmament (<http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/mayors/english/>).

GOALS FOR DISARMAMENT

You may be asking yourself, what does the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament" have to do with me? This is not simply a local petition; it is New Mexico's voice in the global chorus of numerous declarations against nuclear proliferation and the unjust violence inherent in the construction and threat of deployment of nuclear weapons. The World Court project states that "declarations [for nuclear disarmament] are therefore not petitions. They are not simply political tools. They are personal commitments intended to contribute towards the development of international law." This concept is the philosophical basis for the Los Alamos Study Group's "Call for Nuclear Disarmament," which states four concrete goals for disarmament:

1. Stop design and manufacture of all nuclear weapons, including plutonium bomb cores.
2. Dismantle our nuclear arsenal in concert with other nuclear powers, pursuant to Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

3. Halt the disposal of nuclear waste at Los Alamos.
4. Demand sensible priorities for health care for everyone, better education, renewable energy and economic opportunity for those who don't have it.

LOS ALAMOS STUDY GROUP

Here in New Mexico we have an important historical imperative and current responsibility with regard to nuclear weapons research, development and production. While federal funding continued to pour into our state at a higher rate per capita than any other state, New Mexico's poverty rates increased, and our public education system was rated as one of the worst in the nation. Observation and rejection of this intimate, destructive relationship led to the creation of the Los Alamos Study Group in 1989.

The organization is a nonprofit whose careful research on the activity of nuclear weapons labs in New Mexico is devoted to educating the public on matters of nuclear activity and facilitating positive change in New Mexico, as well as nationally and internationally. Our work includes research and scholarship, education of decision-makers, creation of an information clearinghouse for journalists, organizing, litigating and advertising. We place particular emphasis on the education and training of young activists and scholars.

We are currently working even harder to bring our research into the public eye and to invite the public to become engaged in our research and action by joining the registry of public resistance to nuclear proliferation. 2005 is an important year for nuclear policy. In May a delegation from the Los Alamos Study Group will attend the five-year NPT Review Conference at the United Nations in New York. On July 15 and 16, we will host two literary events in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, "Mightier Than the Sword: Writers Address the Nuclear Age," to mark the 60th anniversary of the world's first nuclear explosion at the Trinity Site in New Mexico. To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the devastation of Hiroshima, August 6, and Nagasaki, August 9, the Study Group, in cooperation with many other organizations, will host "Hiroshima 60 Years," an all-day commemorative event on August 6 at Ashley Pond in Los Alamos. All are great opportunities to speak up where it really counts.

TO ENDORSE THE "CALL"

Silence in the face of nuclear proliferation communicates support for the illegal, immoral industry of maintaining, researching, creating and deploying nuclear and other weapons. To sign the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament" is to join your fellow concerned New Mexicans, owners of local businesses and leaders of nonprofit organizations and churches as well as people around the world in a declaration of public conscience. We need every individual, business, organization and church to endorse the "Call."

Please go to our website, www.lasg.org, first page, under "New Mexicans Call for Nuclear Disarmament," and click on the "Endorse the Call" button at the right of the page. Let's speak out, New Mexico. It's our issue. ○

For more information on how to get involved and to endorse the "Hiroshima 60 Years" August 6 event, visit our website at www.lasg.org, e-mail Claire Long at clong@lasg.org, or reach us by phone at 505-265-1200.

The Nuclear Disarmament Imperative

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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The continued possession, further development, and manufacture of nuclear weapons by the United States here in N.M. undermines the ethical basis of our society, breaks treaties our nation has signed, wastes our nation's wealth, and permanently contaminates our environment, while providing no real contribution to U.S. national security. This concrete manifestation of what Dr. King calls "spiritual death," this black hole of military spending, ironically provides us with a unique opportunity for "spiritual resurrection," if we choose to take the road of action with confidence.

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Illegal? Yes, nuclear proliferation is indeed illegal as stated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) ratified in 1970 by the United States and 187 other countries. The US and other nuclear powers are therefore legally bound to abide by all articles within the treaty, including Article VI of the NPT which clearly calls for all parties of the Treaty to pursue "...complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

The current nuclear weapons budget for Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has tripled the average expenditures during the Cold War era. LANL is the largest facility for WMD in the world in dollar terms. Sandia National Laboratory is next in size. Almost half of U.S. nuclear warhead spending now occurs in New Mexico. Soon, LANL will be the only site in the U.S. that fabricates plutonium pits (bomb cores), which are necessary for making completely new nuclear weapons. LANL also houses the largest active nuclear disposal site in the Southwest.

According to a recent poll conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) and Knowledge Networks, 84% of Americans believe it a good idea to "work toward eliminating nuclear weapons as part of the non-proliferation treaty" (check-out "Americans on WMD Proliferation", at <http://www.pipa.org/> and search for "April 15, 2004").

The "Call for Nuclear Disarmament" is not simply a local petition; it is New Mexico's voice in the global chorus of numerous declarations against nuclear proliferation and the unjust violence inherent in the construction and threat of deployment of nuclear weapons.

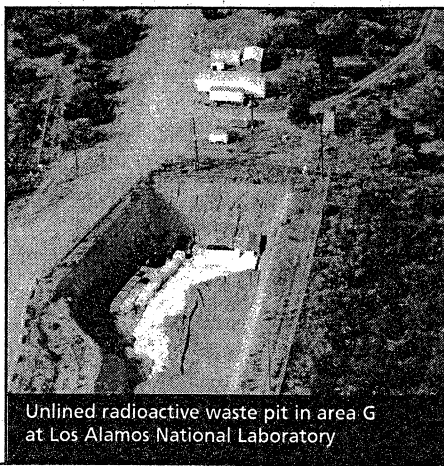
The Los Alamos Study Group's "Call for Nuclear Disarmament," states 4 concrete goals for disarmament:

- 1) Stop designing and manufacture of all nuclear weapons including plutonium bomb cores.
- 2) Dismantle our nuclear arsenal in concert with other nuclear powers, pursuant to Article VI of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.
- 3) Halt the disposal of nuclear waste at Los Alamos: and finally,
- 4) We demand sensible priorities for health care for everyone, better education, renewable energy and economic opportunity for those who have not.

Here in New Mexico we have an important historical imperative and current responsibility with regard to nuclear weapons research, development and production. While federal funding continues to pour into our state at a higher rate per capita than any other state, New Mexico's poverty rates climb, and our public education system is rated as the worst in the nation. The Los Alamos Study Group formed in 1989, is a nonprofit organization whose careful research on the activity of nuclear weapons labs in New Mexico is devoted to educating the public on matters of nuclear activity and facilitating positive change in New Mexico, as well as nationally and internationally.

To sign the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament" is to join your fellow concerned New Mexicans, owners of local businesses and leaders of non-profit organizations and churches as well as people around the world in a declaration of public conscience. Please go to our web site, www.lasg.org, "Endorse the Call" button at the right of the page. Let's speak out New Mexico. It's our issue.

For more information on how to get involved, to join the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament," or to endorse the Hiroshima 60 Years August 6th event, visit our website www.lasg.org, email Claire Long at clong@lasg.org or reach us by phone: (505)265-1200.



Unlined radioactive waste pit in area G at Los Alamos National Laboratory

Nuke administration proposes new warhead

By **WALTER PINCUS**
The Washington Post

head is "still just a vision, nothing more," and that even planning for a feasibility study is "at the very early stages of development."

But he insisted the yields of most of the nuclear warheads in the current stockpiles, built to attack Soviet hard targets, "are probably too high." Because their casings were not designed to penetrate earth, "we have no capability against hardened, deeply buried targets." He also described the current stockpile as "unsuited for some specialized missions" caused by post-Cold War situations.

"Today's stockpile may not be the stockpile you want to have 20 years from now," Brooks concluded.

Greg Mello, director of the Los Alamos Study Group, an anti-nuke group in Albuquerque, took note of the policy shift. "This is the first time NNSA has openly spoken about building plutonium cores for new weapons

— and doing so soon, at Los Alamos," he said. "This is also the first time the Bush Administration has requested funds for manufacturing equipment specifically for these new weapons."

The push for new weapons is about a need for work to train a new generation of weaponeers at Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories, Mello said, "before the graybeards retire and die."

Although Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., had to leave the afternoon session early to attend the White House ceremony awarding the Medal of Honor to a Floridian, he gave an indication of the questions that others will raise in discussing the new warhead feasibility study.

"Is it an opportunity to have a serious review and discussion of nuclear weapons and nuclear policy?" Nelson asked. "Or is it just an excuse to develop a new nuclear weapon and to return to nuclear-weapons testing?"

Brooks said the warheads would be

designed to be less sensitive to aging and would be easier to certify as safe and reliable. He said money for the feasibility study would be taken from what Congress approved last year to initiate a so-called Reliable Replacement Warhead program that was originally proposed to study replacement parts for current warheads, designed almost 30 years ago and now being updated.

Those funds and new ones added in the proposed fiscal 2006 budget would be used "to begin concept and feasibility studies on replacement warheads or warhead components that provide comparable military capabilities to existing warheads," Brooks said.

If those studies produced a feasible program, he added, by 2012 to 2015 "we should be able to demonstrate through a small build of warheads that a reliable replacement warhead can be manufactured and certified without nuclear testing."



WASHINGTON — The head of the nation's nuclear-weapons programs proposed Monday that Congress approve funds to study the feasibility of building a new, more reliable nuclear warhead that could be deployed without nuclear testing in less than 10 years.

Saying the current Cold War stockpile is inadequate technically and militarily, Linton F. Brooks, administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, told the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces: "We want to explore whether there is a better way to sustain existing military capabilities in our stockpile absent nuclear testing."

Recognizing such a proposal could be highly controversial, Brooks emphasized that a new nuclear war-

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US Nuclear Warhead Plan Under Fire

By Julian Borger
The Guardian UK

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Saturday 09 April 2005

Democrats and American arms control groups warned yesterday that a new Bush administration scheme to replace ageing nuclear warheads could be used as a cover for the eventual construction of a "black arsenal" of new weapons.

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The plan, known as the reliable replacement warhead programme (RRW), was unveiled this week by Linton Brooks, the head of the National Nuclear Security Administration.

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Instead of maintaining the old stockpile by monitoring the warheads and replacing occasional spare parts, RRW would entail the design, production and deployment of a new generation of warheads. These would not require testing, and therefore would not break the US moratorium on nuclear tests.

Mr Brooks said the new warheads would be used in existing cold war era weapons. The construction of a warhead production facility would also maintain the expertise and infrastructure for the US to respond flexibly to new threats.

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"We need to maintain the capability to respond to potential future requirements," he said.

Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher, a California Democrat and one of the party's leading voices on military issues, alleged that the administration was using the scheme as a cover for developing a range of "smaller and more usable" weapons which were blocked last year by Congress.

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"This administration doesn't take no for an answer," Ms Tauscher told The Guardian. "But every time we erect a fence they jump it."

Congress blocked development funds for the proposed robust nuclear earth penetrator, a "bunker-buster" for destroying enemy stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction or underground command posts. The legislature also stopped the advanced concepts initiative, a broad-ranging research programme for developing a new generation of weapons.

Opponents said both projects would undermine global counter-proliferation efforts and could eventually tempt policymakers to use a new generation of smaller weapons in a crisis.

Greg Mello, the head of the watchdog organisation the Los Alamos Study Group, said the RRW plan could have the same impact because it enabled the nuclear laboratories to custom-build small numbers of a range of warheads. He said: "It raises the spectre of a

separate arsenal - a black arsenal beyond public oversight.

"This is a way to perpetuate the nuclear weapons complex in its full panoply of capabilities and to allow the US nuclear stockpile to evolve for new missions under the guise of so-called reliability problems," Mr Mello went on.

"It is not compatible with US and other efforts to counter proliferation and it sends the wrong message around the world."

Bryan Wilkes, a spokesman for Mr Brooks said that the RRW plan was being misinterpreted. "The last new weapon in the stockpile is 20 years old," Mr Wilkes said. "If there is a problem with a component, you might have an entire class of weapons that goes bad. What we need is a way to replace some of those components. We are not talking about new weapons of new designs."

Mr Brooks argued that the RRW programme would lead to a reduction in the US arsenal rather than its expansion. He said the new warheads would be so reliable they would not need testing, and would not require the current large reserve of warheads on standby in case of malfunctions in the existing plutonium weapons.

"Establishing a responsive nuclear infrastructure will provide opportunities for additional stockpile reductions because we can rely less on the stockpile and more on infrastructure," Mr Brooks said.

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Stronger Steps Sought against Cluster Bombs

By Stefania Bianchi
Inter Press Service

Friday 08 April 2005

Brussels -- Stronger regulations are needed to protect civilians from cluster munitions during and following armed conflict, a group of leading human rights groups says.

A consortium of civil society groups, made up of the New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Belgium-based non-governmental organizations Handicap International and Netwerk Vlaanderen say the international community must halt the production, sale and use of such weapons, which they say harm hundreds of innocent civilians each year.

'The immediate effect and long-term impact of the use of cluster munitions over the past 40 years have demonstrated that cluster munitions pose unacceptable risks to civilians, yet little has been done to reduce the supply of and demand for the weapon, or to regulate its production, trade or use,' the groups said in a statement released during a press conference Thursday (Apr. 7).

'There is no transparency requirement in any conventional arms control regime that requires states to declare or notify other states of sales or transfers of cluster munitions,' they added.

Cluster bombs are weapons that contain a number of bomblets which get scattered over a wide area. Cluster munitions include artillery projectiles, aerially delivered bombs, and rockets or missiles that can be delivered by surface or from the air.

Submunitions delivered by cluster munitions are highly explosive and can be delivered in very large numbers from a long distance. However, many fail to explode and become explosive remnants of war (ERW), and these threaten the lives of civilians who come into

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International



U.S. nuclear warheads plan under fire

By Julian Borger

WASHINGTON, APRIL 9. Democrats and American arms control groups warned yesterday that a new Bush administration scheme to replace ageing nuclear warheads could be used as a cover for the eventual construction of a "black arsenal" of new weapons.

The plan, known as the reliable replacement warhead programme (RRW), was unveiled this week by Linton Brooks, the head of the National Nuclear Security Administration.

Instead of maintaining the old stockpile by monitoring the warheads and replacing occasional spare parts, RRW would entail the design, production and deployment of a new generation of warheads. These would not require testing, and therefore would not break the U.S. moratorium on nuclear tests.

Mr. Brooks said the new warheads would be used in existing cold war era weapons.

The construction of a warhead production facility would also maintain the expertise and infrastructure for the U.S. to respond flexibly to new threats.

"A covert plan"

"We need to maintain the capability to respond to potential future requirements," he said.

Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher, a California Democrat and one of the party's leading voices on military issues, alleged that the administration was using the scheme as a cover for developing a range of "smaller and more usable" weapons which were blocked last year by Congress.

"This administration doesn't take no for an answer," Ms. Tauscher told *The Guardian*. "But every time we erect a fence they jump it."

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He said: ``It raises the spectre of a separate arsenal — a black arsenal beyond public oversight.

``This is a way to perpetuate the nuclear weapons complex in its full panoply of capabilities and to allow the U.S. nuclear stockpile to evolve for new missions under the guise of so-called reliability problems," Mr. Mello went on.

- Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

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May 17, 2005

Anxiously, Los Alamos Awaits a New Era

By **WILLIAM J. BROAD**

Two of the world's largest military contractors are challenging the nation's largest university system for the job of running Los Alamos, the government's pre-eminent nuclear arms laboratory. The winner will preside over a program valued as high as \$44 billion over two decades.

The issue is whether the University of California, the lab's longtime manager, should be awarded a new federal contract after presiding over years of safety problems, security lapses, financial irregularities and embarrassing scandals, culminating May 6 in the resignation of the director, Dr. G. Peter Nanos.

On a deeper level, the struggle is over Los Alamos's mission - whether it should turn away from its traditional role as a center of scientific excellence toward a narrower one focused on weapons design and production, in essence a bomb factory.

The university's history of automatic contract renewals ends in September; the Department of Energy says it will start receiving new proposals this week. Already, the lab is experiencing a wave of jitters, with retirements up sharply and officials expressing fears of a mass exodus.

The military contractors, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, are pursuing the contract separately. Their ambitions appear to align with those of the Bush administration, which wants Los Alamos to make atomic triggers for hydrogen bombs and a new generation of reliable, long-lived warheads.

The companies say they could revitalize Los Alamos as well. Dr. C. Paul Robinson, who recently resigned as director of the Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque to lead Lockheed Martin's bid for Los Alamos, said his company knew how to excel at industrial production without endangering its scientific mission.

"We don't want to devalue the role of science and technology," he said in an interview. "That's what drives the innovations."

But officials and experts both inside and outside Los Alamos say they worry that putting the lab in industrial hands may accelerate an exodus of vital personnel, diminish its ability to do world-class science and leave it poorly equipped to carry out the Bush administration's plans as well as its traditional responsibilities.

"I'm not sure that turning Los Alamos into a lackluster lab more focused on manufacturing is a good thing for the country," said Dr. Hugh Gusterson, an analyst at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who studies the nation's nuclear arms laboratories. "If you're trying to recruit a young Ph.D. from Princeton, and you tell them you're working for the University of California and not a bomb shop, it really matters."

Dr. Gusterson, who visited Los Alamos last month, said he had never seen morale so low. "People were just stricken," he said. "They're worried that Los Alamos will increasingly become a manufacturing facility. A lot of people were talking about early retirement."

A main worry of lab employees is that new management will never match the university's benefits, including its generous pension plan. Kevin Roark, a spokesman for Los Alamos, said worries over such matters had contributed to a recent increase in retirement inquiries.

"These are core people," he said, adding that most of them were not support staff but experts involved centrally in work on nuclear arms or on halting their spread.

Isolated in the mountains of New Mexico, the Los Alamos National Laboratory employs 14,000 people on an annual budget of \$2.2 billion. Nuclear weapons research is only one of its missions; it is ranked as one of the world's top laboratories in

terms of the number and quality of its unclassified scientific papers, as measured by how often subsequent papers cite them. Los Alamos has long maintained that the high quality of its science lifts its other endeavors.

The University of California's role goes back to 1943, when J. Robert Oppenheimer, then a top physicist there, founded the lab and brought along his employer. Historians say the university took on the management job reluctantly, mainly as a wartime public service.

The academic tie helped recruit the geniuses who built the first atom bomb but also brought a conundrum that endures today: the best civilian brains are capable of distinctly nonmilitary behavior. At wartime Los Alamos, Richard Feynman, later a Nobel laureate, spent a fair amount of time irritating the military authorities by cracking their safes.

Admirers say the climate of academic freedom lets dissenters speak out and gives the best and brightest minds a chance to clash; in science, sharp criticism is the backbone of rigor. But critics say the university's hands-off management style - especially after the cold war, when the central focus of the lab shifted from innovating to caretaking - resulted in a run of awkward and sometimes dangerous lapses.

"They lent their name and credentials for recruiting but were not in the day-to-day operations," said a senior Los Alamos official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, saying he feared reprisal. Part of the problem, he said, was that the university got only \$8 million a year for its work. In the new contract, he said, the figure is to climb to around \$100 million, the higher pay coinciding with tougher management duties.

The biggest upset on the university's watch involved Dr. Wen Ho Lee, a Los Alamos scientist arrested in 1999 on 59 counts of mishandling secret data. All but one of the charges were dropped after a judge found significant problems with the government's case.

Apprehension about security increased in 2000 when two computer hard drives containing secret data vanished from a safe and were found weeks later behind a copying machine.

In 2002, the Energy Department said such jolts reflected a "systematic management failure," and in April 2003 it announced plans to end automatic contract renewals and open the pact to competition.

Now, two years later, the department says it will lay out the new contract's terms and expectations in a final request for proposals this week. Competitors will have 60 days to submit their bids. The management fee will be the same no matter who wins.

A career civil servant at the Energy Department, as yet unnamed, is to make the choice; the idea is to remove the risk of pressure that a political appointee may face.

"The future of the lab is up in the air right now," said Greg Mello, director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a private arms-control organization in Albuquerque that monitors weapons laboratories. "The question is how hard core Los Alamos is going to be, how much science and how much production."

On Wednesday, Bechtel, the world's largest construction and engineering company, said it would join the University of California's bid. Before that announcement, S. Robert Foley, a retired admiral who oversees the university's weapons lab management, said in an interview that adding a large industrial partner would "back up the capabilities on the business side to match what we have on the science side."

He acknowledged a history of management errors and weakness at the university, the lab and the government. "They played musical chairs," he said. "They didn't hold people accountable. So there is plenty of blame to go around."

If Lockheed Martin wins the bidding, Dr. Robinson, formerly of Sandia, will become the new Los Alamos director. The company is also talking to the University of Texas - the nation's second biggest university system - to see if it will join as an academic partner.

Northrop Grumman says its strong suit is its expertise in developing advanced technology and managing large-scale military programs. "Northrop Grumman's strength lies in its people - scientists and engineers much like those at Los Alamos - who

apply their energy and creativity to solve the nation's most challenging problems," the company's president, Dr. Ronald D. Sugar, said in a statement.

But Dr. Gusterson of M.I.T. said the government needed to move carefully lest it cripple what has been a giant of national security.

"I'm sure it's attractive to have a tightly run ship," he said. "But you'll get worse science."

Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jun 14, 2005; Section: Final; Page: 16



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3 Labs Rip U.S. Nuclear Complex

John Fleck Journal Staff Writer copyright 2005 Albuquerque Journal

Senate Unveils DOE Budget Today

The United States' current approach to maintaining its nuclear arsenal "looks increasingly unsustainable," according to an internal report by senior officials at the nation's three nuclear weapons labs.

The nuclear weapons program's future costs exceed the available budget, and the effort to maintain aging warheads is forcing the nation to retain a larger nuclear arsenal than would otherwise be needed, the report concludes.

Completed last month, the report's findings mirror in some respects those of a key House of Representatives subcommittee.

The House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee issued a report last month calling for a sweeping reorganization of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex as part of its proposed 2006 Department of Energy budget.

The two reports set the stage for today's unveiling of the Senate's version of the DOE budget, written by Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.

The outcome of the debate is critical to New Mexico, which is home to Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories, two of the three U.S. nuclear weapons design laboratories. The federal government will spend an estimated \$2.9 billion this year for nuclear weapons work in New Mexico, more than in any other state.

The House and lab reports both argue that it is no longer feasible to maintain the existing Cold War nuclear arsenal by nursing along old weapons, refurbishing aging parts when necessary.

The labs' report, written by a quartet of senior nuclear weapons scientists and endorsed by the weapons program chiefs of the three U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories, argues that continuing to maintain weapons is possible "only at significantly increasing cost."

The program, dubbed "Stockpile Stewardship" when it was established a decade ago, "merely preserve(s) nuclear weapons with out-dated technology and a ponderous and expensive enterprise required to support old technology," the labs' report concludes.

Because of resulting uncertainties about long-term weapons reliability, "the United States must retain a relatively large number of reserve weapons to ensure against contingencies," the lab scientists from Sandia, Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories wrote -- spares in

case problems crop up in some of the primary stockpile weapons.

Official stockpile numbers are classified, but the independent Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental and arms control group, estimates there are 5,300 nuclear weapons in the active U.S. stockpile and another 5,000 being held in reserve.

The House Subcommittee, led by Rep. David Hobson, R-Ohio, raised similar arguments last month, concluding that the nuclear weapons labs need to design a new "Reliable Replacement Warhead" that is easier to care for in the long run.

Hobson's 2006 budget report calls for the new warhead to be "designed for ease of manufacturing, maintenance, dismantlement and certification without nuclear testing."

To do that, Hobson's spending plan would:

- * Reduce spending on refurbishment of current U.S. weapons;
- * Increase spending on design efforts for the new Reliable Replacement Warhead;
- * Reduce spending on preparations for possible future underground nuclear test blasts at the federal government's Nevada Test Site;
- * Cut spending on nuclear weapons supercomputers, arguing that they have not lived up to their promise as a way of conducting virtual nuclear tests to maintain existing weapons;
- * Eliminate funding for a new factory to build plutonium nuclear weapon cores; and
- * Delay money for a new plutonium lab at Los Alamos until the weapons designers have a clearer picture of what the newly designed warhead requires.

Greg Mello, an arms control activist at the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group, called Hobson's vision of a new nuclear weapons program "sweeping."

Aides to Domenici declined comment, saying they preferred to wait until they released their own proposed version of the 2006 nuclear weapons budget.

TAOS DAILY NEWS

Whopping Expansion at Los Alamos National Labs

June 14, 2005

By Jane Odin

*Welcome to
New Mexico*

*We invest in
nuclear;
P-Pits are our
specialty.
We invest in
WMD;
We make 'em,
ship 'em, store
'em.*

*Bombs are the
name of the
game.
Our politics are the same.
Tons of unburied nuke waste
Under tents in rusting drums.*

*Plutonium glows in the sun.
In the land of nuclear fun.*

*But there's very little security
At factories of nuclear purity.*

*Welcome to New Mexico.
Roll or bowl a P-pit
A penny a pitch.
Capitol of WMD, capital of WMD.*



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COLUMNS

The Grunt's View

Introduction

LANL is permitted to burn 1,408 pounds yearly of depleted uranium (DU) in open pits. The amount is up from the May report of 528 pounds. But hopefully we have little danger of DU in Taos. The particles are so heavy they don't blow the distance. Dispersion models find that the particles travel 50 meters. That's the end of the good news. LANL is a bomb-making factory. The place is flowing with plutonium—from plutonium pits to unimaginable tons of high-level radioactive waste. And now the Department of Energy (DOE) is itching to expand into the world's largest unregulated radioactive waste dump and create the Rocky Flats of tomorrow: a Modern Pit Facility.

Meanwhile, will the Taos Town Council sign the resolution supporting U.S. compliance with the treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and the closure of the LANL nuclear waste dump? Los Alamos Study Group says Town Council support is very important. The vote is scheduled for June 28, after a presentation by Erlinda Gonzales, Town Council member and member of LANL's Citizen's Advisory Board (CAB).

If the Council fails to support the resolution, it is a vote in favor of the war machine, high-level radioactive waste, proliferation of nuclear warheads, terrorist threats, radioactive pollution and a philosophy of no more tomorrows.

Area G

The DOE wants to expand the LANL nuclear waste dump (Area G) from 63 to 93 acres in fall '05. Greg Mello, Director of Los Alamos Study Group, says this must be stopped. Why focus on Area G? Fire, terrorism, environmental pollution, disease and proliferation are obvious concerns. Area G is said to have 2.5 million drums under three feet of sand. It's located on the regional aquifer that supplies water to Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque and Pojoaque. Area G has never been licensed, regulated or permitted. Although the Attorney General says the site is operating illegally, neither Governor Bill Richardson, A.G. Patricia Madrid, nor the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has acted to do anything about it. At least something should be done about the estimated 50,000 drums of plutonium waste under huge white nylon tents sitting on the mesa before expanding Area G.

A chemical engineer and past member of CAB says that in

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'99, unidentified radioactive gas-filled canisters piled up near Area G. "They would puncture tiny holes in the canisters and draw samples for analysis in an attempt to determine the exact nature of the waste," according to the engineer, who wrote in an extensive CAB memo that LANL needed to deal with waste-management situations "liable to have a major environmental impact on the surrounding communities." For example, according to NMED reports, there is noticeable Tritium and Strontium 90 contamination of groundwater in Mortandad Canyon. It is generally known that this was dumped through a sewer outlet into the canyon.

Details of health concerns and other issues are found at the Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety website www.nuclearactive.org. Look at "New Mexico's Right to Know: The Impact of LANL Operations on Public Health and the Environment." You will learn the Centers for Disease Control has found "the soil surrounding LANL may contain 100 times more plutonium than was previously estimated." That's just for starters.

Another major problem, according to Greg Mello and the Wall Street Journal, is poor security. Mello stated at a HUB meeting in Taos that on a scale of 1-10, LANL security is a 3. John Fialka writes in the Wall Street Journal that Army special-forces teams have tested security at LANL several times and demonstrated that "quick attacks by small, well-trained teams can penetrate department security forces and gain access to simulated nuclear materials used in the exercises."

Rocky Flats Moves to LANL

Currently, LANL is the only source of plutonium pits in the United States. These round, smooth grapefruit-sized pits are the trigger-explosive mechanism for W88 Poseidon submarine missiles. With Bush's push to expand Star Wars nuclear capacity ("Bush's New Nukes: Our Radioactive Future" in Earth Island Journal, Summer 2005) they need more than the 20 to 40 pits produced in LANL's facility.

Pit production was brought down from the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant when the FBI closed it for polluting the Denver-Boulder area, after faulty equipment created fires that released plutonium into the atmosphere. It had to be a critical scenario for the FBI to take action. The site was so contaminated the buildings and facilities were decontaminated and removed brick by brick. They are still working on closure.

Fashion

A Taos Jewel

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Guess what? According to an inside source, the DOE simply moved the Rocky Flats scientific personnel and pit-box equipment to LANL. Now LANL would like to win the government contract to build The Modern Pit Facility, capable of 450 pits per year, known as the new bomb factory.

The University of California stated in a letter to Hank Daneman in 1990 that plutonium production at LANL was a no-go. James Kane in the UC president's office stated, "the University has no intention of managing a plutonium production facility. Our contract calls for research only." Could this be an inside reason UC is out of the LANL management business?

Basically each pit is equal to a nuclear warhead. This is interesting, considering Article 6 of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), signed by the U.S., calling for nuclear disarmament. Town Council member Erlinda Gonzales is expected to urge the Council on the 28th to vote against a resolution supporting compliance with NPT and closure of the waste site. Why is this expected? In the past, when the CAB—appointed by DOE/LANL—has not supported LANL, it was removed from service. It is an interesting history, as reported to Horse Fly by a past chairman of the CAB.

CAB History

The purpose of the CAB, as set forth in the Federal Advisory Committee Act, is to identify environmental concerns of the local public, develop recommendations to prevent environmental degradation and to accelerate cleanup of legacy wastes. But this is not what occurs. A former long-term chairman of the CAB wrote in 1999 that the CAB was downgraded from "an independently aggressive board into a submissive one willing to sit placidly through the 'dog and pony' shows staged by the DOE at the beginning of every board meeting." DOE removed one entire CAB after it criticized LANL safety and waste management. LANL brought in new candidates and changed the bylaws for the purpose of "keeping the CAB within bounds." The head of waste management quit because LANL was diverting money that was supposed to be going to waste management to other places. "LANL treated budget allocations as discretionary spending," according to the former CAB chairman.

A DOE rep at LANL told me prospective CAB members are checked out by the site office manager and that DOE in

Washington makes the final decisions on CAB membership. So it seems it would be most difficult to criticize "the boss" and keep the job for two years. I hope the Town Council keeps this in mind when listening to Gonzales' presentation on the waste site. Taoseños should take a moment to let the Town Council and Mayor know how you feel about the resolution for nonproliferation and against nuke factories and radioactive waste storage in northern New Mexico.

Conclusion: What You Can Do

When Oppenheimer moved the Manhattan Project from Chicago to the boys' school ranch at Los Alamos in '42, the spot was chosen because of its total isolation. This is certainly not the case in 2005. Northern New Mexico is no longer the morally correct place to continue expansion of a whopping big radioactive waste site and P-pit facility. Also, plutonium pit production creates so much radioactive waste, it would make sense to move it closer to the WIPP (Waste Isolation Pilot Plant) in southeastern New Mexico.

On Aug. 6, the Los Alamos Study Group is sponsoring a Hiroshima commemoration celebration at Ashley Pond Park at Los Alamos, under the banner of "Stop the New Bomb Factory." Call 505-265-1200 to volunteer. Food and lodging will be provided. This will be an exciting event with music, drama, poetry and teach-ins.

Diane Gledhill needs volunteers to sign up more local businesses to the Resolution. So far approximately 65 have signed. Contact her at 751-3016.

There are a number of northern New Mexico groups working to stop expansion at LANL:

- Los Alamos Study Group, www.lasg.org, 505-265-1200.
- Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, www.nuclearactive.org.
- Pax Christi New Mexico, www.paschristinewmexico.org, 758-1970.
- Nuclear Watch New Mexico, www.nukewatch.org (a wealth of timely documents on this website).

Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jun 14, 2005; Section: Journal North; Page: 86



Date--06/14/2005 Section--News Edition--Journal North Page--1

3 Labs Rip Nuclear Program

[also in Journal Santa Fe]

John Fleck Journal Staff Writer

* The report, and one by a House subcommittee, calls for wide-ranging changes

The United States' current approach to maintaining its nuclear arsenal "looks increasingly unsustainable," according to an internal report by senior officials at the nation's three nuclear weapons labs.

The nuclear weapons program's future costs exceed the available budget, and the effort to maintain aging warheads is forcing the nation to retain a larger nuclear arsenal than would otherwise be needed, the report concludes.

Completed last month, the report's findings mirror in some respects those of a key House of Representatives subcommittee.

The House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee issued a report last month calling for a sweeping reorganization of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex as part of its proposed 2006 Department of Energy budget.

The two reports set the stage for today's unveiling of the Senate's version of the DOE budget, written by Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.

The outcome of the debate is critical to New Mexico, which is home to Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories, two of the three U.S. nuclear weapons design laboratories. The federal government will spend an estimated \$2.9 billion this year for nuclear weapons work in New Mexico, more than in any other state.

The House and lab reports both argue that it is no longer feasible to maintain the existing Cold War nuclear arsenal by nursing along old weapons, refurbishing aging parts when necessary.

The labs' report, written by a quartet of senior nuclear weapons scientists and endorsed by the weapons program chiefs of the three U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories, argues that continuing to maintain weapons is possible "only at significantly increasing cost."

The program, dubbed "Stockpile Stewardship" when it was established a decade ago, "merely preserve(s) nuclear weapons with out-dated technology and a ponderous and expensive enterprise required to support old technology," the labs' report concludes.

Because of resulting uncertainties about long-term weapons reliability, "the United States must retain a relatively large number of reserve weapons to ensure against contingencies," the lab scientists from Sandia, Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories wrote -- spares in case problems crop up in some of the primary stockpile weapons.

Official stockpile numbers are classified, but the independent Natural Resources Defense Council, an

environmental and arms control group, estimates there are 5,300 nuclear weapons in the active U.S. stockpile and another 5,000 being held in reserve.

The House subcommittee, led by Rep. David Hobson, R-Ohio, raised similar arguments last month, concluding that the nuclear weapons labs need to design a new "Reliable Replacement Warhead" that is easier to care for in the long run.

Hobson's 2006 budget report calls for the new warhead to be "designed for ease of manufacturing, maintenance, dismantlement and certification without nuclear testing."

To do that, Hobson's spending plan would:

- * Reduce spending on refurbishment of current U.S. weapons;
- * Increase spending on design efforts for the new Reliable Replacement Warhead;
- * Reduce spending on preparations for possible future underground nuclear test blasts at the federal government's Nevada Test Site;
- * Cut spending on nuclear weapons supercomputers, arguing that they have not lived up to their promise as a way of conducting virtual nuclear tests to maintain existing weapons;
- * Eliminate funding for a new factory to build plutonium nuclear weapon cores; and
- * Delay money for a new plutonium lab at Los Alamos until the weapons designers have a clearer picture of what the newly designed warhead requires.

Greg Mello, an arms control activist at the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group, called Hobson's vision of a new nuclear weapons program "sweeping."

Aides to Domenici declined comment, saying they preferred to wait until they released their own proposed version of the 2006 nuclear weapons budget.

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TAOS DAILY NEWS

Sprinkling Plutonium on Your Banana

July 15, 2005

By Jane Odin

Background

Back in the '70s nuclear scientists chowed down on plutonium. The catchphrase of the day was "sprinkle some plutonium on your banana." Sounds like a chachacha. In the '40s and '50s scientists



forced plutonium on others. The Manhattan Project and Atomic Energy Commission injected unsuspecting hospital patients and prisoners with plutonium and learned how total body irradiation had radically different effects from individual to individual. (Read "The Plutonium Files" by Eileen Welsome.) Some died—some are alive today. Many of the experiments were conducted by Nazi scientists brought to the U.S. in Project Paperclip. The Nazi legacy of arrogant ruthlessness, deception, and cover-up is perpetuated today by the Department of Energy (DOE), as witnessed in their general philosophy and the management of nuclear proliferation sites across America, including Los Alamos National Lab (LANL).

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Word Play

As you know from the June Horse Fly, the DOE wants to expand the Area G nuclear waste site. Meanwhile, we've learned the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) may issue a draft closure for the Area G nuclear waste site in February 2006. This development focuses magnified importance on supporting the nonproliferation resolution in front of the Taos Town Council.

What's Hidden in Area G?

The Town Council postponed the June 28 vote on the nonproliferation resolution, pending study at a council workshop on July 12. The council is scheduled to vote on July 19. (All of this, as usual, is subject to change.) Town Councilor Gene Sanchez knows where he stands. He will be voting in favor of the resolution and against the expansion of the Area G waste site. DOE Citizen's Advisory Board member and Town Councilor Erlinda Gonzales is expected to vote against the resolution. What else does one do when working for the DOE and LANL? At some point the council will view a DOE propaganda film on LANL.

What will the LANL film reveal? Will it point out the nuclear reactors buried under the sand at material disposal area TA 21? Nuclear reactors and spent fuel rods emit gamma rays, making it high-level radioactive waste. Will the film show Area C, where the super-hot waste is stored? And what about older sites—such as Areas A, B, T, and V—that date back to the Manhattan Project? No one knows what's in these sites.

LANL and the DOE say there is no high-level waste at Area G. According to the Los Alamos Study Group (LASG) this isn't the case. "LANL has routinely produced irradiated reactor fuel in its own reactors, of which there have been several since 1944, and this was buried at Area G and other Material Disposal Areas." What about the drill-back cores from underground tests containing the same radioactive isotopes in similar concentrations as spent nuclear fuel? Apparently there is high-level waste and every other type of ionizing radiation at LANL.

The DOE told Greg Mello, director of LASG, that Area G cannot close because some of the waste streams are so highly radioactive there is no possible way to ship them off-site. For example, no container will hold super-hot carbon accelerator beam stops. Should we be surprised that DOE continues to claim there's no high-level waste at LANL? Read about DOE's philosophy of deception and cover-up in the Caron

["A" is for "No"](#)

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The above selections are just part of what you'll find in this month's

Balkany and Wes McKinley book "The Ambushed Grand Jury."

Irresponsible Management

Have you seen the large black plumes blowing into Taos from Los Alamos? Now we know they are beryllium plumes. At a blogspot known as LANL: The Real Story, LANL scientists discuss the April 2005 hydrotest at the Dual-Axis Radiographic Hydrotest (DARHT) facility, which evaluates munitions and studies high-velocity impact phenomena. Their comments say Taos Valley is affected: "The prevailing winds take the plumes from DARHT and PHERMEX (not decommissioned) directly over TA-3, the town site, and have been tracked all the way to the Taos Valley. The test Friday had a large black plume that followed the same path. The foam does concentrate more Be at Darht [sic] but a substantial portion is still released to the environment."

When the plume first became an issue, Senator Pete Domenici was told the foam protection technique in use could only be 20 to 40 percent efficient in controlling the beryllium. "Pete's response was that it didn't matter if it worked as long as we were perceived to be doing something about the problem. He had no interest in the hazards as long as he looked good. And so in the end we got a much more hazardous work environment at DARHT and the public got a healthy dose of Be," according to the Real Story blogspot.

A healthy dose of Be is known to produce Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD). According to a blogspot entry, "There are a number of people that work at or around DARHT that have contacted CBD and they will die from it. The disease has no cure. The symptoms are much like emphysema and it is debilitating before it is fatal. This is the information they don't want you to know." The authorities say some people are much more susceptible to CBD than others. Onset of the disease is signaled by shortness of breath, fatigue, night sweats, and coughing.

Other comments on the LANL blogspot go like this: "Why does nobody understand how badly LANL has deteriorated and how terribly irresponsible the management has been?" "Safety, security and environmental problems ... all these are solvable if someone cares. It's obvious that the bloated upper management at LANL doesn't care." "There are countless other examples of DOE's lip-service regarding safety and security."

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What's Happening?

James Bearzi, Bureau Chief at NMED's Hazardous Waste Department, says LANL will be compelled to close Area G by February '06. Bearzi says the issue is not so much what they have in Area G but that LANL continues to use this site as they have in the past. He says the post-closure permit and scheduling of public hearings will be the beginning of an enormous fight whose success depends on citizen response at the public hearings. The DOE does not want Area G closed. According to Bearzi, "This will be the first time the state has played its hand."

LASG Director Greg Mello says if the state moves to close the waste site it will definitely be the first time the state has played its hand. Mello has heard this promise on multiple occasions before. The waste site permit expired in '89 but has been administratively continued by NMED. Mello says, "LANL is not now under any threat from NMED to close Area G nor will it be next year due to any RCRA [Resource Conservation & Recovery Act] process." The last time Mello spoke to Bearzi, he was told that the "cleanup" order would be proposed by NMED and DOE for inclusion en bloc into the permit. So we have two contradictory stories coming out of NMED. Sounds like they're sprinkling plutonium on our bananas again and again.

We have a unique opportunity in New Mexico to stand strong for peace in a country that is escalating weapons buildup and continuing the militarization of space. We have a unique opportunity because we are at the heart of the beast. If you want to know details of what is planned by the Department of Defense and the DOE for our future, check out a most important document on the Internet: "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century."

Contact Taos Town Council members and urge them to support the resolution against proliferation. And try to attend Hiroshima Day in Los Alamos on Aug. 6. LASG's website (www.lasg.org) has all the details.

Nuke Lab Report Calls for Changes

from PAGE A1

— are among the state's largest employers.

The report praises the nuclear weapons labs as "national assets" but suggests it will not take as many people in the future to maintain the U.S. arsenal as are employed at the labs.

The report suggests that, in some cases, the laboratories have built redundant research equipment, such as supercomputers, when a single centralized machine would suffice.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said, if carried out, the effects of the report's recommendations "could be pretty substantial." But he questioned whether Congress and the administration would be willing to do what the report suggests.

Officials at the Department of Energy and the labs declined comment, saying the report was still being reviewed.

Even before its release, the report drew sharp criticism from Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., the labs' chief congressional defender.

Domenici's congressional nemesis on the issue, Rep. David Hobson, R-Ohio, who originally called for the report, said Thursday he "agree(s) 100 percent" with the report's conclusions, setting the stage for a showdown.

The proposed lab cuts are part of a sweeping reorganization of U.S. nuclear weapons design, manufacture and maintenance recommended by the panel.

Whether the report's advice is accepted is up to the Department of Energy and Congress. The recommendations, contained in a "draft final report" published Thursday for public comment, go to the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board, an independent panel that provides advice to the Department of Energy.

Central to the plan is the design of a new "Reliable Replacement Warhead" that would be cheaper to maintain than existing Cold War designs.

That might mean more work for some weapons designers. But the report suggests that, overall, the labs' staff of nuclear scientists and engineers "can be significantly reduced." The report does not specify how many jobs would be cut.

In the short term, Los Alamos National Laboratory needs to increase its ability to manufacture plutonium nuclear weapons parts, the Advisory Board report concludes.

But in the long term, plutonium work now done at Los

Alamos and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory should be moved to the new factory, the report recommends.

The report recommends that one extreme high-end supercomputer be maintained for nuclear weapons research. Currently, each of the three labs has its own — computers that compete for the title of "world's fastest."

Substantial money could be saved by moving work now done at Los Alamos' troubled Dual-Axis Radiographic Hydrotest Facility, where scientists detonate mock nuclear weapons to X-ray them, to Nevada to a central explosives testing site, the committee concluded.

The report makes only minor recommendations for specific cuts at Sandia beyond the general call for a reduction in the size of the labs' work force.

Despite their nonbinding nature, and the fact that it is only a draft document, the report's conclusions appear to have started a congressional debate about the direction and future of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex.

Domenici began criticizing it three months before it was made public.

In an April 18 telephone news conference, Domenici told New Mexico reporters the report's call for consolidation and cuts at the labs — at that point just a rumor — "probably won't be" accepted.

In a statement issued Thursday, Domenici said, "While there is always room for improvement I believe our labs are doing good work, and I do not think we should rush into any quick fixes."

Hobson, who has clashed with Domenici in recent years over nuclear weapons funding, was far more enthusiastic.

"The task force concludes that the current stockpile and supporting weapons complex is neither technically credible nor financially sustainable," Hobson said in a statement.

The disagreement between Hobson and Domenici is critical to the outcome of the debate. The two chair the House and Senate committees responsible for the Energy Department's budget.

The new report is largely supportive of the direction Hobson has tried to set for the budget, while Domenici's version is substantially different. The two must come to some sort of compromise by this fall on a final spending plan.

Report Calls For Big Changes At Nuclear Labs

DOE Advisory Panel Makes Suggestions

By JOHN FLECK
Journal Staff Writer

7/15/65

The United States needs new, easy-to-maintain nuclear warheads and significantly smaller staffs at its nuclear weapons labs, a senior Energy Department advisory panel has concluded.

The Nuclear Weapons Complex Infrastructure Task Force, in a draft report made public Thursday, calls for a centralized nuclear weapons factory to be built, consolidating work that's scattered among old Cold War-era plants and the labs.

Where the new plant might be built remains a question.

The report carries significant implications for New Mexico, where two of the nation's three nuclear weapons labs — Sandia and Los Alamos

See NUKE on PAGE A8

DOE funding hammered out

ROGER SNODGRASS
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Monitor Assistant Editor

4/8/05

House and Senate conference split the \$1.5 billion difference between their respective energy and water appropriations bills, they reported Monday. The House went up \$748 million to reach agreement on the \$30.5 billion measure; the Senate came down \$750 million.

"There were significant differences between the House and Senate on this bill, but I believe we have come up with a package that will maintain key lab missions without personnel or facility disruptions," said Sen. Pete Domenici, R-NM, chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

"I want to be clear that our increased investments in science, nonproliferation, nuclear energy and the like

will keep our labs strong. And when you consider the Homeland Security funding going to our labs, we are in good shape," he said.

The House-passed cuts and Senate-approved increases revealed fundamental differences in the two bodies' approaches to funding the Department of Energy, which was cut by \$179 million overall to reach the \$24.3 billion recommended.

The two houses of Congress must now endorse the agreement, before it is forwarded to the President for approval.

"I am very pleased with the energy and water conference bill," said Los Alamos National Laboratory Director Robert Kuckuck in a prepared statement. "Sen. Domenici has once again helped secure the laboratory's position as a world

See DOE, 6

DOE Mixed results on LANL projects

From Page 1

leader in national security, science and technology."

Key projects at Los Alamos National Laboratory met with mixed results.

One winner, as expected: Environmental Cleanup at the laboratory will increase significantly, from about \$80 million last year to \$142.2 million in FY2006.

Noting its importance to maintaining scientific integrity at the national laboratories, Domenici said the conferees had agreed to his effort to raise the Lab Directed Research and Development level from 6 percent up to 8 percent. This key item supports a variety of independent scientific projects, fosters recruitment and enables collaborations with many other institutions.

Another installment in developing the proposed Chemical and Metallurgy Research Replacement facility was fully funded at \$55 million.

"It is obvious that as federal budgets continue to constrict, that we will be faced with more difficult choices on the direction of the labs and some projects related to ensuring the safety, reliability and future of our stockpile," Domenici said. "In that light, we've built in a number of reforms and directives to force DOE to take a critical look at projects like Yucca Mountain, DARHT, pit production and other ongoing projects."

While the bill denies funding once again for construction of a modern pit facility, it instructs NNSA to improve the existing manufacturing capability at LANL, a move that nudges the laboratory closer to assuming a major long-term responsibility in that area.

LANL's Dual-Axis Radiographic Hydrodynamic Test Facility won its budget request of \$27 million, but the bill calls for an independent study by the JASONS research group to see if the unfinished second axis is on budget and capa-

ble of providing its expected function.

Gregg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, said he believes the hard decisions have been postponed for next year.

"Sen. Domenici has succeeded in getting money to Los Alamos, but a price has been paid in overall coherence," he said. "Horsetrading has resulted in a fragmented approach to the program."

In the broader weapons community, the bill restores full funding for Lawrence Livermore's National Ignition Facility, which Domenici had tried to cut. Domenici expressed his continuing doubts that the facility would meet future milestones.

The bill also continued the declining fortunes of Yucca Mountain, now dipping to \$500 million for the year, but including a \$50 million fund to reduce the spent fuel bound for the repository by setting up a recycling plan and campaign to find local governmental entities who want to volunteer to accept a reprocessing facility.

Despite the apparent resolution of budget uncertainties, LANL will continue to scrutinize its hiring activities through the current contract, which expires May 31.

"The council will closely review and consider each proposed hiring action to insure that priority is given to hiring positions that are crucial to mission and science capabilities, safety and compliance needs and internal efficiencies," said James Rickman, a laboratory spokesman. "The hiring council will help insure that the lab maintains a stable workforce and a sound fiscal profile from now through the transition to a new prime contract."

Also included in the bill, another \$5 million will go to Los Alamos County to stabilize the airport landfill and \$500,000 has been earmarked for Manhattan Project site preservation.

LANL

Bill gives money to science, research

By Andy Lenderman The New Mexican

November 8, 2005 p. C-4

U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., has again helped to deliver billions in federal money to be spent on New Mexico nuclear, energy and water projects that employ thousands.

Science and research programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories were clear winners in Monday's announcement of a deal between House and Senate leaders on the 2006 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill.

Weapons programs were cut overall. But a few specific weapons programs — such as the Reliable Replacement Warhead project and the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility at Los Alamos — were given as much or more money than President Bush's administration sought. The bill also directs the National Nuclear Security Administration to improve the manufacturing capability at Los Alamos for plutonium pits, which are triggers for nuclear warheads.

The \$30.5 billion measure includes an estimated \$4.4 billion for New Mexico projects overseen by the federal Department of Energy alone.

"I am very pleased with Sen. Domenici's bill," Robert Kuckuck, director of Los Alamos National Laboratory, said. "He has once again helped secure the laboratory's position as a world leader in national security, science and technology."

The lab has about 9,500 University of California employees and a \$2.2 billion budget, the majority of which comes from the Department of Energy.

Domenici negotiated with a leading critic of how the labs are managed — Rep. David Hobson, R-Ohio, who leads the House committee that oversees energy and water projects. Hobson has pushed for a new strategy for nuclearweapons funding. Plus, the federal budget faces pressure from costly hurricane cleanup and an ongoing war in Iraq.

"There were significant differences between the House and the Senate on this bill, but I believe we have come up with a package that will maintain key lab missions without personnel or facility disruptions," Domenici said in a news release. "I want to be clear that our increased investments in science, nonproliferation, nuclear energy and the like will keep our labs strong." Homeland-security funding also helps the lab budgets, he noted.

The leader of a nuclearwatchdog group was pleased with an overall decline in nuclear-weapons funding and elimination of the so-called bunker buster, or Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator.

But Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch of New Mexico said by e-mail that the country still spends "50 percent above the Cold War average on nuclearweapons research, development, testing and production."

Coghlan said his group and others will lobby Congress that the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, which Domenici says replaces parts on existing weapons, isn't necessary. He called it a "nukes forever program, and a Trojan horse for future new designs."

Coghlan also noted that the bill deletes funding for the Modern Pit Facility, a proposed new project to mass produce triggers for nuclear warheads, and directs the NNSA to improve manufacturing capability at Los Alamos. Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group said the bill "tries to get as much money for New Mexico with as little thinking about the future as possible."

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URL: http://www.abqjournal.com/north/406206north_news11-09-05.htm

Wednesday, November 9, 2005

Lab Expected to Get New Plutonium Unit

By John Arnold and John Fleck

Journal Staff Writers

A project to replace one of Los Alamos National Laboratory's largest and oldest buildings— an aging nuclear research facility with a history of safety problems— would receive its largest chunk of funding to date under a new Department of Energy spending plan.

A \$30.5 billion Energy and Water Appropriations bill hammered out by House and Senate negotiators Monday includes \$55 million for construction of a new Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility.

The existing 550,000-square-foot building, located in the lab's Technical Area-3, dates back to the early 1950s and is used to test and analyze plutonium and other nuclear materials. But safety problems, including a 1996 explosion, have plagued the facility over the last decade, and lab officials say it's been expensive to upgrade and maintain.

Lab spokesman Kevin Roark said the new building will be more efficient, more secure and much smaller— about half the size of the current building.

"Really, the driver (for the new facility) was we don't need as much space. We need a facility that's cheaper to maintain, and we need a facility that's located inside an existing security perimeter," Roark said.

The new facility, to be located with other plutonium facilities in Technical Area-55, will cost an estimated \$838 million, according to Sen. Pete Domenici's office. In addition to this year's pending appropriation, Domenici, R-N.M., helped secure \$40 million for the project last year and \$10 million the previous year.

The project is moving forward over objections from lab watchdogs, who contend the new building is not needed and that it's part of a larger strategy to increase weapons manufacturing at the laboratory.

"We shouldn't build more plutonium space," said Los Alamos Study Group executive director Greg Mello. "The additional floor space is only needed because of the desire to design new weapons, to manufacture new weapons and probably also to do research and development of novel nuclear fuels (for civilian nuclear power). We're opposed to all three of those missions. If you take away those missions you take away the need for the facility."

In addition to CMR facility funding, the DOE spending measure also includes language likely to expand nuclear weapons plutonium manufacturing at Los Alamos.

The lab is currently working on a production line to manufacture small

numbers of plutonium "pits"— the radioactive cores of nuclear weapons. Current plans call for production of 10 such pits per year in 2008. The budget approved by negotiators Monday includes several directives that could expand that work substantially in the future.

The United States has not had a large-scale plutonium factory since the Rocky Flats Plant outside Denver shut down in 1989. Los Alamos has long been seen as an interim manufacturing site while DOE develops plans for a large new factory. But the 2006 budget approved by House and Senate negotiators this week cuts all money for that new factory, while directing the National Nuclear Security Administration "to undertake a review of the pit program to focus on improving the manufacturing capability at TA-55."

Domenici said that the CMR project is not directly tied to pit manufacturing.

"However, as long as the pit manufacturing mission remains at LANL, the more important the (CMR) facility is. It performs the analytical experiments on pits and other special nuclear material," he said in a written statement.

Work will begin on the CMR building's first phase— a radiological laboratory— early next year, Roark said.

The Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, which funds DOE, includes \$6.43 billion for nuclear weapons spending. That's a 1.6 percent increase for the coming fiscal year.

The House approved the measure Tuesday. It now requires Senate approval and the president's signature.

E-MAIL Journal Staff Writers John Arnold and John Fleck

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11/11/05

Weapons program draws split positions

Domenici: Goal is to improve existing arsenal; critics call project a backdoor upgrade

By Andy Lenderman

The New Mexican

Congressional committees have more than doubled funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, money that will go to Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories. But proponents and a nuclear-watchdog group are already arguing about what the program means. Supporters say the program is just a concept for now, but one that could create more reliable parts for an aging nuclear-weapons stockpile. Critics say it's the backdoor to a totally new weapons program. U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., a leading supporter, said in a written statement Thursday that "program designed build on the successes that we've had using a sciencebased approach to improving the design of existing weapons. This is not intended to be a new weapons program, but rather a method to improve the way that we manufacture existing weapons."

The goal will be to reduce the maintenance costs of nuclear weapons and improve safety and reliability, Domenici's office explained in a news release earlier this week.

A nuclear-disarmament group is opposed to the idea.

"The reliable replacement warhead is not needed," Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group said. "... Designing a new warhead and building a new warhead ... is just a sharp stick in the eye to the rest of the world."

The program has been allocated \$25 million this year from Congress — up from \$10 million the year before.

The money, Domenici reported, will support a design competition between Los Alamos and Livermore labs "to create replacement components on existing weapons."

Both labs will submit their concepts to the U.S. Department of Energy in March, LANL spokesman Kevin Roark said. The labs will also submit "a very firm plan on how to get it done," he said, and the department will decide what to do with the concept.

"Nothing's been decided," Roark said.

Mello, whose group advocates nuclear disarmament, said the project will cause other countries to consider whether they should invest in new nuclearweapons programs.

And the project, he said, "will entail a multibillion-dollar program of construction and operation for these manufacturing facilities. It's a backdoor in an upgrade of the U.S. nuclear arsenals, and it's not something that the House of Representatives or the Senate can control ... once they let the dog out of the pen here."

A new budget bill pending congressional approval appears to restrict what can be done with the money.

"Any weapon design work done under the RRW program must stay within the military requirements of the existing deployed stockpile, and any new weapon design must stay within the design parameters validated by past nuclear tests," a report on the 2006 Energy and Water Appropriations Act reads.

Roark also said the program could lead to less nuclear weapons.

The directors of the program “are firm in their belief that the (reliable replacement warhead) really furthers the cause of stockpile reduction. Because if we have a robust reliable replacement for existing warheads then we don’t need as many warheads in reserve. And so the hope is this will eventually lead to a reduction in the overall stockpile.”

The programs and other weapons issues received more attention this week since Congressional committees negotiated a \$30.5 billion appropriations bill that covers the Department of Energy.

A second project to receive more money includes a new chemistry and metallurgy research building at Los Alamos, where nuclear-chemistry work would take place. The lab is scheduled to break ground on the \$800 million project early next year, Roark said. Not all the money has been secured.

Domenici secured \$55 million for the project this year and nearly \$40 million the year before.

Congressional committees have also directed the National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees the nuclear labs, to strengthen the manufacturing capability at Los Alamos to produce plutonium pits, or triggers for nuclear bombs.

The last new pit, or trigger for a nuclear bomb, was produced about 15 years ago at the Department of Energy’s Rocky Flats weapons complex, Roark said.

“The U.S. lost its capability to make new weapons when Rocky Flats closed,” Roark said.

“We are slowly regaining that capability with limited pit production at Los Alamos.”

Some would argue this federal spending, and potential for more, is a good thing for New Mexico’s economy.

Although \$25 million could build a new school in New Mexico, it’s just a small chunk of the estimated \$4.4 billion that Domenici estimates the Department of Energy will spend in New Mexico during the 2006 fiscal year.

By comparison, New Mexico’s state government budget is about \$4.7 billion this year.

But Mello argues that reliance on federal spending actually depresses New Mexico’s economy because it discourages innovation and encourages complacency.

“The nuclear-weapons business has hurt New Mexico economically,” he said. “And the rise of the nuclear-weapons business has coincided with the relative decline of New Mexico in comparison to other states.”



Group faults lab on plutonium records

[print](#)

By Andy Lenderman The New Mexican |
December 1, 2005

A Maryland nuclear-watchdog group says Los Alamos National Laboratory should do a better job of keeping track of plutonium.

Various organizations involved in monitoring the weapons lab say they believe much of the highly radioactive atomic-bomb ingredient referred to in a new report is buried as waste at Los Alamos.

But authors of a report released Wednesday by the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research want managers of the federal lab to explain what it says are "major discrepancies" in accounts of plutonium at LANL.

One of the report's authors said there's no evidence the plutonium has left Los Alamos.

An official with the National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos office was studying the report Wednesday. But spokesman Bernie Pleau said his office wouldn't be able to respond until today.

The report states: "An analysis of official data indicates that the unaccounted for plutonium amounts to at least 300 kilograms, and could be over 1,000 kilograms, though the higher figure appears unlikely."

Authors Brice Smith and Arjun Makhijani speculate about where the plutonium could be. However, Greg Mello, the head of a separate nuclearwatchdog group in New Mexico called Los Alamos Study Group, said activists have known since the 1970s that most of the plutonium in question is buried in waste at the lab.

Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch New Mexico agreed that's likely. "Nevertheless, we're talking about a very serious discrepancy," Coghlan said.

The report details discrepancies between documents at the federal Department of Energy headquarters and other DOE offices, Smith and Makhijani wrote.

A summary offers possibilities to explain the discrepancy, including that the plutonium is buried in waste or has been shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad. And if part of the plutonium is missing, they wrote, it would have major national security implications.

"If much or most of the plutonium was disposed of as buried low-level waste and buried transuranic waste, the long-term radiation doses would exceed any allowable limits," the report reads.

The report recommends a detailed explanation of the discrepancy and says appeals to the department and the lab "have failed to elicit a serious response or investigation."

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URL: http://www.abqjournal.com/north/412466north_news12-01-05.htm

Thursday, December 1, 2005

Plutonium Unaccounted For

By John Arnold*Journal Staff Writer*

POJOAQUE— More than 660 pounds of plutonium at Los Alamos National Laboratory is unaccounted for, a Maryland-based environmental watchdog said Tuesday.

The Institute for Energy and Environmental Research compared public records data from the nation's weapons and disposal sites with a 1996 U.S. Department of Energy report detailing plutonium waste inventories. IEER researchers discovered large inventory discrepancies at Los Alamos, said institute president Arjun Makhijani, who co-authored a report on the findings.

"We've got three sets of books with plutonium numbers in waste, and they are so far apart that they cannot be reconciled by any reasonable means," Makhijani said at a news conference in Pojoaque.

Makhijani said his findings raise serious environmental, regulatory and security questions. The amount of unaccounted-for plutonium, a radioactive by-product of nuclear weapons manufacturing, can be used to make dozens of bombs, according to the report. There's no evidence the plutonium has been stolen or has left LANL, Makhijani said, but "it is the responsibility of the Department of Energy and (LANL manager) the University of California to guarantee that it has not gone off site."

It's possible that the unaccounted-for plutonium is buried in nuclear waste pits at LANL, which "would have very significant environmental and health implications," the report states. Another possibility for the discrepancy, according to Makhijani, is that DOE documentation understates the amount of plutonium being disposed of at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad.

A National Nuclear Security Administration representative who attended Tuesday's news conference said the agency would analyze IEER's report and provide a response. John Ordaz, an NNSA assistant manager for environmental stewardship said the analysis would take time.

"But we're doing everything to make sure the public is safe, and everything we do is formal and by the book and we have many, many assessments," Ordaz said.

Makhijani's concerns aren't new. Anti-nuclear activists have raised the issue for years and in 2004 wrote a letter to then-LANL director Pete Nanos asking him to address inventory accounting discrepancies during a work stand-down at the lab.

Greg Mello, director of lab watchdog the Los Alamos Study Group, said he is "comfortable with the assumption" that the unaccounted-for plutonium is buried at LANL, is awaiting shipment to WIPP or has already gone there.

The root of the problem, he said, is poor disposal records, especially related to early disposal areas, that prevent an accurate accounting of plutonium waste.

"The uncertainty we have in (waste records) is more than enough to account for several hundred kilograms," Mello said.

E-MAIL Journal Staff Writer John Arnold

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Lab pact the pits?

All this money for Los Alamos' new partners.
All this drive for more plutonium cores. All this concern.

By Greg Mello

12/29/05

Since its inception in 1943 as Site Y of the Manhattan Engineering District, the facility now called Los Alamos National Laboratory has been owned by the U.S. government and operated by the University of California and its subcontractors.

This is now about to change. On Dec. 21, the management of Los Alamos was handed over to a new private company called Los Alamos National Security, which will assume full management powers at Los Alamos after a six-month transition period.

The company is a partnership among UC; Bechtel National (a subsidiary of the Bechtel Group); BWX Technologies, a nuclear weapons and nuclear materials manufacturer that does 96 percent of its business for the U.S. Department of Energy; and Washington Group International, a growing government services firm with large contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As of last summer, Washington Group ranked fourth among all contractors in sales in those countries. Bechtel ranked sixth.

Most folks don't know that 96 percent of DOE nuclear weapons program spending goes to contractors, mostly for-profit companies. This month's decision continues the privatization trend, moving Los Alamos' \$2.2 billion budget into a new for-profit business that, unlike the

TODAY'S BYLINE

Mello is director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a nuclear weapons watchdog group in Albuquerque.

situation in the past, stands to make hundreds of millions of dollars in management fees.

If the new partnership succeeds in pleasing its federal paymasters, the organizations will be rewarded with a continuous, no-bid, government contract of up to 20 years, worth tens of billions of dollars overall and fees in the \$1.6 billion range.

There is also a great deal of the political influence associated with such enormous sums.

Can a huge, secret "national security" laboratory and production site be managed without waste, fraud and corruption in our present political climate? Not really. History concurs with common sense in this regard.

All three nuclear laboratories, as well as the nuclear production plants, have experienced egregious problems of virtually every kind, and in spades.

Los Alamos' scale is a big problem. Since the Reagan era, its budget has not been determined by the mission, but rather its mission has been determined by its budget.

U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, an Albuquerque Republican, gets as much money for the lab as possible. And the lab gives him the language with which to get these vast sums.

Because the language is quite technical and Congress is quite busy, usually only a vague pseudo-scientific fig leaf is all that is necessary to hide what is essentially pork barrel interest.

Thus our senior senator is himself a major cause of problems at the lab. Our junior senator, Democrat Jeff Bingaman of Silver City, usually keeps a studious silence on the subject. Los Alamos represents, after all, his largest campaign contributor.

Los Alamos' three core missions are to maintain nuclear weapons, design new warheads and manufacture the plutonium cores ("pits") for both.

On Nov. 7, Congress tentatively assigned it the job of making pits for the nation's stockpile, a role UC did not relish and did not do well. Yet, this summer the secretary of energy's Advisory Board slammed Los Alamos for operating its aging plutonium facility at just "5 percent" efficiency.

But the new contractors now have hundreds of millions of dollars in fees riding on the proposition they can begin manufacturing Trident warhead pits in 2007 and a new kind of pit in 2012.

Is New Mexico ready for this? I hope not.

Lab Seals Faulty Container

Plutonium Was Stored in Plastic

BY JOHN ARNOLD
Journal Staff Writer

1/25/06

Workers at Los Alamos National Laboratory have sealed a faulty storage container responsible for an accidental plutonium release last month. But dozens of similarly constructed containers remain in the plutonium facility's vault, according to a representative from an independent safety board.

Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board site representative C.H. Keilers Jr. wrote in a Jan. 6 memorandum that the source of the contamination appears to be a container of plutonium oxide stored at LANL's Technical Area-55.

The highly carcinogenic nuclear material — which dates back to the early 1980s — was packaged in a plastic jar enclosed in a plastic bag, Keilers wrote. Like dozens of similar containers in the vault, the jar and bag sat in a taped, slip-lid can.

"... the inner jar and bag failed, releasing powder into

the can; the vinyl tape around the lid circumference then possibly failed, causing the release," the memo states.

Nine workers evacuated the vault after air monitors detected the Dec. 19 release, which a LANL spokesman described as "a minor event." Nasal swipes indicated five workers had been exposed to minute contamination levels that registered far below federal exposure limits.

The release came as LANL works to comply with 1994 and 2000 Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board recommendations to stabilize and safely store nuclear materials at Department of Energy facilities across the country.

The United States stopped manufacturing new nuclear weapons in 1989, and the board stated in its 1994 recommendation that materials left over from weapons production posed hazards if they weren't stabilized and stored properly.

For example, plutonium can interact with and rupture plastic in older storage containers.

In 2000, the board reiterated its concerns, suggesting in a revised recommendation that DOE facilities weren't making

adequate progress in implementing stabilization and storage programs.

LANL Nuclear Materials Technology division leader Steve Yarbrow said Tuesday that under the revised 2000 recommendation, LANL is ahead of its schedule — possibly by one or two years — to stabilize and repackage nuclear material by 2010. LANL workers have "triple-bagged" last month's faulty container and a similar one, which had been scheduled to be repackaged this month.

"We have a full recovery plan that we're executing," he said. "We meet with (DNFSB representatives) daily on our status and where we're at, and we're moving ahead in a very diligent, methodical fashion."

But lab watchdogs have criticized progress on implementing the board's recommendations, saying LANL has dragged its feet on the issue for more than a decade.

"It was to avoid this kind of accident that the recommendation was made," said Los Alamos Study Group executive director Greg Mello. "The longer plutonium is in contact with plastic, the worse the problem becomes."

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

HOME-OWNED AND HOME-OPERATED ■ MADE IN THE U.S.A.
126TH YEAR, No. 38 ■ 62 PAGES IN 8 SECTIONS

TUESDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 2006

FINAL ★★

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LANL May Begin Building Nuke Pits

Fleet grounded?

Bush's proposed 2007 budget retires F-117A stealth jets **D1**



'Heavy lift'

President's \$277 trillion budget could be headache for Congress **A5**

Energy Secretary Says Project a Top Priority

BY JOHN FLECK AND MICHAEL COLEMAN
Journal Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — Federal officials on Monday proposed expanding nuclear weapons manufacturing at Los Alamos National Laboratory, part of a sweeping plan to develop new

nuclear weapons for the first time since the end of the Cold War.

By 2012, they hope to be able to make 30 to 40 new plutonium nuclear weapon cores per year, according to the Bush administration's fiscal year 2007 budget request.

The government's top nuclear weapons official cautioned that the new program remains primarily a research effort for now, aimed at finding ways to build safer and more reliable

nuclear weapons. But the spending plan delivered to Congress on Monday includes, for the first time, a long-term spending plan for moving the weapons from the drawing board to production.

In a news conference unveiling the administration's proposed spending plan, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman said the new "Reliable Replacement Warhead" project, as the effort

See LANL on PAGE A2

LANL May Begin Building Nuke Pits

from PAGE A1

is called, was a Bush administration priority.

The Energy Department budget also includes money for a new civilian science initiative promised last week in President Bush's State of the Union speech.

Overall, funding for New Mexico's Energy Department laboratories — Los Alamos and Sandia — is projected to decline 2 percent next year, according to the U.S. Department of Energy's proposed 2007 budget.

That is unlikely to cause any job losses at the labs, Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said in a telephone news conference.

The biggest news in the budget was not the dollars but how the Department of Energy wants to spend them: to design replacements for aging Cold

War nuclear weapons.

The budget request and recent comments by senior officials lay out a longer-term plan that suggests the country could be building new nuclear weapons by 2012. They would be the first since the Cold War ended in 1991.

Under the plan, which must be approved by Congress, Los Alamos will be asked to make plutonium "pits" for the new weapons.

Pits sit in the heart of modern nuclear weapons. They are semi-spherical shells of plutonium that are squeezed by high explosives to start the weapon's chain reaction.

The United States has been unable to make pits since the Rocky Flats plutonium factory near Denver closed in 1989. Los Alamos is preparing to begin making 10 pits per year by 2008

as replacements for pits in existing weapons. The budget unveiled Monday contemplates expanding that to between 30 and 40 pits per year by 2012 for the new weapon.

In a talk two weeks ago, National Nuclear Security Administration chief Linton Brooks called the shift to manufacturing new weapons rather than simply maintaining old ones "transformational."

Greg Mello, an anti-weapons activist with the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group, called the budget proposal "a radical change."

"The emphasis is shifting from maintaining existing weapons to replacing all of them," Mello said Monday.

In Monday's news conference, Brooks cautioned that the Reliable Replacement Warhead remains a research effort.

"Remember, this is research," he said, "so we don't know whether we can do all the things we hoped we can do." But he added that the plan "has a great deal of possibility for improving the long-term safety, security and reliability of the stockpile."

For the Bush administration's new science initiative, Bodman said the DOE budget contains an extra half-billion dollars for scientific research and development, in accordance with President Bush's call for keeping American technologically competitive in the years ahead.

"This will be a clarion call to the world that America means to retain our position of leadership in research and development and benefit from the economic fallout that we have enjoyed for the past five or six decades," Bodman said.

Publication: Santa Fe New Mexican; Date: Feb 8, 2006; Section: Local News; Page: C-4



Pit program shows progress

Boost in funds for nuclear warhead apparatus draws cheers and jeers

By Andy Lenderman The New Mexican

LOS ALAMOS — The goal to build 30 to 40 new plutonium pits, or triggers for nuclear warheads, sends a message that the United States has finally caught up with other world nuclear powers, the boss of the National Nuclear Security Administration said Tuesday.

The pit-manufacturing program is based at Los Alamos National Laboratory, the only place in the country where that work occurs, agency chief Linton Brooks said in an interview.

President Bush's proposed 2007 fiscal-year budget includes more than \$147 million for the program, which is an increase, and calls for an eventual boosting of production capacity from 10 pits a year to 30 to 40. Six pits were produced in 2005, according to the president's budget request.

"We're the only nuclear power that can't produce 30 to 40 new pits a year now," Brooks said. "It says through great effort we've taken 30 years to reach the standard China has today."

Brooks was in Los Alamos on Tuesday to visit with agency employees, including the lab director, and attend an awards ceremony for top scientists.

Later, his comments drew criticism from two nuclear-disarmament groups opposed to the pit-production program. Both Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group and Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch New Mexico said Brooks' position was "ludicrous," arguing the United States already dominates the world in terms of nuclear military power.

"The U.S. now spends more each year on its military than the whole rest of the world combined," Mello said in a statement. "The U.S. spends more on its nuclear weapons than any other country, and as a result has far more capable nuclear forces than any other."

Brooks also discussed the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, which has been described as a way to refurbish a nuclear weapon based upon basic weapon science that's been proven for decades. Critics say it's a new weapons program that will anger other countries.

Today, Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories are in competition to design the replacement warhead.

Brooks said it would have the same military characteristics, the same target and the same delivery system, or missile, to carry it.

"It's component replacement, and the question of how many components do you replace

before you say it's new is a little bit of a philosophic question," Brooks said. " ... There's no reasonable definition of a new weapon that would call this a new weapon. It's going to have a lot of new parts on it."

But Coghlan says it is a new weapon.

"With RRW, Brooks is pushing a 'nukes forever' program that will be a Trojan horse for new designs," Coghlan said by e-mail. "He himself has told Congress that U.S. nuclear weapons may no longer be useful because new and more usable lowyield and earth-penetrating weapons are needed."

Brooks, while discussing pit production, explained where he's coming from. "I start from a prejudice," he said. "I believe that we are very unlikely in my lifetime to see the political conditions that will lead to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. ... We are operating on the view that we are going to maintain the deterrent forever, and I think that's what all of the acknowledged and unacknowledged nuclear powers are doing too."

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URL: http://www.abqjournal.com/north/439530north_news03-07-06.htm

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Anti-Nuclear Group Gaining Support

By **John Arnold**

Journal Staff Writer

The call for nuclear disarmament is growing, an anti-nuclear group said Monday as it marked a milestone in its 18-month campaign to enlist the support of community groups, businesses and individuals.

More than 100 nonprofit organizations in New Mexico have signed the Los Alamos Study Group's "Call for Disarmament," said Greg Mello, the Albuquerque-based group's executive director.

Los Alamos Study Group's campaign coincides with a national debate over whether the United States is abandoning commitments it made under the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, part of which calls on signees to work toward nuclear disarmament.

At a news conference in Santa Fe on Monday, Mello said the United States' recent nuclear pact with India and its plans to build replacement warheads for existing nuclear weapons undermine international nonproliferation efforts.

"Both of these are body blows to the world's nonproliferation regime," Mello said.

In several recent public appearances, National Nuclear Security Administration chief Linton Brooks has described his agency's plans for the country's nuclear policy, which includes a prominent role for Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Brooks says the United States has made "remarkable progress" in reducing the number of nuclear weapons and will continue to do so. But he says the end of the Cold War did not diminish the importance of nuclear weapons in the face of new kinds of threats.

"The United States will, for the foreseeable future, need to retain both nuclear forces and the capabilities to sustain and modernize those forces," Brooks said during a visit to the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tenn., last week. "I do not see any chance of the political conditions for abolition arising in my lifetime, nor do I think abolition could be verified if it were negotiated."

Under NNSA's plans, Los Alamos National Laboratory would play a key role in a program to replace aging nuclear weapons with more reliable bombs. NNSA wants LANL to manufacture 30 to 40 plutonium bomb cores, known as pits, by 2012 for the Reliable Replacement Warhead program.

The government has not manufactured pits since the Rocky Flats plutonium factory near Denver closed in 1989.

The Los Alamos Study Group's disarmament campaign demands that the government not manufacture any more pits, that the United States fulfill its obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and that nuclear dumps at Los Alamos National Laboratory be closed.

In addition to the list of nonprofit organizations, 286 New Mexico businesses, 80

national and international organizations and 2,500 individuals have endorsed Los Alamos Study Group's "Call for Disarmament," Mello said.

"I guess what it does is give shape to our sense that in the community there's a lot of opposition to nuclear weapons and the agenda of the lab," Mello said of the campaign.

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Posted on Sat, Mar. 18, 2006

Amount of unpaid federal fines up sharply

MARTHA MENDOZA and CHRISTOPHER SULLIVAN
Associated Press

When a gasoline spill and fiery explosion killed three young people in Washington state, officials announced a record penalty against a gas pipeline company: \$3 million to send the message that such tragedies "must never happen again."

When nuclear labs around the country were found exposing workers to radiation and breaking other safety rules, assessments totaling \$2.5 million were quickly ordered.

When coal firms' violations were blamed for deaths, injuries and risks to miners from Alabama to West Virginia, they were slapped with more than \$1.3 million in penalties.

What happened next with these no-nonsense enforcement efforts? Not much. The pipeline tab was eventually reduced by 92 percent, the labs' assessments were waived as soon as they were issued, and the mine penalties largely went unpaid.

The amount of unpaid federal fines has risen sharply in the last decade. Individuals and corporations regularly avoid large, highly publicized penalties for wrongdoing - sometimes through negotiations, sometimes because companies go bankrupt, sometimes due to officials' failure to keep close track of who owes what under a decentralized collection system.

These are conclusions of an Associated Press examination of federal financial penalty enforcement across the nation, which also found:

_The government is currently owed more than \$35 billion in fines and other payments from criminals and in civil cases, according to Justice Department figures. This is almost five times the amount uncollected 10 years ago - and enough to cover the annual budget of the Department of Homeland Security. A decade ago, Congress mandated that fines be imposed regardless of defendants' ability to pay, which has added tremendously to outstanding debt.

_In 2004, federal authorities ordered \$7.8 billion in 98,985 fines, penalties and restitution demands in criminal and civil cases, but collected less than half of that.

_White-collar crime cases account for the largest amount of uncollected debt. In a study, Government Accountability Office investigators found that just 7 percent of restitution in such cases is paid.

"Fines and orders to pay restitution are an important part of how we punish convicted criminals. When so little effort is made to collect that money, we allow convicted criminals to avoid punishment for their crimes, weaken our criminal justice system and ultimately deny justice to the victims of crimes," said Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., who has pressed for closer scrutiny for years.

The mechanisms of financial penalty enforcement are complex. To glimpse them, the AP filed Freedom of Information Act requests with a dozen federal agencies, seeking records on why and how they issue and collect administrative penalties and other assessments.

The AP reviewed the responses, which ranged across the spectrum of regulation - from penalties for an Illinois company's shoddy bike handlebars that resulted in knocked-out teeth to fines for selling tainted meat in Tennessee. The AP also reviewed more than a decade of congressional and Justice Department reports on uncollected debt, and interviewed agency officials, prosecutors and individuals who were fined.

Although the government does collect billions each year in fines, penalties and restitution - including hundreds of millions in long-outstanding debt - success rates vary from agency to agency, region to region, case to case.

In many high-profile cases, fines are touted by authorities as proof that they are cracking down. Yet frequently those orders are quietly negotiated to just a fraction of their original amounts - as if drivers, faced with fines for speeding, offered the traffic court judge pennies on the dollar, and the judge agreed.

Documents provided to the AP by the Labor Department's Employment Benefits Security Administration, whose job is to protect pension and welfare benefits, showed that \$2,000 was the maximum amount paid on nearly a dozen penalties ranging from \$86,500 to \$180,000; these were for various kinds of violations, everything from failure to file reports to self-dealing by pension fund managers.

Why the reductions? Officials explained that compliance is the agency's goal, and that the law allows penalties to be reduced when companies make amends. Violators who don't comply risk being referred to the Treasury Department,

which can collect by seizing federal benefits.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's written policy explains to inspectors that they can reduce penalties by as much as 95 percent, "depending upon the employer's 'good faith,' (25 percent) 'size of business,' (60 percent) and 'history of previous violations.' (10 percent)"

Internal documents from U.S. Customs show that dramatically large fines may be cut sharply.

Agency documents released under AP's FOIA request listed, for example, a \$60,911,316 "commercial fraud" assessment for one company - but the case ended with a \$15,000 collection by Customs.

The company, Richemont North America, contradicted the Customs reports, saying the case never reached the point of an actual, multimillion dollar fine.

Admittedly, some paperwork was not in order, company lawyer Alan Grieve said, but he added: "Ultimately, the size of the settlement does reflect the fact that Richemont had no major problem at all."

The Energy Department routinely issues substantial fines it isn't even allowed to collect.

Federal law exempts the national nuclear laboratories from most financial liability, but the Energy Department has issued some \$2.5 million in fines against Los Alamos, Livermore and Argonne national laboratories since 2000. The fines - issued and waived in the same sentence - involved 31 different workers who inhaled or touched radioactive or toxic materials.

In 2004, Energy's National Nuclear Safety Department fined Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico \$770,000 for five separate violations after two workers were exposed to dangerously high levels of plutonium. The violation notices add in parentheses: "Waived by Statute."

"This is kind of an exercise in absurdity," said Greg Mello, who heads the Los Alamos Study Group, a nuclear disarmament activist organization in Albuquerque.

Even so, the Energy Department includes the fines in its annual reports to Congress and often announces them in press releases.

Last year, Congress tightened the rules so that as nuclear laboratory contracts are renewed, the fine waivers are eliminated. Eventually, said DOE spokesman Jeff Sherwood, nuclear labs will have to pay imposed fines.

The reason DOE issued fines it could not collect was to show what the problems were and how bad, he said: "A \$1 million fine says something different than a \$10,000 fine."

Financial penalties are regularly touted by agencies and prosecutors as a strict consequence of lawbreaking. The message - that violators can expect to pay dearly - can be misleading.

The Office of Pipeline Safety, a Transportation Department bureau, is one of a number of agencies chastised by members of Congress for failing to follow through on enforcement.

Nearly seven years ago, a pipeline ruptured, spilling 230,000 gallons of gasoline into a creek near Bellingham, Wash. The fuel exploded into a fireball that ravaged the surrounding woods. And it killed two 10-year-old boys playing in the woods and a young man, 18, who had gone to the stream to fish.

Authorities vowed to punish those at fault, and indeed some company officials eventually served prison time.

But on June 2, 2000, the Transportation Department issued a forceful press release, announcing a \$3.05 million administrative penalty against the pipeline owner, Olympic Pipe Line Co. This, it said, was the largest in the history of the federal pipeline safety program.

"Tragic events like this pipeline failure must never happen again," then-Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater said at the time. "This civil penalty is one of a series of actions we have and are taking to help protect the people and environment."

But last year, with the memorials in place, fish returning to the creek and the forest budding with new growth, the penalty was quietly reduced to \$250,000.

"They let them off with a slap," said Carl Weiner, who heads the Bellingham-based Pipeline Safety Trust.

Olympic Pipe Line officials disagree, saying they already paid \$11 million in state and Justice Department assessments and \$15 million in restoration and improvements.

Still, the case illustrates how the value of assessed penalties is merely a starting point for some officials.

The Environmental Protection Agency, for example, is often willing to reduce penalties in exchange for polluters agreeing to spend money cleaning up.

"We trade off a portion of the penalty in return for them doing supplemental environmental projects," said the EPA's Tom Skinner.

The recent West Virginia coal mine deaths focused new criticism on enforcement tradeoffs made by mine safety inspectors.

During hearings in January, Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., voiced outrage at how coal operators can whittle down fines. He cited assessments by the Mine Safety and Health Administration against a company in an Alabama mine where 13 people were killed in 2001.

"Incredibly, ... an Administrative Law Judge reduced these fines from \$435,000 to a mere \$3,000 - a decision that harms workers and erodes MSHA's authority," Specter and three fellow senators elaborated in a letter to Labor Secretary Elaine Chao.

The Labor Department later announced plans to raise fine amounts, and in a case it called "precedent-setting" sought an injunction against a Kentucky mine operator and two companies he owns, which paid nothing on \$200,000 in penalties.

AP's Freedom of Information filing turned up numerous cases in which administrative penalties were ordered against mining companies for dangerous laxness in following rules - and yet records showed many went unpaid. Sometimes, in the narrow-margin world of small coal companies, the violator escaped paying by declaring bankruptcy or ceasing operations.

On Feb. 20, 2002, near Rupert, W.Va., a section of mine roof up to 10 feet thick collapsed, killing one miner and seriously injuring another. It took more than four hours to dig them out.

The MSHA investigators' report concluded: "Root cause - Mine management condoned unsafe work practices and ... demonstrated a reckless disregard of the dangers posed by conditions created when faulty pillar recovery methods were used." Some supervisors were eventually ordered jailed and fined, prosecutors said; two companies that ran the mine were placed on a year's probation.

The companies also were hit with \$165,000 in administrative penalties each. But MSHA has no record of any payment four years later. When contacted by AP about why, the agency cited records showing the mine was sealed and, in one case, a bankruptcy filing made.

"They probably figured it wasn't worth it financially to stay in business," said the agency's Allen K. Watson.

When agencies can't get debtors to pay, the Justice Department may get the task of collecting a fine or penalty. But the process is decentralized. The collection legwork falls to the 93 U.S. Attorney offices around the country, where "financial litigation units" have the task of pursuing the money.

Although the backlog of uncollected debt has drastically increased, from \$6 billion in 1995 to more than \$35 billion in 2004, the number of financial litigation unit lawyers has remained steady, usually just one or two per office, supplemented by paralegals.

Reviewing the adequacy of staffing was one of 14 recommendations made by the GAO in 2001 to improve collection. A followup report two years ago noted progress in streamlining procedures but still said "fragmented processes and lack of coordination" remained.

Until these problems are fully addressed, GAO said then, "the effectiveness of criminal fines and restitution as a punitive tool may be diminished."

An attempt by the prosecutors and court system to create a National Fine Center, centrally coordinating collections across myriad jurisdictions, collapsed and was abandoned a decade ago.

The Justice Department office overseeing U.S. attorneys said it has made strides toward better coordination, including links with Treasury's program to offset certain federal benefits to repay debt. Justice also published a "Prosecutors Guide to Criminal Monetary Penalties."

A major factor in the high rate of uncollected fines and penalties was a change in the law.

The 1996 Victims Mandatory Restitution Act requires judges to order payments regardless of a defendant's ability to pay. It's no coincidence, says Natalie Collins, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney's office in Las Vegas, Nev., that the uncollected debts have steeply increased since the law was passed.

"These people come out of prison with a huge restitution debt and if they can't pay, they have that judgment just hanging over them," she said. "We can't squeeze blood out of a turnip."

That said, some prosecutors' offices are more successful than others in going after the money.

For example, in 2003, Delaware's U.S. Attorney's office was the top collector in the country, bringing in \$365 million in criminal and civil debt and leaving just \$19 million outstanding.

At the other end of the spectrum that year was the Montgomery, Ala., office, which collected \$914,676 and ended 2003 with almost \$30 million uncollected.

Steve Doyle, an assistant U.S. Attorney in Montgomery, said the small office has just one attorney and one paralegal, assigned part-time to collecting debts - which are often uncollectable.

"Other than in white-collar cases, most criminal defendants don't have any money," said Doyle. "We attempt to collect everything that can be collected."

Sometimes even as financial penalties are being ordered, it's obvious that the money is never going to be paid.

"I've had clients who have had millions of dollars of restitution imposed, and every one in the courtroom knows that this person will never be able to pay," said Mike Filipovich, a federal public defender in Seattle.

Five years ago, Filipovich represented Leonard Fridall Terry Antoine, a member of Canada's Cowichan band of the Salish tribe, who was sentenced to two years in prison and ordered to pay \$147,000 for paying people to shoot bald eagles and selling their parts. Prosecutors charged him \$3,000 for each of 49 eagles.

"It is absolutely right that this defendant serve time for such an outright violation of our nation's environmental laws," said Tom Sansonetti, then-Assistant Attorney General of the Department of Justice's Environmental and Natural Resources Division. "The outcome will serve as a deterrent." Antoine was released from prison in 2003, but has not paid any of the fines, according to federal records.

"The reality for most folks," said Filipovich, "is that they simply can't afford to pay."

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Saturday, April 8, 2006

LANL Needs Skilled Workers

By John Arnold*Journal Staff Writer*

Los Alamos National Laboratory needs more skilled technicians to help with its expanding pit manufacturing program and other jobs, and the state's community colleges can help, a LANL consultant said Friday.

"Manufacturing has not really been a major part of the lab, but it will become a major part of the lab," said the consultant, Abad Sandoval. "So we've got a lot of people working, or will be working, in manufacturing who really need to become certified and retrained."

About 40 representatives from most of the state's 18 community colleges and university branch campuses will attend a work force training forum at Santa Fe Community College Monday to hear more about work force needs at LANL, Sandia National Laboratories, PNM and Intel.

Two items on the agenda list LANL pit manufacturing as topics, although a spokesman from the lab's public affairs office said the agenda is misleading.

While the LANL officials scheduled to speak at the forum work in the lab's pit manufacturing program, they won't be talking about it, according to lab spokesman Kevin Roark.

"All they're going to talk about is the kinds of skills that are needed at a place like Los Alamos," he said. "... this is just a meeting of the minds to let these officials at the community colleges know what the general overall needs are, with the hope that what comes out of it is the development of programs and curricula that helps meet those needs."

Pits are the grapefruit-size plutonium cores of nuclear bombs. LANL is playing a key role in the U.S. Department of Energy's plans to overhaul the country's nuclear weapons program, under which Los Alamos will serve as an interim pit manufacturing facility until a permanent one can be built.

According to the DOE's plan, outlined Wednesday by National Nuclear Security Administration deputy administrator Thomas D'Agostino, LANL would manufacture between 30 and 50 pits per year beginning in 2012, before the yet-to-be-determined permanent site comes on line. A more modest pit production operation—capable of producing 10 pits per year—will be ready to go next year, according to D'Agostino.

Frank Renz, executive director of the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges, said an aging work force was a big driving force behind Monday's forum. Renz—who, along with LANL consultant Sandoval, helped organize the forum—expects to learn more about the expansion of LANL's pit production program and the skills the lab will require from workers.

"That's definitely part of the program (Monday)," he said. "The community college representatives who are coming are going to hear more about those requirements so that they can gear up, if they're not already geared up, to producing more skilled workers to help with the ramp up (in pit production)."

LANL isn't the only institution in need of skilled technicians who support scientists and engineers. Machinists, welders, electrical and chemical maintenance workers and similarly skilled workers— especially those with math and science skills— are in high demand, Sandoval said.

The community colleges can play a role in training such workers and provide a needed boost to the state's economy, he said.

The lab has often reached out to the state's community colleges, offering resources for programs that train machinists, informational technology workers and others, said Sheila Ortego, Santa Fe Community College's executive vice president.

Ortego said LANL and Sandia may be interested in providing support for technician training programs, but those programs wouldn't just benefit the labs.

"This would be the kind of general technician training that could be applied to many industries, if we can get it off the ground," she said. "... and so if they can assist us then everyone benefits, including other industries not even associated with the lab."

But anti-nuclear activists say jobs in pit production are not only dangerous, they run contrary to the country's international nonproliferation obligations. Training dollars would be better directed to fields like health care, education and renewable resources, said Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group.

"As long as we keep spending hundreds of billions on the military, and corrupting our educational and training institutions to serve the military, we won't be building the job opportunities we really need," he said.

Bomb making is controversial, Sandoval acknowledged, but the lab is a key contributor to northern New Mexico's economy.

"Everyone to his or her own opinion," he said. "These are good jobs."

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LANL program gets help from Senate committee

[print](#)

By ANDY LENDERMAN | The New Mexican
June 30, 2006

A new chemistry building and environmental cleanup programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory got big boosts Thursday from the Senate Appropriations Committee.

 Big Picture

U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., included in a bill \$112.4 million for the lab's new Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility, "a state-of-the-art nuclear laboratory" that Domenici has called the largest building project ever undertaken by the Department of Energy.

He also boosted environmental-cleanup programs at Los Alamos for \$141 million, a \$50 million increase over President Bush's budget request.

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The Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill for the 2007 fiscal year must be approved by the full Senate before moving to the House of Representatives, which has been more conservative on lab funding in recent years. It passed the Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday.

The \$30.7 billion measure would fund the Department of Energy, the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation.

Domenici said the new building "will play an important role for the complex today, as well as the complex of the future."

Domenici broke ground on the project in January.

"Without what goes on in this building, the existing (nuclear-weapons) stockpile cannot be certified, and the state of the stockpile cannot be verified," Domenici said then.

However, a House subcommittee has criticized planning around the project as "irrational."

That's because the department has proposed building a so-called Consolidated

Plutonium Production Center, at a yet undetermined location, by 2022, according to language from the House version of the energy and water-projects bill.

The total cost of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility is estimated at nearly \$1 billion, the House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee reported.

The new building at Los Alamos, which would store special nuclear material, according to the bill, will have its "primary production support function" made obsolete by the planned Consolidated Plutonium Production Center.

"The committee finds this type of planning by the (National Nuclear Security Administration) irrational," the House bill reads.

Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, a citizen watchdog group, is opposed to the new building.

"In our view, having that facility built ... makes it much more likely that Los Alamos will end up being the country's permanent site for expanded plutonium pit production," Coghlan said.

A pit is a trigger for a nuclear weapon.

The NNSA has proposed to increase annual pit production at Los Alamos from 20 per year to up to 50 certified pits per year, according to a draft environmental-impact statement released by the agency.

Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, which opposes nuclear weapons, said the new building at Los Alamos is "a new pit factory for the United States aimed at jump-starting nuclear-weapons production."

However, Mello and Domenici appear to have found some common ground on the extra money for environmental cleanup.

Domenici said the department proposed a deep cut in cleanup funding, which he restored.

"I believe this scenario had the potential to backfire on DOE and increase costs by extending the cost of cleanup and fines," Domenici said.

The department is committed to cleanup at Los Alamos through a mutual consent order with the state of New Mexico.

Domenici also said his bill specifies the department must pay any fines if it fails to follow the consent order. The state could charge between \$8 million and \$35 million in penalties, according to language from Domenici's bill.

"There are many worse places in the DOE where you could spend that

\$50 million," Mello said. "It's a good thing, given the context."

The lab recently reported there are a total of 2,129 contaminated sites there. Of those, 1,365 have been cleaned up and 764 remain, according to the lab. The cost to complete the cleanup is estimated to be more than \$1 billion.

Examples of contaminated sites include dumps, landfills, firing sites and

container-storage areas.

The secretary of the New Mexico Environment Department has urged Domenici and U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., to stop the cuts in cleanup funding proposed by the department.

"This cleanup is crucial to protect the health and environment of New Mexicans for generations to come," Secretary Ron Curry wrote to Domenici and Bingaman earlier this year. " ... I urge you to do what you can to secure the necessary funding to avoid needless penalties and protect our citizenry."



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LANL May Up Its Nuclear Production

Critics Protest Government Plans

BY JOHN ARNOLD

Journal Staff Writer

8/9/06

LOS ALAMOS — Opponents of the National Nuclear Security Administration's plans to build more nuclear bomb cores at Los Alamos National Laboratory lined up Tuesday to blast the idea.

NNSA held the first of three public meetings to gather comments on a draft environmental evaluation, known as a sitewide environmental impact statement.

The voluminous document outlines potential environmental impacts from lab operations over the next five years. The evaluation covers a wide range of nuclear and non-nuclear operations, but the most controversial includes NNSA's plan to ramp up the production of nuclear bomb triggers, known as pits.

Critics on Tuesday said the proposal undermines international nonproliferation efforts, and they questioned how the lab would handle increased waste.

"Currently, we don't have adequate and safe plans to dispose of waste we have already produced," Albuquerque pastor Daniel Erdman said.

Currently, the lab is cleared to manufacture up to 20 pits a year. NNSA wants to increase production to 50 certified pits a year.

Because not all manufactured pits meet certification requirements, NNSA is requesting that LANL be allowed to make up to 80 a year, according to the environmental evaluation.

The plan will "dramatically



BROOKS:
NNSA chief has final say on nuclear alternatives

change the nature of Los Alamos National Laboratory's mission," according to Greg Mello of the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group. "Science at Los Alamos is an endangered species."

NNSA officials said they will incorporate public comments into a final version of the environmental impact statement, which will be sent to agency chief Linton Brooks for review.

The final document will offer several alternatives for how LANL should operate in the future. NNSA is recommending expanded operation including pit production. But the environmental evaluation will also include a "no-action" alternative and one for reduced operations.

Brooks will make a final decision on which alternatives the lab will pursue.

Speakers on Tuesday criticized the process as rushed, and they said the public's views should weigh heavily in the decision.

"It's not Linton Brooks, but the

Critics said the proposal undermines international nonproliferation efforts, and they questioned how the lab would handle increased waste.

people of this country who should be making this decision," said Astrid Webster of Albuquerque.

Two more public meetings are scheduled for this week, including one tonight at Northern New Mexico College in Española. Another meeting is scheduled for Thursday at Santa Fe Community College. Both meetings start at 6 p.m.

NNSA officials will also be collecting written comments through Sept. 20.

Public can weigh in on lab's future

By **Andy Lenderman**
The New Mexican

New buildings, environmental cleanup and more plutonium-pit production for nuclear weapons are possibilities for Los Alamos National Laboratory in the near future.

The National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees the nuclear weapons lab and is responsible for the country's nuclear weapons stockpile, is holding meetings and gathering comments on these and other ideas included in a draft environmental impact statement for the lab.

There's a public meeting tonight in Española and one

Thursday in Santa Fe where citizens can log their comments.

Pit production has caught the attention of the nuclear watchdog community. Pits are triggers for nuclear warheads.

In the impact statement, under what's called the preferred alternative, the lab could go from making up to 20 pits per year to 80. Of those, 50 would be certified for use in the weapons stockpile.

"We do have an interim pit production mission here at the lab," NNSA spokesman Bernie Pleau said. "... But it's nowhere near the capacity of Rocky

See **FUTURE**, Page C-5

IF YOU GO

Two public meetings include:

◆ 6-8:30 p.m. tonight in Española at Northern New Mexico Community College, Eagle Memorial Sportsplex, 921 Paseo de Oñate.

◆ 6-8:30 p.m. Thursday in Santa Fe at Santa Fe Community College, Main Building, Jemez Rooms, 6401 Richards Ave.

Written comments should be sent to Elizabeth Withers at lanl_sweis@doeal.gov, or NNSA Los Alamos Site Office, 528 35th St., Los Alamos, NM, 87544-2201. They can also be faxed to (505) 667-5948.

To place comments by phone, call (877) 491-4957, a toll free number.

part II, Wed. Aug. 9th

Future: LANL waste could increase

Continued from Page C-1

(Flats). And it's never going to get to that capacity that we can see right now. And it's based on the needs of the stockpile."

Pits were produced at the Department of Energy's Rocky Flats weapons complex during the Cold War. Nuclear-watchdog groups in New Mexico are concerned that environmental contamination could accompany a potential increase in pit production here.

"Los Alamos lab is the largest institution in Northern New Mexico," Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group said. "... And the character of the laboratory is going to change under these plans. And the laboratory will become a manufacturing center for a new generation of nuclear weapons."

Everything from the region's identity to property values could be affected, Mello said. "We can be assured that accidents will happen," he said. "We just don't know how severe they'll be."

Also in the draft statement, the amount of transuranic nuclear waste generated at Los Alamos could rise to 510 cubic yards a year from 260 cubic yards a year.

Much of that new waste will be collected during environmental cleanup, said Elizabeth Withers, an NNSA official. Specifically, she said, the waste could come from three areas, including the potential for more pit production.

The other two areas include:

◆ Replacing old buildings with new ones, which depends on Congressional funding. There are proposals to replace a radioactive liquid-waste-treatment facility; build a new science complex; remodel the plutonium facility and replace a warehouse and truck-inspection station, among other projects, Withers said.

"Most of the building up here took place in the '50s," Withers said.

◆ Cleaning up 12 major waste disposal areas.

Ultimately, NASA Administrator Linton Brooks will determine the lab's direction, and he can pick and choose among the various options in the impact statement, Withers said.

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Los Alamos Monitor

Vol. 43, No. 159

Wednesday, August 9, 2006

1 Section, 8 Pages

www.lamonitor.com 50¢

Lab folks mum on pit production

ROGER SNODGRASS

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Monitor Assistant Editor

It was 18-0 Tuesday night, as the first of at least three public meetings about the relative environmental impacts of various development scenarios at Los Alamos National Laboratory came to a lopsided end.

The subject was the Draft Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for Continued Operations. The first opportunity for public comment took place in Los Alamos, but no current laboratory employees offered comment one way or the other.

Other venues including written comments are available.

Opposition to the National

Nuclear Security Administration's "expanded operations alternative," - and particularly the expansion of nuclear weapon activities and additional waste production - dominated the two-hour environmental impact "slam" at Fuller Lodge.

Elizabeth Winters, the Department of Energy compliance officer for the National Environmental Program Act at Los Alamos, introduced the four-volume document, asking for public input on the statement so that "the best possible decision" could be made.

She said the comment period had just been extended an extra 15 days, from Sept. 5 to Sept. 20, a decision that was made Tuesday.

Several speakers, including Erich Kuerschner of Taos, complained that copies of the draft document were not readily available. Chris Mechels of Tesuque objected to the lack of availability of supporting assessments cited in the draft document.

Many speakers were from neighboring communities; some came from out of state. Their commentaries ranged from moral thrashing to substantive critiques about the public review process and scientific issues at stake in the three main baskets of proposals for the next five years at the laboratory - no action, reduced activities and expanded activities.

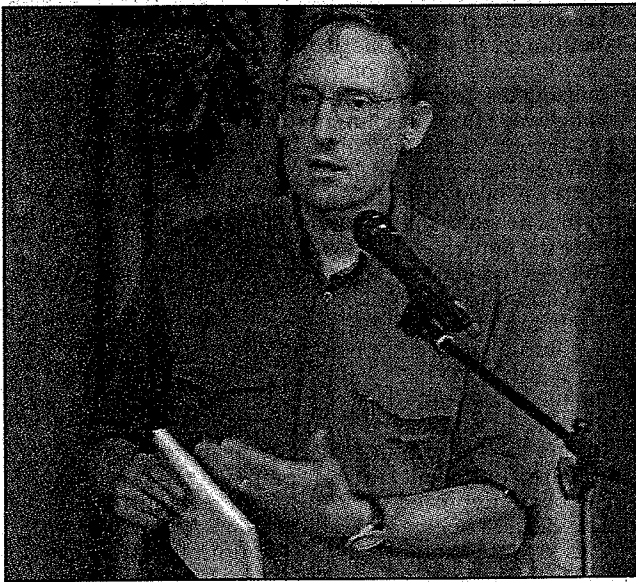
Topping the publicly expressed concerns was the

rapid expansion of pit production. Pits are the plutonium primaries that initiate a thermonuclear explosion and LANL is the only place in the country where a few handfuls are still being made. The expansion plan calls for quadrupling production plans from about 20 to about 80 pits.

Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, said that a decision to quadruple the pit production would dramatically change the laboratory, and he didn't think people in Los Alamos yet realized what that would mean.

Jodi Benson of Los Alamos, among others, made the

See **SESSION**, 2



GARY WARREN/Monitor

EXPERT Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, speaks of the changing direction of work at Los Alamos National Laboratory during a Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement public hearing at Fuller Lodge on Tuesday evening.

SESSION Pit production discussed

From Page 1

implication explicit.

"This is going to specifically change the direction of Los Alamos, moving it from science to production," she said, sharing a view she had heard expressed in the community.

In the past, LANL officials have expressed little interest in assuming a major pit production role at the weapons laboratory.

A handful of speakers from Los Alamos, such as Ed Grothus, were either retired or not directly employed by the laboratory.

Chuck Pergler, an environmental consultant for a company with laboratory contracts, said new pit production might not even be necessary and that studies about pit longevity in the existing weapons stockpile should be studied, "before we spend a billion dollars" on this kind of expansion.

He was one of several speakers who objected to removing the discussion of where to locate the Modern Pit Facility from the national agenda, and making it into a local issue, despite having

important environmental consequences for many other communities around the country.

In an overview of the NEPA process, Withers explained that NNSA Administrator Linton Brooks would make the final decisions about the level of operations at Los Alamos and which actions would be taken.

Several decisions, formalized as Records of Decision, are expected, as a result of the NEPA process.

Withers said she anticipated that one decision would be an affirmation of a commitment to meet the court-ordered compliance agreement with the state, concerning the ongoing comprehensive environmental clean-up program at the laboratory.

She compared the decision-making process to voting, noting that Brooks could choose one or another of the alternatives, like voting "a straight party ticket" or he could pick individual actions from one alternative to go with parts of another, as in voting across party lines.

Other new projects that would add new or expand existing capabilities include several new buildings and building complexes - the four-building, 700,000-square-foot Center for Weapons Research to consolidate the stockpile stewardship program in the main administrative area; the 400,000-square-foot science complex; and the 10-building, 400,000-square-foot Radiological Sciences Institute, a replacement for the 57-year-old radiography facility at Technical Area 8.

Expanded computer operations at the Metropolis Center for Modeling and Simulation would contribute to an overall 40-percent increase in electrical requirement to 668,000 megawatt-hours and an additional one-third water usage, to 522 million gallons.

The Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility would be modernized to manage the disposition of about 66 percent more transuranic waste and 25 percent more low-level radioactive waste under an expanded

operation option.

A "reduced operations alternative" includes 20-percent reductions in high explosive processing and testing, and shutting down the Los Alamos Neutron Science Center (LANSCE), maintaining the system for a possible future restart.

Regina Wheeler, Solid Waste Division manager for Los Alamos County said the county is reviewing the document and would be submitting written comments.

The public comment meetings continue tonight in Eagles Memorial Sportsplex at Northern New Mexico Community College in Española and in the Main Building at Santa Fe Community College in Santa Fe. Both meetings will begin with a poster session beginning at 6 p.m., NNSA presentations at 6:30 p.m.; and public comment beginning at 6:45 p.m.

More information: E-mail: LANL_SWEIS@DOEAL.GOV or call LASO EIS hotline at (toll free) 1-877-491-4957.

MEETING

From Page 1

said. "I would prefer we maintain ownership and continue to lease it to UNM-LA."

During the board's regular meeting held in the district boardroom Tuesday, the board also voted 5-0 to review the district's vision and mission statements.

"The administrative team will lay out a plan for revitalizing the vision and mission statements," Janecky said. "Brenda Clark from Quality New Mexico will conduct a workshop for the administrative team on Aug. 23 when they will look at revitalizing the vision and mission statements."

A Highway Funds Resolution to resurface the parking lots at Los Alamos Middle School and Barranca Mesa Elementary School was also approved 5-0.

LAPD will provide \$8,116 of the \$32,467 project cost or 25 percent. The state, through a matching funds program, will provide the remaining \$24,359 or 75 percent.

Changes to policies 3545-transportation and 4081-parent participation also received board approval.

The board discussed the pros and cons of random drug testing during extra curricular activities. A decision was not made.

The board also discussed the fact that enrollment at both Mountain and Aspen are down from last year.

Aspen's current enrollment is 267, down from 325 last fall. Mountain's enrollment is at 424 compared to 441 last spring.

The board approved back-to-school meetings and dates and ratification of June and July cash disbursements.

Janecky introduced new LAPS Comptroller Sean Trujillo and LAMS new assistant principal Mike Johnson who previously taught history at LAMS.

The next school board meeting and work session will be held Aug. 24 in the district boardroom. The public is invited to attend.

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Critics dominate environmental meetings

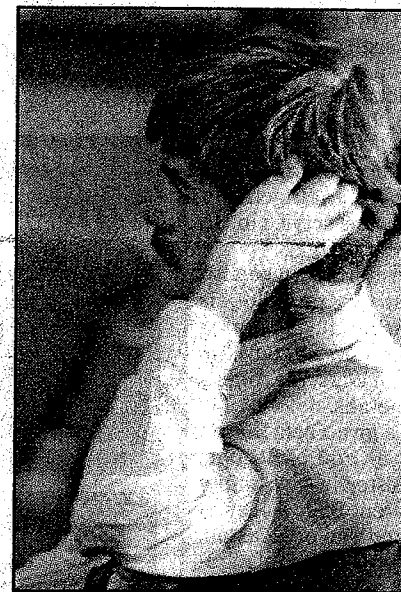
8-11-06
ROGER SNODGRASS
 roger@lamonitor.com
 Monitor Assistant Editor

SANTA FE – The public meetings on future environmental impacts at Los Alamos National Laboratory ended as they began – with even more criticism of expanding nuclear weapons production and hazardous waste generation.

Local officials of the National Nuclear Security Administration again faced a barrage of anger and recrimination Thursday night, in which members of the public repeated many of the same themes from the first meeting in Los Alamos on Tuesday.

“We are following a process that is set down by policy,” Bernie Pleau, NNSA spokesman, said this morning. “NEPA is a requirement of the law. We asked people to come in and give their comments. That’s what they did. They expressed their opinions and emotions,” he said. “We’ll look at what was said and what was recorded and incorporate into the document those comments that add value.”

So many people were signed up to speak against the Draft Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement Thursday night at Santa Fe Community College that the meeting facilitators limited speaking time to three minutes, rather than the five minutes



GARY WARREN/Monitor

IN ATTENDANCE The third public meeting on the Draft Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for Continued Operations at LANL was held Thursday evening in Santa Fe. Photos are from a meeting Tuesday evening at Fuller Lodge in which Elizabeth Winters, DOE compliance officer for the National Environmental Program Act at Los Alamos, is seen speaking to attendees. Ed Wilmot, Los Alamos Site Office manager for NNSA, is shown as he listens.

given to people at the other venues. This became a point of contention, as many of the speakers complained that they were prepared to speak for five minutes, as others had done during the hearings.

“I was surprised that not one sin-

gle person stood up to defend pit production, or even the existence of US nuclear deterrent – and NNSA did not presume to defend it either,” said Greg Mello this morning, after attending all three nights, including the public meeting in Española on

Wednesday. Mello is the executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group who has tracked the laboratory’s processes for nearly two decades. “At the Modern Pit Facility hearings, NNSA officials did attempt to justify the mission and need,” Mello continued. “Here, no one stood up to defend the program.”

He said only the lab’s scientists were spoken of favorably, mostly by people who thought they should be employed more constructively.

A few members of the audience began to act out during the first 15 minutes of the meeting when the project’s document manager Elizabeth Winters first mentioned the possibility of increased production of nuclear pits. Others used the meeting as a forum for political recruiting.

Since closure of the Department of Energy’s Rocky Flats facility in 1989, production of plutonium triggers for nuclear weapons has shifted to LANL, where an emergency capability has been established.

That role could expand dramatically, if the expanded operations alternative calling for an annual production rate of up to 80 pits is chosen by NNSA Administrator Linton Brooks.

The no-action alternative would continue the current ceiling of 20 pits

See **MEETING**, 3

From Page 1

per year, approved in a 1999 decision.

Santa Fe City Councilor Matthew Ortiz led off the meeting by reading a resolution co-sponsored by all but one of the members of the nine-person city council, objecting to the proposed expanded nuclear weapons activities alternatives in the

draft document.

The resolution, expected to pass at the governing body’s meeting at the end of the month, called for an extension of the comment period, as did many individuals during the course of the evening.

Responding to earlier complaints that references

cited in the Draft SWEIS were not available at public locations, NNSA issued a paper listing three locations where they can be obtained – at the Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board office in Santa Fe; at the Government Information Department of Zimmerman Library, UNM, in Albu-

querque; and at the LANL Public Reading Room in Los Alamos.

Jay Coghlan of Nuke-Watch New Mexico said his organization would put nine CDs of the referenced information on its website (<http://www.nukewatch.org>) next week, to make it more accessible.

InBrief

8/17/06 Tribune

Nuclear bomb work triggers opposition

LOS ALAMOS — A proposal by the federal government for Los Alamos National Laboratory to quadruple its production of triggers for nuclear weapons has met opposition from watchdog groups.

The National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile, proposes Los Alamos increase its production of plutonium pits from 20 a year to 80.

"We can be assured that accidents will happen," said Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group. "We just don't know how severe they'll be."

He said the proposal will change the character of the laboratory, making it "a manufacturing center for a new generation of nuclear weapons" that could affect everything from the identity of northern New Mexico to property values.

Sunday, September 3, 2006

Nukes Bring Everyone Down

By Willem Malten

The Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for the new mission at Los Alamos National Laboratory, which will effectively transform the lab into a nuclear bomb factory, talks about how to handle and clean up all the waste and contamination that will be generated— as if Los Alamos has had a spotless record in this regard thus far. I am not going to read it— it is a macabre sideshow, like talking about reducing the smoke from the ovens of Auschwitz.

The environment I am concerned with— never even mentioned in the SWEIS— is the psychic environment that goes together with the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction.

I am concerned about the international environment that is created by trashing treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Isn't our complicity and bad faith the reason that people all over the world see us as enemies? Isn't that the motivation behind proliferation of nuclear weapons in poor, backward places like Iran and North Korea? If the country with the largest conventional army needs nuclear weapons, don't we all?

I am concerned about how to control a privatized corporate nuclear weapon industry, now that the contract for Los Alamos' WMD factory has gone to Bechtel and the University of California. Don't corporations work to maximize profit for their shareholders— in this case, fomenting conflict all over so that there is a lively market for their product? What about congressional or regulatory oversight in this scenario? This concern is not farfetched: remember, the FBI had to fly in with helicopters in order to shut down Rocky Flats.

Declaring war on ill-defined concepts such as "terror" or "drugs" involves the prospect of endless wars without any measure of victory, and a totally arbitrary distinction between "the good guys" and "the bad guys." The only winners are the corporations that make the weapons, giving them an interest in privatizing conflict, and managing the public's perception through the media.

When more than 80 percent of the American public has expressed a desire for nuclear disarmament, yet the national laboratories such as the ones in New Mexico keep pursuing renewed testing, upgrading nuclear weapons and building a new pit production facility, there is something seriously wrong. The sheer magnitude of nuclear weapons and everything that comes with it— research, production, contamination, security— is incompatible with a functioning democracy.

Democracy may have to be rebuilt from the bottom up. Neighborhoods, communities and cities are now the vehicles that express the people's will and have to represent the changes we are seeking. True security and democracy comes from a stronger sense of community, from getting closer. That is why it is significant that Santa Fe has adopted a second resolution against pit production in Los Alamos and in favor of strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and other disarmament treaties. Being a city of peace and holy faith at this point means to resist the WMD facility called LANL on a mesa nearby.

The people of the world are watching and wondering if "We the People" are up to the task. Let's take courage. It started here; let's stop it here.

Malten is a baker, filmmaker and community activist in Santa Fe, as well as a longtime member of the Los Alamos Study Group.

Pit production: once begun, hard to control

In late 2007 Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is slated to begin production of plutonium warhead cores ("pits") for the U.S. stockpile. If this occurs I believe it will be the first time LANL has made pits for the stockpile since 1949 and it will be the first time the U.S. has produced new stockpile pits since 1989.

Producing pits for the stockpile has a number of serious implications for the lab, the town, and the country. Before discussing these, I would like to lay out some of what is publicly known about possible future pit production at LANL.

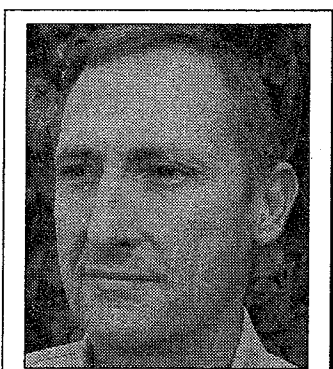
According to National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) budget submissions and the LANL draft site-wide environmental impact statement (SWEIS), the rate of pit production, now zero, is supposed to reach between 30 and 50 stockpile pits/year by 2012 if not before, or up to 80 pits/year including test pits and rejects.

The first pits to be made are for W88 475-kiloton submarine-launched warheads, to be made at a rate of 10 per year. Congressional budget submissions indicate that a total of 70 W88s are to be produced between early FY2008 and FY2014.

In addition, by 2012 if not well before (conflicting accounts are given) pits for at least one version of the "Reliable Replacement Warhead" (RRW) are slated to begin production.

According to NNSA chief Linton Brooks, RRWs are supposed to replace all the pits in the stockpile, expected to number about 6,000 in 2012. The first weapons to be replaced are the two Trident warheads, the W76 and W88.

The W76 is now in the beginning stages of a \$2.5 billion upgrade, expected to extend its life for another 30 years. (This also happens to be the expected life of the



Greg Mello

RRW. Go figure.)

What will happen after 2012, the end of the SWEIS analysis period?

That depends on decisions made between now and then. One of the most crucial decisions is now pending before the Energy and Water Appropriations Conference Committee, namely whether to continue funding for the proposed Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement (CMRR) building.

The CMRR is a \$1 billion, 400,000 square-foot facility that would provide pit production support at TA-55, among secondary purposes.

The House Appropriations Committee, led in this matter by David Hobson (R-OH), believes the CMRR is "irrational" and "absurd" and has proposed cutting all funding (last year) or nearly all funding (this year) for the project. Senator Domenici got the CMRR fully funded last year. This year's negotiations are still pending and it is unlikely that a decision will take place before the Nov. 7 elections.

How many pits might LANL make? Possibly all of them. Take a look at the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board (SEAB) report on the future of the nuclear weapons complex.

The SEAB, while generally endorsing the concept of a "Consolidated Nuclear Production Center" (CNPC) that would integrate all major nuclear activities at a single

GUEST COLUMNIST ^{9/14/06} Monitor

site, also advised that LANL's main plutonium building (PF-4) could produce 20 times as many pits per year as it now does. Depending on how one interprets this, PF-4's alleged potential production appears to be in the range of 200-400 pits/year.

NNSA's most recent admitted plan for large-scale pit production was the so-called Modern Pit Facility (MPF), a roughly \$4 billion project capable of making 125-450 pits/year, originally to come on line circa 2020. LANL was the preferred site for the MPF from the technical perspective.

NNSA, having failed to sell this plan, now requests no funding for the MPF through at least 2011. Instead, the "realignment of prior Modern Pit Facility funding starting in FY 2007 will support NNSA planning to increase pit manufacturing capacity at LANL."

Looking at total pit-manufacturing sunk costs at LANL since 1995, DOE and NNSA have already spent about \$2.5 billion in 2006 dollars laying the groundwork for pit production at LANL. A decade from now, NNSA (assuming its requests are funded), will have spent a few more billions of dollars on pit production at LANL (the exact number depending on what you want to count).

So 10 years from now, if all goes according to published plans, funds comparable in size and purpose to those anticipated for the MPF will have been spent at LANL and a production capacity comparable to the MPF will have been achieved.

How? NNSA plans to enable greater pit production capacity at LANL by a number of means. The first is new and refurbished facilities, centrally the CMRR, which is now in

the early stages of design/build and is slated to begin operation in 2014.

In addition to the CMRR there is the "Plutonium Facility Complex Refurbishment Project," major security and transportation investments, expansion of the nuclear waste disposal area at TA-54, the "Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility Upgrade Project" in TA-50, and a TA-55 radiography facility, to pick only the most obvious.

Second, the Department of Energy (DOE) and NNSA hope to relocate plutonium-238 activities from PF-4 to the Idaho National Laboratory (INL), roughly doubling the floor space available to pit production in PF-4.

Third, the RRW will be designed for automated manufacture, with fewer "hands-on" steps, fewer hazardous materials, looser tolerances in key places, and fewer manufacturing steps and work stations overall.

These design changes, taken together and combined with other "agile" manufacturing innovations would enable, it is thought, much greater production rates.

Finally, reconfiguration of production equipment and relocation of stored material and light laboratory functions may liberate more PF-4 space and enable what is available to be used more efficiently for pit production.

If made, these investments will likely commit LANL to being the sole U.S. pit production facility. What other billions would be available for another?

Next time: the implications of pit production for the lab and the town.

Greg Mello is the director of the Los Alamos Study Group.

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LOS ALAMOS
Nuke lab evacuations cited in
federal probe
Incidents point to safety concerns in
plutonium handling

- [Keay Davidson, Chronicle Science Writer](#)
Thursday, September 28, 2006

Power and ventilation failures at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico forced a half-dozen evacuations over the past four months from a building where radioactive plutonium is handled, according to a federal investigator.

No one was hurt in the employee evacuations, which date back to June 1, but the incidents point to continuing concern about the handling of radioactive materials for nuclear bombs at the lab, which is jointly run by the University of California, Bechtel Corp. and a few industrial partners.

The investigator, in memos to the U.S. Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board that monitors the safety of nuclear weapons labs, said the problems with the ventilation system occurred in a building within a complex set aside to deal with plutonium and other nuclear waste. Failure of the ventilation system can be hazardous because of the potential that plutonium might be sucked out of secure labs and through the structure, and possibly into the outside environment.

In a separate inspection, the investigator noted that half the weapons lab's storage containers for fast-accumulating amounts of plutonium used in bomb "pits" -- the explosive cores of nuclear weapons -- are possibly substandard and could lead to further safety issues.

The amount of plutonium and other radioactive waste is growing to the point "where they impact both (lab) mission and safety, virtually ensuring failure unless addressed as a priority," the investigator wrote in an Aug. 25 memo.

"Half of (the lab's) 9,000 nuclear material containers are nonstandard and suspect," the memo said. The inspector did not detail exactly what kind of accident might be represented as a "failure," but he said building TA-55 where the nuclear waste is stored, is so jammed with plutonium that it "is now near its residue storage capacity, and is within six months of having to curtail pit operations unless (the storage problem) is resolved."

The two memos, the first one dated Aug. 18, were written by an investigator for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, an official advisory agency to the U.S. Energy Department and its quasi-independent branch, the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration. NNSA oversees the nation's nuclear weapons complex.

Kevin Roark, a Los Alamos spokesman, said the lab is moving to resolve some problems identified by the memos, while denying that some of them are even problems. He acknowledged the evacuations occurred -- he wasn't sure how often -- but said the ventilation systems continued to operate each time because a diesel emergency power system kicked into action. The evacuations were calm and orderly, no one was hurt, and no plutonium escaped during the incidents, he said.

Roark denied the memos' claim that half the lab's radioactive waste containers are "nonstandard and suspect."

Julianne Smith, a spokeswoman for the Nuclear Security Administration, made clear that "we expect (the UC-Bechtel partnership) to run the lab in the safest, most effective and cost-efficient way possible. Certainly safety is a top priority." If the lab management doesn't live up to its responsibilities, she added, "we'll hold them accountable -- there's financial and other ways to hold them accountable."

^{Mello}
Greg Miller, a leading activist and lab critic with the citizens Los Alamos Study Group, blames the crisis on the lab's rush to transform itself into the nation's central nuclear bomb-making factory: "They want to push this (bomb-making complex) through while President Bush is in office because it's a political window in which they can act."

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URL: <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2006/09/28/BAG3CLE5941.DTL>

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Friday, September 29, 2006

Lightning Prompted LANL Shutdowns

By John Arnold

Journal Staff Writer

Los Alamos National Laboratory officials blame lightning and external electrical problems for power failures that forced the lab to shut down part of its plutonium facility six times over the summer.

A federal safety investigator reported last month that power and ventilation problems led to evacuations at LANL's Technical Area-55, where the lab processes radioactive plutonium and produces nuclear bomb cores, or pits.

Lab spokesman Kevin Roark said Thursday that Technical Area-55's aging infrastructure, including its electrical system, are in need of upgrades but aren't responsible for this summer's power failures.

"There's an electrical line that comes off of the grid into the lab, and sometimes it goes out, especially when there are heavy thunderstorms," he said. "... we do know it's not our facility that's causing (the power failures)."

The plutonium processing facility was shut down as a precaution, because the staff at Technical Area-55 didn't want to put too much electrical load on the emergency generators, Roark said. No plutonium escaped from the building, and workers were never in danger, he added.

C.H. Keilers Jr., an investigator with the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, has issued two recent memos describing infrastructure and safety concerns at Technical Area-55, which began operations in 1978.

Longstanding infrastructure problems have allowed plutonium residue and waste inventories "to grow to where they impact both mission and safety," Keilers writes in an Aug. 25 memo.

Half of LANL's 9,000 nuclear material containers "are non-standard and suspect," and problems at the facility that treats Technical Area-55's radioactive waste "is a potential single point of failure."

Because of problems at the waste treatment facility, Technical Area-55 is nearing its plutonium residue storage capacity, "and is within 6 months of having to curtail pit operations unless resolved," the memo states.

LANL spokesman James Rickman said Thursday that the lab has taken care of the waste processing backlog and doesn't anticipate that any plutonium operations will be interrupted. The waste treatment facility is in the process of being upgraded, and a new facility is scheduled for completion in 2011, he said.

Meanwhile, LANL is in the process of upgrading infrastructure systems at Technical Area-55, according to Roark.

"The infrastructure investment thing is a priority," he said.

Keilers notes in one memo that over the next six years, LANL wants to significantly expand plutonium operations, including pit production. The lab is currently cleared to produce up to 20 pits a year but is seeking approval to make up to 80.

Lab critics, however, question how Technical Area-55 can handle an expanded pit production mission, considering the state of its aging facilities.

"It's not clear even if they can be fixed, let alone at what cost," Los Alamos Study Group executive director Greg Mello said. "LANL wasn't built to be a production plant."

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Print Page

Thursday, November 2, 2006

Last modified Friday, October 20, 2006 2:33 PM MDT

Feds bid to transform weapons complex

ROGER SNODGRASS roger@lamonitor.com Monitor
Assistant Editor

Los Alamos National Laboratory may get the full-time job that has gone vacant since the Rocky Flats facility was shuttered in 1989. LANL is currently the only place in the country where "pits," or triggers for nuclear weapons, can be produced. Whether it gets an even bigger assignment depends on factors to be weighed under a new Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, a quest embarked upon by the National Nuclear Security Administration on Thursday.

Ultimately, the decision hangs on yet-to-be-determined evaluations concerning the Defense Department's interest and pocketbook, numbers of pits to be produced, costs, transportation factors, how much nuclear material would need to be moved around, how well it could be protected and whether it would be more or less secure at Los Alamos than elsewhere, according to a senior NNSA official.

Among the first priorities of the proposal would be to select a site to be known as the "consolidated plutonium center," where a "baseline capacity of 125 qualified pits per year" would be produced.

Under the current draft environmental impact statement at LANL, NNSA has proposed an interim capability of 80 pits, in order to obtain 50 that can be certified.

The consolidated plutonium center would also be responsible for long-term research and development and surveillance in addition to manufacturing, according to the notice.

A spokesman for Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said this morning the senator supports NNSA's objectives to modernize the nuclear weapons complex and to make it more cost-effective.

"He supports the forward movement, without saying specifically whether the laboratory should get this or that," said Chris Gallegos from the senator's office.

Concerning the plan to expand pit production, he added that a no action alternative to be included in the evaluation could "leave the pit capacity where it is now."

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., campaigning in New Mexico, responded to a question about the possibility that LANL might be selected for the consolidated plutonium center.

"Given the site's layout on a mesa with surrounding local communities, LANL does not appear to be suited to become home to the nation's central storage facility for weapons plutonium," Bingaman said.

A spokesman for Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., Tom Nagle said, "From the briefings we've had, it doesn't look like Los Alamos is the best place for this."

In addition to Los Alamos, other sites under consideration for the consolidated plutonium center are Nevada Test Site, Pantex Plant, Y-12 National Security Complex and the Savannah River Site.

The plan explicitly rejected the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board's task force suggestion that there be a single consolidated nuclear production center for all weapons-related activity involving a significant amount of nuclear materials, as well as its idea that the transformation could be accelerated to take place by 2015.

Kevin Roark, a spokesman for LANL, said this morning, the laboratory has been working with NNSA on the Complex 2030 plan for some time.

"It's very early in the process," he said. "None of the

plan is decided yet."

If the task of production does fall to Los Alamos, NNSA Deputy Director for Defense Programs Thomas D'Agostino's view is that managing a national scientific laboratory is not the same as managing a nuclear pit manufacturing facility and may even require a separate manager at Los Alamos.

The major revision in the way the country organizes work on its nuclear stockpile arises 15 years after the fall of the Soviet Union and was described as an effort to transform and modernize the Cold-War-era nuclear weapons complex.

"I feel a sense of urgency," D'Agostino said, comparing the complex to an old house or automobile. "You have to keep pouring money in it to keep it going," he said. "Meanwhile the world has changed dramatically."

NNSA is relying on a new concept, known as the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW), to enable the complex to modernize and become sustainable for the long run. Although RRW is barely mentioned in the initial document, it is an apparent catalyst for change throughout.

NNSA Administrator Linton Brooks has described RRWs as "replacements for existing stockpile weapons that could be more easily manufactured with more readily available and more environmentally benign materials, and whose safety and reliability could be assured with the highest confidence, without nuclear testing, for as long as the United States requires nuclear forces."

An RRW design competition between LANL and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California concluded recently, but the results are still being evaluated.

The Bush administration's doctrine on nuclear weapons, the Nuclear Posture Review of 2002, called for a nuclear stockpile that reflected that the Cold War is over and contains the lowest possible number of warheads for current security needs.

D'Agostino emphasized significant reductions in the

size of the nuclear stockpile and plans for reduction under the Treaty of Moscow, in which the U.S. and Russia agreed to limit themselves to 1700-2200 operationally-deployed nuclear weapons by 2012.

To that number the notice added "augmentation weapons, reliability reserve weapons and weapons required to meet NATO commitments."

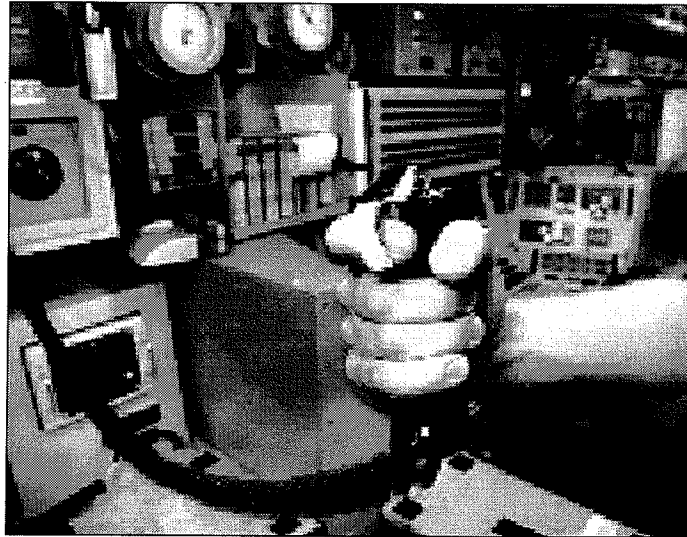
The apparently new category of "augmentation weapons" is not defined in the document, noted Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, among several nuclear watchdogs who are following the new developments.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, a national network of watchdog groups called the plan a "bombplex" and said the Reliable Replacement Warhead "will potentially drive a new nuclear weapons arms race, in order to carry out the expanded first strike options envisioned in the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review."

Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group said whether people were in favor or opposed to pit production at LANL, we would have to come to grips with a fundamental problem.

"We can't just provide management review for one proposal after another to make more nuclear weapons," he said. "The country needs to decide whether we're going to make nuclear weapons the centerpiece of world security, which means everybody is going to have to get them, or whether we're going to lead the way to a safer world where nuclear weapons can be everywhere condemned."

Thursday's announcement kicks off a 90-day scoping and comment period that will end on Jan. 17, 2007.



This is the launch trigger for Trident missiles on an Ohio-class submarine. If loaded with eight W88 warheads, one missile contains more explosive power than all the explosives used in World War II. Photo from *Face to Face with the Bomb: Nuclear Reality after the Cold War* by Paul Shambroom, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

<http://www.eldoradosun.com/Mello.htm>

PERSONAL PRACTICAL GLOBAL

SUN Monthly

November 2006

Plutonium Pit Manufacturing and the Quest for Nuclear Credibility

Greg Mello

Late next year, if all goes as planned, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is slated to begin production of plutonium warhead cores ("pits") for the U.S. nuclear stockpile. The United States has produced no new pits since 1989, and because of this it has produced no entirely new warheads since then either. If and when LANL begins production, warhead manufacturing will start up at a handful of plants around the country again, after a hiatus of some 18 years.

Whether this happens or not depends substantially on whether citizens in northern New Mexico want plutonium manufacturing as their fastest-growing industry, and on whether, how

and with what firmness they express their desires in the matter. If indeed production does get up and running — which has been the central purpose of the transformations forced on the lab over the past few years — LANL's rate of manufacturing pits will determine the overall U.S. weapons-production rate, since making pits is the hardest and the slowest part of the entire process.

LANL has not had this job since 1949. The facilities in which production is gearing up to take place weren't built with this in mind and are decades old. They need major renovation and are plagued by long-standing safety issues. Despite their intense interest in getting pit production running at LANL as fast and hard as possible, there is as yet no clear sign that either the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) or the Bechtel-led consortium that runs LANL has budgeted enough money or time to solve these problems. Neither do they have a clear plan as to how to make pits while also carrying out the major renovations needed in the facilities being used.

Whether despite these problems or because of them, \$2.5 billion in inflation-corrected dollars has been spent at LANL since 1995 to get ready for the day, should it come, when the first shiny little pit — a “keeper,” not one made for testing — comes off the line. A pit is built like an ellipsoidal or spherical ball with one or more metallic shells inside — somewhat like a nesting *matryoshka* doll — with the innermost shell made of plutonium.

Another \$3 billion or more is slated to be spent between now and 2014 to sustain and increase LANL's pit production, of which fully \$2 billion is for new and improved facilities. By 2014, the rate of production is projected to rise to at least 50 pits per year. Following that, production is supposed to speed up further as new facilities begin to come online. Last year the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board said LANL could make, and therefore *should* make, about 200 pits per year.

When (and if) completed, pits made at LANL would be sent to the Pantex assembly plant located a few miles east of Amarillo, Texas. There, in semiunderground chambers, each of these metal eggs would be surrounded by high explosives and provided with a few other parts. At this point the device would become, in effect, a small atomic bomb, capable of releasing the explosive energy of a whole trainload of explosives.

If this assembly, called a “primary” in the weapons-of-mass-destruction trade, is then placed in a uranium shell along with a “secondary” thermonuclear explosive, some rigid foam and a couple of other parts, the result is a “nuclear explosive package,” or “physics package.” When this is put in a cone-shaped shell (a “reentry vehicle”) with a variety of electrical and mechanical parts, it becomes a nuclear warhead, in this case a high-yield warhead called a “W88.” W88s have an explosive yield of almost a half million tons of TNT.

The warheads are next loaded onto missiles. Up to eight W88s are placed on a platform called a “bus” (so called because the warheads get off the “bus” independently for their different destinations) inside a Trident missile. Twenty-four such missiles are loaded into each of 14 Ohio-class submarines.

Loaded in this way, just one of these missiles carries the equivalent of all the explosive power used in World War II. Just one of these warheads, if exploded at full yield over a large city, would kill hundreds of thousands of people by blast, radioactivity and the ensuing firestorm. It's the firestorm that military planners especially don't like to talk about, even more than fallout. Its

widespread, total destruction contradicts the “precision” targeting ideals deeply ingrained in U.S. military culture.

How many such explosions would be necessary before full societal collapse occurred? Not too many, probably, if key spots are targeted.

THE CRAFTSMAN’S LEGACY

Present nuclear threats and future nuclear strikes begin with that metal Easter egg, so hard to make — thin, heavy and a bit warm to the touch. At Los Alamos and afterward, with each successive step of assembly and then deployment, a monstrous reality takes shape: a very real and eminently portable hell on Earth, deliverable to any nation or people within 30 minutes guaranteed — an efficient, high-tech holocaust-on-demand. Once such a machine is assembled, the right person — it needn’t be the president, you know — can switch it on with no more than a few strokes on a keyboard or a few spoken words.

Those who make plutonium pits hope they will just sit in a bunker for decades, but the fact is, once their craftsmanship is done they have no more say in the matter. The time when they could have saved lives and been faithful to human ideals will be past. Long after those who make them die, those nested metal balls may remain in careful readiness, a lasting legacy of terror, waiting for the word that would doom a hundred thousand families. It happened before, with a pit made in Los Alamos.

Those who plan such a thing and work to make it possible say they hope it will never happen. Well, that and a buck fifty will get you a cup of coffee, because without an utterly credible threat, nuclear weapons have no coercive value — which means no value at all. At the worker-bee level, “no value” translates into “no job” and “no paycheck.” How could the threat of nuclear attack be credible to an enemy but not to us? Either the threat is credible — that is, real — or it’s not.

Former Sandia Labs president Paul Robinson used to say that it’s “overwhelming terror” that puts the “terr” in nuclear deterrence. Producing that same overwhelming terror puts thousands of paychecks in New Mexico bank accounts. Poor New Mexico — the quaint and complaisant little *colonia* where the United States does almost half of its warhead work, including the dirty and dangerous jobs nobody else wants. Poor New Mexico — so far from God, so close to Los Alamos. Denial of these realities is one of the defining cultural features of Santa Fe today; there is far less denial in the Espanola Valley. Those who think this has been good for New Mexico will have to explain to the rest of us why the state’s income rankings have fallen so low relative to other states at the same time the labs’ budgets have risen so high.

But wait. Aren’t there “surgical” nuclear missions, very special missions in today’s world that only nuclear weapons can do — like destroying bad guys or germ-warfare agents in deep bunkers, like in the movies? Isn’t there a role there for a new kind of nuclear strike force, aka “deterrent”?

It’s too long a story for this article to take up these cases and others one at a time. But the bottom line is this: From a strictly military perspective, all the military problems for which new nuclear weapons — earth-penetrating nukes, mininukes, any nukes — are supposed to provide solutions either have other far better military solutions or no military solutions at all. This is true

even from the most callous military and strategic perspective, the imperial perspective from which these things are typically viewed in the halls of power today.

Once all the euphemisms and the self-serving, illogical fantasies are stripped away (these fantasies are far more common among civilian nuclear promoters than in the military), those who think they see military value in nuclear weapons are not thinking about the big picture hard enough. Most New Mexicans, long accustomed to the “national security” mantle wrapped around the labs, are usually surprised to learn that most military brass don’t like nuclear weapons very much, for a heap of good reasons.

PRESERVING THE PRIESTHOOD

Today the United States has about 23,000 pits, give or take a thousand or two. There are almost 10,000 in weapons, of which perhaps 2,000 reside in an underground bunker complex about a mile south of Albuquerque’s Sunport. (There are more nuclear weapons in that bunker than anywhere else on Earth.) The rest of the pits are stored at the Pantex Plant near Amarillo. Of those, 5,000 have been designated a “strategic reserve” to be kept in case something goes wrong with deployed pits.

Nobody knows for sure how long all these pits will last. The official minimum lifespan is still “45 to 60 years” — two different numbers, giving all of us ample notice of what a finely tuned enterprise this is (not!). Some advisors to NNSA, the agency that runs the weapons labs and plants, believe pit longevity may be significantly greater than 60 years. This would of course greatly affect any “need” to make new pits. Pits, it seems, can even “improve” with age as their inherent radiation anneals away internal irregularities.

If we don’t crush and dispose of them first, future generations may figure out the shelf life of pits. Or maybe they never will, having more important things to do. We know, however, when pits were made. We can say, for example, that if the U.S. government so decides, there will still be 6,000 pits that are 60 years of age or less in 2045. Since that’s almost four decades from now, perhaps even die-hard nuclear aficionados ought not to panic about “pit aging.”

Pit aging (and warhead aging overall) is not the reason NNSA wants to restart nuclear-warhead production — workforce aging is. To keep the nuclear enterprise going, nuclear skills, knowledge, values and culture must be transmitted to a new generation. Through new designs and new manufacturing, NNSA and its allies seek to renew the labs and manufacturing plants in every way possible.

NNSA understands what many well-meaning liberal activists do not: the nuclear enterprise is fragile, weak and as dependent upon unwritten knowledge, belief and a supporting social consensus as it is upon hardware and money. Polls show there is no support for anything but a declining nuclear-weapons enterprise headed for mutual disarmament pursuant to treaties already signed and ratified. So a great deal of effort is put into fabricating an illusion of legitimacy, especially inside the labs and plants themselves, where workers can be easily indoctrinated.

THE QUEST FOR CREDIBILITY

The only other reason pit production is needed is because NNSA wants new kinds of weapons that won’t “self-deter,” as they put it. “Self-deterrence” is the strategic equivalent of

conscience. If only nuclear weapons weren't so powerful, the story goes; if only they were more accurate, more flexible as to yield; if only we could be sure that nobody could get hold of a dud and use it; if only bombs could burrow another few meters into the earth; if only they had a more powerful electromagnetic pulse so they could be detonated in a place and manner that would not cause as much (political) fallout — if only they were different and better, they could be more easily used and so the threats we make with them would be more credible.

In other words, new weapons are “needed” because nobody has yet been able to come up with a convincing use for the existing ones. Since this is America, the answer must lie in technological progress. Of course, all the existing nuclear weapons were once said to be “solutions” to the credibility problems of prior weapons, and so on back.

As stated before, none of the technical proposals for new nuclear weapons are convincing from a military point of view. They blow things up and kill a lot of people, and they do so in a way that makes the overall military and strategic situation much worse, in every possible case. None solve the overwhelming moral, political, legal, military and strategic problems that accompany every contemplated use of nuclear weapons and that indeed lie in the contemplation and in the weapons themselves.

But NNSA knows its real audience, which is in Washington, D.C., not Tehran or Beijing. The key people who must be convinced sit on a few congressional committees. In Washington a more credible deterrent *does* require new warheads and, hence, new pits. Increased credibility to that small audience — the audience that really counts — happens not because the warheads are different or “better,” but because they are *new*. Sheer momentum and investment per se, the gloss of newness, is indeed the coin of the realm. Investment creates belief, which is to say credibility. Investment creates value, as any stockbroker knows. So new pits and new warheads, if pursued, will definitely create a more credible deterrent — to budget cuts. It is not at all clear that there is any other nuclear deterrence.

The sales problem for NNSA, the labs and advocates like Senator Domenici is that while “credible” is a nice word to a politician’s ear, and an important one too, “usable” in connection with nuclear weapons is not. And the path to a more “credible” deterrent lies only through more “usable” weapons. “Usable” translates pretty quickly into “stupid,” “deeply wrong” or even “suicidal” for people who don’t have a financial or career interest in nuclear weapons.

In the final analysis, NNSA’s core argument is that we must make pits . . . in order to make pits. It will cost us our self-respect, our environment, about \$100 billion or so — and all hope of preventing nuclear proliferation. Are we going to do this, or not? I hope you will reflect on this personally because Congress is largely asleep at the switch on this question, leaving this decision largely up to “we the people” in practical terms.

What can be done? There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question; political effectiveness is usually a very sensitive function of time and commitment, but there are very simple things you can do as well. Please write me at gmello@lasg.org or call our main office at (505) 265-1200 if you think you might want to help. Or visit www.lasg.org and look through the recent “Action Alerts” for more background on the issues and ways to work against the appalling plans to resume nuclear warhead manufacturing after all these years.

URL: http://www.abqjournal.com/santafe/517912north_news12-04-06.htm

Monday, December 4, 2006

Labs at Center of Pits Debate Again

By John Arnold

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As New Mexicans weigh in this week on the National Nuclear Security Administration's new-look nuclear weapons complex, Los Alamos National Laboratory once again finds itself in the middle of a debate over if and where to put a next-generation nuclear weapons factory.

Beginning today, the nuclear security administration will conduct a series of hearings across the state on "Complex 2030," the agency's long-term vision for consolidating nuclear weapons operations and modernizing its aging Cold War arsenal with a new warhead design.

Under the plan, Los Alamos is one of five sites the agency is considering for a new plutonium center, which would churn out the round, radioactive bomb cores, or pits, needed to fuel nuclear weapons.

It's not the first time.

In 2002, LANL was one of five sites considered for a manufacturing plant called the Modern Pit Facility. But lack of congressional support doomed the proposal.

The NNSA's newest plan is also facing scrutiny on Capitol Hill, especially in light of a new plutonium study delivered to Congress last week.

The study, which determined that pits have a much longer lifespan than previously thought, has some members of New Mexico's congressional delegation questioning whether the country needs additional pit manufacturing capabilities or the new weapon design known as the reliable replacement warhead.

"I have always had serious questions as to whether the (reliable replacement warhead) program constitutes the development of new weapons, which would be counter to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. ... Now, with the added information about the longevity of pits, the (warhead) may not be necessary," said Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M.

Both Udall and Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., called for hearings next year to determine whether the new weapon is needed.

Bingaman said regardless of what happens with the new warhead, LANL is not the best choice for a permanent facility to produce pits.

Not only does Bingaman have concerns about security and the additional nuclear waste that would be created by such a facility, but "(LANL) has always been a science lab, so it doesn't necessarily fit in with the mission of the lab," said Jude McCartin, the senator's spokesman.

Future mission

What the future holds for LANL's mission under Complex 2030 is far from clear.

The nation's last pit factory, Rocky Flats near Denver, closed in 1989, making LANL the only site in the country capable of manufacturing pits.

The lab makes a handful each year for research and the W88 warhead. The government, however, is seeking approval to increase production to 80 pits a year.

Under Complex 2030, LANL would manufacture pits for the reliable replacement

warhead until a permanent plutonium manufacturing center is built sometime in the early 2020s.

Although Los Alamos is on the short list for the permanent center, nuclear security administration officials don't think the lab is ideal because it would be more difficult to secure than other potential sites, according to Tom D'Agostino, the agency's deputy administrator for defense programs. LANL's aging facilities also present a challenge.

Complex 2030 calls for the eventual production of 125 pits a year. LANL's plutonium center, Technical Area 55, was built in the 1970s and isn't equipped to handle such a workload, D'Agostino said.

"(LANL's plutonium facility) is designed as a set of research bays and for doing work in an incremental way," D'Agostino said. "It's not laid out as a modern manufacturing plant would be laid out, so it's less than ideal."

Still, D'Agostino acknowledges that LANL's existing resources and experienced personnel make Los Alamos a site worth considering. If it is chosen to host the consolidated center, the plutonium facility would likely not be part of the laboratory, but would be managed by a separate entity, he said.

Capacity levels

The recently released plutonium aging study also raises another possibility.

What if the nuclear security administration doesn't need to produce 125 pits a year and can make do with 80 or fewer?

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said last week that in light of the study, "It is possible that we will not need the same level of capacity as originally proposed."

Jay Coghlan, director of the watchdog group Nuclear Watch New Mexico, thinks that if Complex 2030 requires fewer new pits, LANL is more likely to host a permanent pit manufacturing mission.

Activists say LANL's pit production future could also hinge on a political variable—funding for one of Domenici's pet projects, a new billion-dollar lab building known as the chemistry and metallurgy research facility.

The new building, already under construction, would replace a deteriorating lab Los Alamos needs for plutonium work. But the project has yet to be fully funded, and some in Congress are questioning it.

If plutonium work is going to be moved to a new consolidated site, the chemistry and metallurgy research building "will have a very limited functional lifetime," according to a budget report submitted earlier this year by Rep. David Hobson, R-Ohio. Hobson chairs the House Appropriations subcommittee that works on the Department of Energy's spending plan.

Research facility

The chemistry and metallurgy research facility only makes sense if the consolidated plutonium facility is located at Los Alamos, Hobson said. His spending plan cuts nearly all funding for the project, while Domenici is requesting \$112 million.

* "If we build a new production facility— that's what (chemistry and metallurgy research) is— then it becomes extremely hard to stop pit production. Since we don't need to do it for a long time, we shouldn't be investing in it," said Los Alamos Study Group director Greg Mello.

Domenici and his staff say the chemistry and metallurgy research facility will be needed

in the future regardless of where plutonium is processed, because weapons designers at Los Alamos will always need to work with plutonium on an experimental level, if not for full-scale pit production.

Last week, the Nuclear Weapons Council— a group of senior Department of Defense and DOE officials— determined after reviewing the first reliable replacement warhead designs that the program is feasible and should be pursued.

NNSA says the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal— built to fight the Cold War— is outdated and in dire need of an overhaul.

Complex 2030 and the reliable replacement warhead program aim to create a secure arsenal better suited for 21st century threats, D'Agostino said. State-of-the-art weapons technology in the replacement warhead design would prevent unauthorized use by terrorists, and a consolidated plutonium center would allow storage of bomb-grade plutonium at a single, high-security area rather than at sites scattered around the country.

Supporters also argue that the new warhead would make the arsenal less expensive, safer and easier to maintain, creating a "responsive" weapons infrastructure that would allow the government to dismantle more old weapons.

"The beautiful thing in my view about all of this is it enables us to reduce the size of the nuclear weapons stockpile and start dismantling warheads at a much faster pace than we have before," D'Agostino said.

Critics don't buy that argument.

Creating a new nuclear weapon sends the wrong message to other countries with nuclear ambitions, they say.

* "It's an inopportune time to start manufacturing nuclear weapons," said the Los Alamos Study Group's Mello. "You can be sure we'll hear about it from (Iranian president) Mr. Ahmadinejad and (North Korea's) Kim Jong Il."

Complex 2030 hearings

The National Nuclear Security Administration will take comments on the scope of its environmental study on its plan to overhaul the nation's nuclear weapons complex.

Hearings are scheduled in New Mexico as follows:

- 6 to 10 p.m. today, New Mexico Tech's Macey Center, 801 Leroy Place, Socorro.
- 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 6 to 10 p.m. Tuesday, the Albuquerque Convention Center, 401 Second St. NW, Albuquerque.
- 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Hilltop House Best Western, 400 Trinity Drive, Los Alamos.
- 6 to 10 p.m. Wednesday, Genoveva Chavez Community Center, 3221 Rodeo Road, Santa Fe.

For more information, visit www.complex2030peis.com.

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INFERIORITY COMPLEX

Activists speak out on nuclear future.

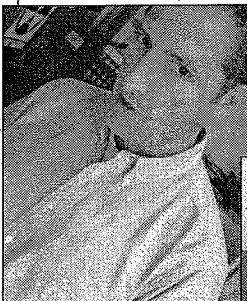
BY NATHAN DINSDALE
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"Complex 2030" sounds like a bad science-fiction movie. Something starring Kurt Russell wearing an eye patch, Vin Diesel in a pair of Ray-Bans or John Travolta sporting a terrible haircut.

Except it's worse. At least according to local anti-nuclear activists like Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group.

"They're essentially proposing to replace the entire US nuclear arsenal with itself," Mello says. "Complex 2030 is supposed to be about having a smaller, more efficient arsenal, but if you

want to reduce the arsenal, just retire existing weapons instead of building new ones."



Greg Mello and Joni Arends are concerned about the potential implications of Complex 2030.

Complex 2030—called "Bombplex 2030" by anti-nuclear activists—is the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) vision for the future of the US nuclear arsenal. According to the NNSA, Complex 2030 is intended to "establish a smaller, more efficient nuclear weapons complex" by developing new warheads, dismantling "retired" warheads and consolidating weapons at fewer sites.

"Complex 2030 is a broad transformation of the nuclear weapons complex," NNSA spokeswoman Julianne Smith says. "What we have now was built in the Cold War for a Cold War adversary, but our potential adversaries have evolved. This is about modernizing for the future."

New Mexico sites like Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), Sandia National Laboratory and the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad could be integral to the Complex 2030 vision. LANL in particular figures prominently in the Oct. 19 Notice of Intent issued by the NNSA.

"We were surprised at just how much

focus is being placed on Los Alamos," Joni Arends, executive director of the Santa Fe organization Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, says. "It looks like LANL is a primary location for this proposed consolidation."

The Notice of Intent is the first step in the process. The second is hosting public hearings in communities near eight federal nuclear sites (including in Santa Fe on Dec. 6 at 6 pm at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center) to discuss NNSA plans to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in conjunction with the proposal.

"All eight of our sites would figure into Complex 2030," Smith says. "To say one is more important than another would not be right."

But those plans also include establishing a "consolidated plutonium center" for nuclear research, development and production as well as choosing a site.

"Part of this environmental process that we're going through now is picking that location," Smith says. "Currently there are five sites being considered, and Los Alamos is one of them."

The project is far from a reality. The NNSA plans to have a draft EIS ready by next summer, but a final EIS isn't expected until spring 2008. The design for the Consolidated Plutonium Center wouldn't be complete until 2012 and the facility wouldn't be operational until 2022.

"We're a long way off," Smith says. "These are just the first steps in a very long process."

Arends and Mello question whether the steps need to be taken at all. A study released last week by a group of independent scientists (called the JASON panel) also questions whether the country's aging nuclear stockpile needs to be replaced at all. According to the study, current weapons are capable of remaining effective for 100 years, more than twice the Department of Energy (DOE) estimate.

"I think the entire premise for Complex 2030 has become null and void," Arends says. "The DOE needs to go back to the drawing board and come up with a new proposal."

That isn't likely. Smith says the study won't effect NNSA plans to move forward with its plans for Complex 2030.

"There are certain infrastructure changes that we need to go forward with," Smith says, "and we have every intention of going forward with them."