

Hearings on plutonium warhead factory coming, opposition ramps up

A firm "NO!" to nuclear production here and now in Los Alamos is a NO to the war machine and a YES to national renewal

For more background, see our two previous Reporter ads at <https://tinyurl.com/ydfppku5> and <https://tinyurl.com/2s4yfi8s>. Prior print ads in this series are at <https://lasg.org/LASG-ads.html>.

The U.S. has embarked on what has become a \$1 trillion program to upgrade and/or replace its nuclear weapons and the specialized factories which make warheads for them. Obama started it. It continued under Trump and then under Biden. Costs grew and schedules lengthened. Scope of work increased.

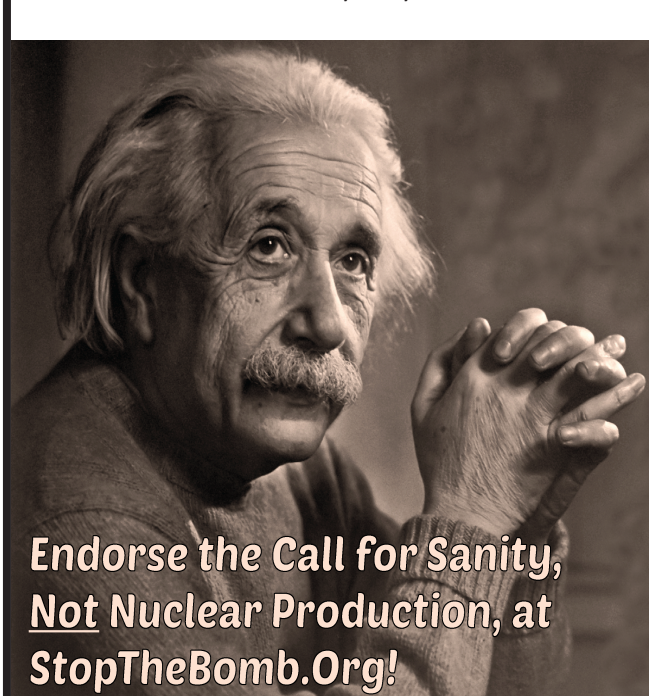
Now, a second Trump administration aims to expand and accelerate warhead production, a vast enterprise run by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). "Go fast" is the mantra, no matter what the cost to taxpayers, the environment, or workers. Fat-cat contractors and their congressional servants are in charge.

Not your daddy's lab anymore

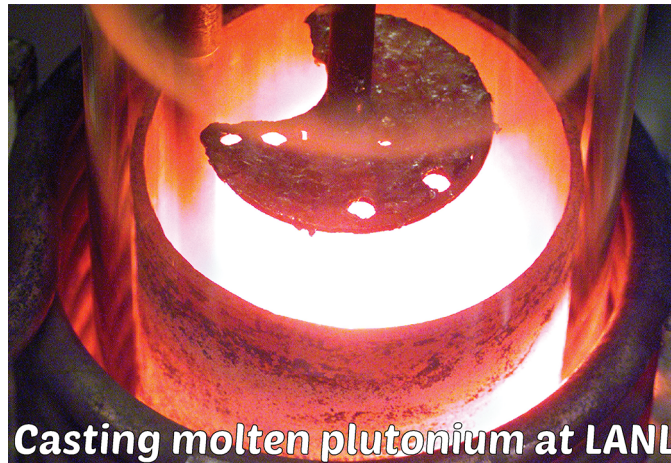
In 2018, under intense lobbying from the New Mexico delegation, congressional hawks, DoD, and the contractors, NNSA decided to make not just one but TWO factories for plutonium warhead cores ("pits").

So the next year, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) began turning itself into a factory for the first time since 1949, ending a 70-year tradition as a nuclear R&D lab. Now, over 1/3 of LANL's budget and workers are devoted to building and slowly starting up this factory.

"Science?" That was mostly a myth. Now it's an historical myth.



Endorse the Call for Sanity, Not Nuclear Production, at StopTheBomb.Org!



Casting molten plutonium at LANL

"For New Mexicans, we're seeing a strategic pivot with respect to the role that DOE and NNSA play in our state. And that strategic pivot is moving toward greater nuclear weapons arsenals production...at the expense of environmental cleanup..." (James Kenney, NMED Secretary, Albuquerque Journal, 4/23/26)

Costs of the LANL pit complex are now 10x what was originally estimated. Future costs increase every year. Pits are a gold mine.

This is the largest capital project in the history of New Mexico by far. It will cost roughly \$30 billion to build through 2032, at least 20 times what the Manhattan Project spent in this state.

It's a star-crossed project. NNSA's only in-depth analysis concluded that trying to build a permanent factory in LANL's old plutonium facility was a terrible idea.

To make it work even temporarily NNSA has drastically loosened safety rules. Allowable radiation exposures have been increased 5x. Eighty safety rules are being secretly reviewed, we hear.

A second, larger factory is under construction in South Carolina. It will be able to make all the pits NNSA wants, starting in the late 2030s. The estimated cost of building both pit factories is \$50-60 billion.

A lawsuit in South Carolina and the "PEIS"

Meanwhile plaintiffs in a 2021 SC lawsuit, including Nuclear Watch of New Mexico, sought to stop the SC pit factory while letting the LANL one freely continue. In the end the judge agreed that NNSA had broken the law but did not stop the SC project (or the LANL one, which wasn't requested). The parties agreed NNSA would produce a nationwide ("programmatically") environmental impact statement (PEIS), now available for public comment in highly obtuse draft form at <https://tinyurl.com/4f7pzvdr>. It purports to analyze the environmental impacts of pit production options.

Normally, an EIS would precede a major federal decision. In this case, Congress laid down the law last December: LANL must acquire the capacity to make at least 30 pits per year, and the Savannah River Site (SRS) in SC must acquire the capacity to make at least 50.

Enter Trump's hawks, little different from Democrats

As explained in our last ad (<https://tinyurl.com/ydfppku5>), Trump's appointees see no reason why "at least 30 per year" at LANL couldn't also be "at least 60," or perhaps

"80." NNSA wants as many new pits as possible, yesterday.

This is at least a 23-year bipartisan quest, and has been the law since 2014 with only minor changes since then. The Trump people

merely want to succeed where their predecessors failed. They are colorful and quotable, but their production goal is no different than Obama's or Biden's.

Arms controllers want LANL production

Regrettably, the arms control community in Washington, including groups like the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Arms Control Association, along with dozens of seemingly progressive members of Congress and of course the New Mexico delegation, do not oppose pit production at LANL. They support it.

Some say they are sad about making pits, and they don't want to make too many – a futile wish – but they do not oppose making them as long as it is done in New Mexico. They want to force NNSA and Congress to make all the plutonium pits at LANL, for all time. Some have said this and worked for this outcome for decades.

Here's the reality: the South Carolina factory won't be finished and operating until the late 2030s. In the meantime, only LANL can make the pits needed for brand-new warheads and an arms race with Russia and China. That's what they are supporting.

LANL's pits are not needed to maintain existing warheads. Everyone in the warhead business knows this.

"We need affordable housing. What we don't need are giant apartment complexes that have no affordable housing and are specifically built to house the workers at the plutonium factory." (Old Santa Fe Association President Randall Bell, Santa Fe New Mexican, 4/29/26)



If LANL is a pit factory, two factories will be built

LANL's small 50-year-old facility can make some pits, especially if safety rules are slackened, but under no circumstances can LANL make anywhere near enough pits to support any arsenal that NNSA, DoD, and Congress can currently foresee.

Nuclear weapons require pits. While pits age only slowly, they do age. It takes about 20 years to build and start up a pit factory from scratch, assuming all goes well. Congress will not choose unilateral disarmament.

So if LANL makes pits to enable an arms race right now, another bigger, newer factory will also have to be built. Such a factory is being built right now in SC. NNSA is

7 years into that project, now explicitly mandated by Congress. Trump won't halt it and neither will his successors. As expensive as it is, all other options are much more expensive and would take much longer. If the SRS project were halted, any successor project would have to be bigger.

Some say "pit recycling" could eliminate the need to build a brand-new factory. It doesn't -- except in the short run, meaning at LANL. Pit reuse is what NNSA has been doing since 1989 and could keep on doing through the 2030s, if all-new warheads

were off the table. Pit reuse eliminates the need for production at LANL but has no relevance to the question of whether construction of the SC factory should continue.

Apart from immediately facilitating an arms race, LANL pit production will maximize corporate revenue, eventual pit production capacity, pork-barrel spending, and congressional support for nuclear weapons.

It is a terrible choice for the United States and the world. This is why these hearings and what follows are important.

What should our message be?

We need to say "NO!" loud and clear to pit production here and now, in Los Alamos and its bedroom communities. THAT is the core of the message we need to convey to Washington – to the politicians and NGOs alike. New Mexicans have had enough. WE are trying to help YOU. We aren't victims and we don't want your sympathy, your nuclear welfarism, your corporate paternalism, or your payoffs. We simply won't be your sacrifice zone – your nuclear weapons colony. We won't cooperate. Stop talking down to us. We know the score. Apparently you do not. We have not lost our humanity. We want to help you regain yours. We don't want your dirty jobs that hurt us. We don't want to be part of your mafia that steals from the poor to build your precious doomsday weapons.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **First**, join the many people and organizations opposing LANL's bomb factory by filling in the short form at StopTheBomb.org. We will then be able to notify you about meetings, educational events, targeted actions, and ways to volunteer. There are plenty of ways to help!
- **Next**, reach out to your friends and contacts and encourage *them* to join you in endorsing the Call at StopTheBomb.org. Organizational, religious community, and business endorsements are very valuable.
- **Contribute** if possible to support our ads, interns, and other work!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming public hearings on plutonium warhead ("pit") production:

• **VIRTUAL**: Tuesday May 5 at South Carolina, 3:30 pm MDT. You can attend virtually via this URL: <https://bit.ly/PitPEIS5May>. Meeting ID: 267 103 716 263 892. Passcode: Wb2RJ9zA. Join by Phone: 571-429-4592. Phone conference ID: 297 381 326#.

• **IN PERSON PLEASE**: Thursday May 14, 5:00 pm at the Santa Fe Farmers Market Pavilion, 1607 Paseo de Peralta. Hearing starts with poster session by NNSA (30 minutes). A virtual attendance option is available but is much less impactful.

These and other hearings in this series (far away and are without virtual options) are likely to be the ONLY public hearings held on pit production. Speakers are usually allotted 3 minutes but you can be creative – in the hearing and outside. The more people there are, the more truthful, authentic, and heartfelt the testimony, and the more engaging the spectacle overall, the better.

SANTA FE CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

The City of Santa Fe has opposed nuclear weapons production and LANL pit production in the past (see <https://tinyurl.com/ydxyrnbd>); we are asking the City to renew its opposition. For more information on the status of these efforts and how to help, write Madison at mfigueroa@lasg.org. Santa Fe County, for its part, has already opposed pit production at LANL. Upcoming City Council meetings will be held May 13 and 27. Public comment occurs at roughly 7 pm.

OUTREACH, DIALOGUE, AND PROTEST IN LOS ALAMOS

Unless plans change, Study Group members will meet each Tuesday at 11 am in front of the Bradbury Museum in Los Alamos. Activities will vary but will always involve discussion, outreach, and camaraderie. Write Madison at mfigueroa@lasg.org for further information.

THE SUMMER PROGRAM

The Study Group is organizing a summer program of experiential learning out of our Albuquerque office. Write Greg at gmello@lasg.org for more information.



Scan to join "The Call for Sanity, Not Nuclear Production!"

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