

(TWILIGHT, MOON RISING, COYOTES SINGING, STARS WHEELING, PATH, COMPANIONS)

"The Accelerating Nuclear Arms Race -- What We Can Do"

Slides for Zoom discussion, April 14, 2026

"Only he who knows the empire of might and knows how not to respect it is capable of love and justice." (Simone Weil, "The Iliad, Poem of Force")

"The French people, in June and July 1940, were not a people waylaid by a band of ruffians, whose country was suddenly snatched from them. They are a people who opened their hands and allowed their country to fall to the ground. Later on...they spent themselves in ever more and more desperate efforts to pick it up again, but someone had placed his foot on it." (Simone Weil, The Need for Roots)



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To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserve send a blank email to lasg-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

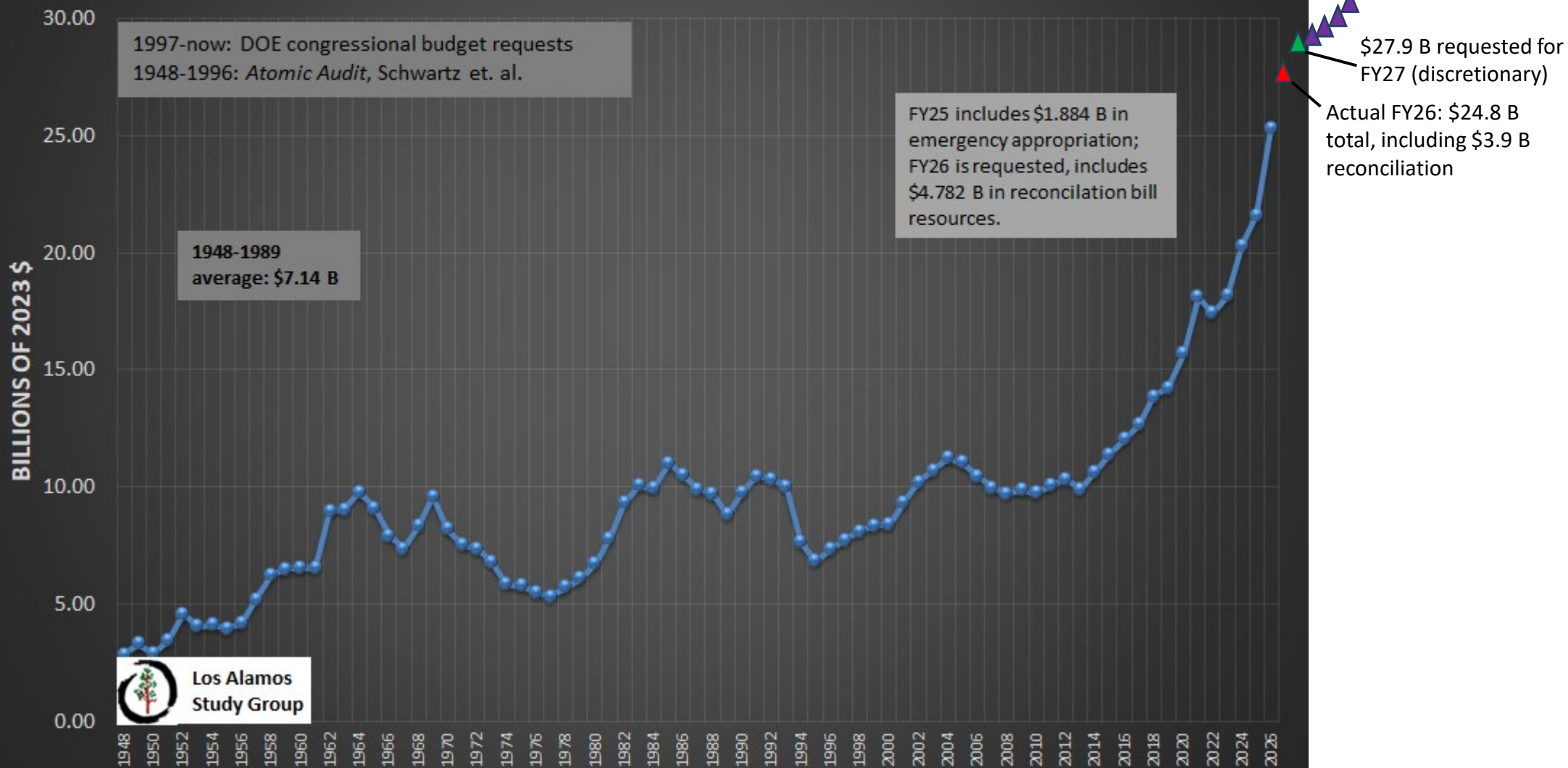
To subscribe to the Study Group's New Mexico listserve, send a blank email to lasg_activist_leaders-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

Blog: <https://lasg.org/wordpress/>

Quick overviews & background

- [Nuclear Weapons Modernization: Current Articles and Issues](#) (Study Group)
 - Nuclear Matters Handbooks: [2020 revised](#); [2020](#)
 - [FY 2025 SSMP](#), Biennial Plan Summary, Sep 2024; [FY 2024 SSMP](#), Nov 2023 (FY2026)
 - <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2026-03/united-states-nuclear-weapons-2026/>
 - [Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2025 to 2034](#), Apr 2025
 - FY2027 NNSA budget request: [Overview](#); [Weapons Activities](#); [Laboratory Tables](#); [State Tables](#)
 - Other resources at https://lasg.org/budget/NNSA_Planning_Budgeting.html
 - Read our [press releases](#) of this year. Read and use our [print media advertising](#)
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- New launch platforms (Columbia, Sentinel, B-21, F-35) for sea, air, and land
 - New and modernized missiles (Trident D5, LRSO, SLCM-N, others following) (DoD)
 - New and modernized warheads and reentry vehicles (NNSA and NNSA/DoD)
 - Future concepts (two new warheads expected to enter program this year)
 - Others expected to follow shortly
 - New infrastructure for DoD (Sentinel, shipyards)
 - New infrastructure for NNSA (plutonium, uranium, lithium, tritium, non-nuclear, assembly/disassembly, storage, support, much more)
 - Rapid capabilities program at NNSA
 - New C3I (command, control, communications, intelligence)
 - New security requirements
 - AI integration for rapid realization of new concepts
 - Continued massive workforce recruitment and expansion across DoD and NNSA contractors, direct and indirect

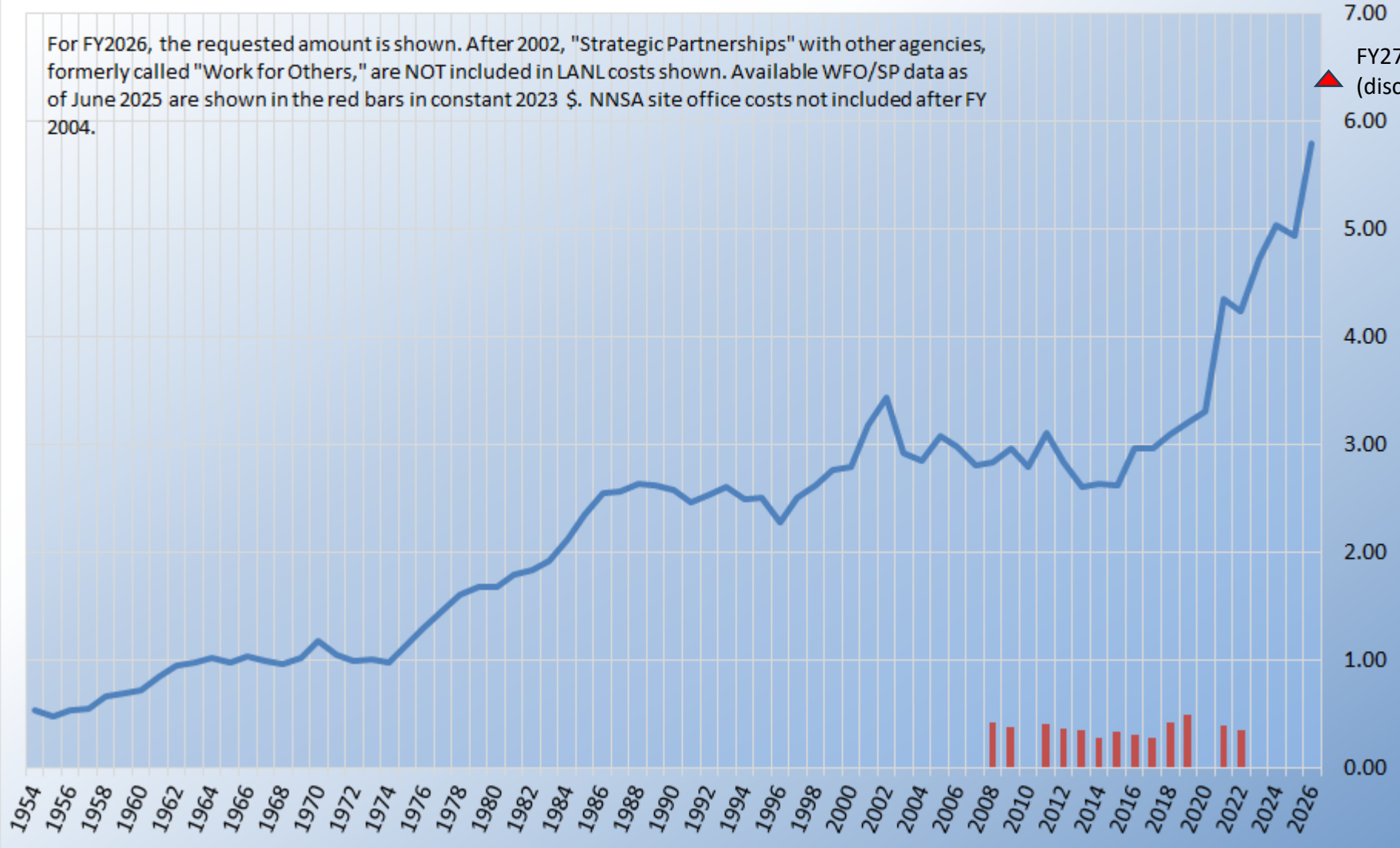
AEC/ERDA/DOE/NNSA Annual Spending for Nuclear Weapons Research, Development, Testing, and Production: NNSA Weapons Activities with administrative costs included; constant 2025\$; ≥FY26 requested, in then-year \$. Updated 6/3/25.



Los Alamos National Laboratory Costs Incurred by Fiscal Year, billions of 2025 dollars

Los Alamos Study Group, June 27, 2025

For FY2026, the requested amount is shown. After 2002, "Strategic Partnerships" with other agencies, formerly called "Work for Others," are NOT included in LANL costs shown. Available WFO/SP data as of June 2025 are shown in the red bars in constant 2023 \$. NNSA site office costs not included after FY 2004.



FY27 requested: \$6.4 B
(discretionary, w/o SPs)

Key vulnerabilities in the nuclear weapons establishment

- Us, and our active recognition that *the present is a very positive historical moment for us.*
- Its direct and indirect workforce: its quality, quantity, morale, and retention
- Its infrastructure (site and regional) in selected cases (e.g. LANL)
- Its inherent immorality and illogic, its overall illegality, its untruthfulness or need for political secrecy
- Its tendency to overreach due to greed and complacency, in programs, budgets, and military commitments. Its plans are unsustainable.
- Its structurally poor management; the “need to feed” contractors
- Supply chain issues
- Safety and security issues
- Powerful external factors, altogether or somewhat beyond our control, examples:
 - The inexorable economic decline of the U.S., accelerated by Iran War
 - Resistance to empire by other states (e.g. but not limited to Russia, Iran, China)
 - Domestic political unrest and social instability (e.g.: >\$11,200 per household for the military + nuclear, not including extra for wars, and not including past military, i.e. veterans affairs)
 - Weather and climate-related regional disasters and specific events impacting facilities
 - Other natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes)
- Electoral vulnerabilities down the line, but don't count on Dems making things better.
- (Site-specific vulnerabilities, e.g. at LANL especially)

As NNSA saw it, a couple of years ago:

Table E-1. The nuclear security industrial base risk factors

Human Capital Gaps	Industry is unable to hire or retain U.S. workers with the necessary skill sets
Sole Source Vendors	Only one supplier is qualified to provide the required capability and/ or product
Constrained Market	Capacity is unavailable in required quantities or time due to competing market demands
Product Security	Lack of cyber and physical protection results in eroding integrity and confidence
Sunset Technologies	Product or material obsolescence resulting from decline in relevant suppliers
Foreign Dependency	Domestic industry does not produce the product, or does not produce in sufficient quantities
Eroding Infrastructure	Loss of specialized capital equipment needed to integrate, manufacture, or maintain capability
Regulatory Changes	Labor, environmental, transportation, etc., laws outpace industry's ability to develop alternative processes
Inflation	Changes to the global market causing uncertainty in suppliers pricing models thereby increase costs in material, labor, and freight over a short period of time
Global Events	Both manmade and natural events such as the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic that negatively impact the supplies of critical goods and services

COVID-19 = Coronavirus Disease 2019

Key strengths of the nuclear weapons establishment

- **Money.** The more money they have to spread around among contractors and politicians the stronger they are.
- **Secrecy**
- **Narrative dominance, unchallenged Russophobia in particular, as well as highly-plastic “deterrence”**
- **Unchallenged hegemonic narratives, jingoism**
- **Structural barriers to accountability in law**
- **What amounts to a neocon takeover of Congress and the Executive**
- **Substantial but not total control of the mainstream media**
- **Substantial control of Congress and the Executive by Israeli-linked forces; lack of sovereignty of the U.S. as a whole**
- **“Deep” domestic activities of the intel community**
- **Cross-linkages with the “Big Tech” AI community, with its vast resources and surveillance**

Every one of these also provides opportunities to us of one kind or another.

Key strengths and weaknesses of the disarmament community (1)

- Our core strengths include:
 - The inherent rightness of the peace, anti-war, humanitarian cause – the conscience we share with almost everybody (con-science, what we know together).
 - The depth of our commitments and vocations
 - Our community of mutual support
 - Our relationships with mainstream and independent media and other media, including our own
 - Our diverse skills and knowledge
 - That said, our strengths – these and others – are more potential than actual right now.
- Some core weaknesses
 - Lack of clarity about what we want. Is it arms control, disarmament, nonproliferation, protection of the environment, worker safety – or all of the above? They overlap but are in general quite different! Or is it defeat of Trump and the election of more and/or different Democrats?
 - We often do not understand the differences between being “anti-nuclear” and being in favor of nuclear disarmament. The latter requires, at a minimum, not being at war with, or seeking to dominate, our negotiating partners!
 - There is a huge difference between seeking justice for past nuclear insults and working on disarmament today.

Key strengths and weaknesses of the disarmament community (2)

- **Some core weaknesses: lack of clarity about what we want (continued)**
 - **We do not adequately understand the difference between expressing an opinion that makes us feel good and having a strategy to win. Said differently, we often don't want really want to win. We often don't think it's even possible and we too seldom have strategies to do so.**
 - **Often, people are using nuclear issues of one kind or another to accomplish something else. Sincerity matters. We may be able to accomplish more than one thing, but everything is improved with openness and sincerity, including openness to ourselves.**
 - **Many people are fixated on restraining Trump. Fine, but how? But Trump is a symptom of deeper problems. There will be no liberal reform that "resets" the U.S. to something that seems "normal." Most people underestimate the depth of the economic and structural political problems. The "party" is well and truly over. Hard times, possible very hard times, lie ahead.**
- **Lack of clarity about the context in which we work. Everything is dramatically changing, fast.**
 - **The U.S. is at war with Russia, for goodness' sake! The U.S. is seeking to dominate China also, including by implicitly threatening with nuclear weapons but meanwhile by denying energy.**
 - **There is no easy strategy, no "silver bullet." We are seeking much more than simple reform.**
 - **Electing Democrats won't be enough. Dems are a major part of the problem, perhaps the greater part of the problem in NM.**

Key strengths and weaknesses of the disarmament community (3)

- **Lack of clarity about context (cont.)**
 - **The U.S. is not remotely a democracy, and has become much less of a democracy since roughly – when? The advent of this century, certainly. The MICIMATT rules, plus Big Tech, Big Energy, Big Finance, and Israel, to name a few. Intel agency psyops and “deep events” are seemingly everyday affairs. It is hard to know what is going on. Congress and the Executive are both dysfunctional to a great degree.**
 - **The U.S. has a terrible deficit, debt, and debt service problem. There is a constant need to sell more debt and pay interest on debt outstanding.**
 - **The crisis in climate and environment is real and biting. Floods, drought, wildfire, storms will continue to increase.**
 - **There is almost no cheap oil and soon no cheap gas. The energy cost of energy is rising. Prosperity is falling. There are no highly-efficient, versatile, cheap alternatives to fossil fuels. The U.S. seeks to control as much of the world’s supply of oil and gas as possible, of course.**
 - **Overall, the U.S. seeks global domination, as described by (for example) Wolfowitz. Until this changes, there will be no nuclear disarmament.**
 - **It is easy to miss the seriousness of the overall situation, which is seldom discussed. It is not polite to do so.**

Key strengths and weaknesses of the disarmament community (4)

- **Some core weaknesses (cont.):**
 - **Lack of thorough and far-reaching nonviolence, especially in its positive aspects**
 - **The nihilism and narcissism of the age. Lack of respect for truth. Truth is not “what sells.”**
 - **Identity politics, a highly-divisive force (race, gender, age)**
 - **Substantial control by Democratic Party/USG adjacent funders, and by DC-based NGOs**
 - **Habits of performative protest engendered by the above and low democratic enfranchisement. We (quite reasonably) lack ambition. We must be unreasonably firm and persistent. This is hard.**
 - **Individual and group material insufficiency and/or insecurity, contributing to lack of vocations**
 - **Lack of skills, both immediate task skills and skills in building capacity and community**
 - **Aging leadership, retirements; loss of knowledge and experience, replacement with naïvete**
 - **Lack of permanence and institutionalization**
- **The recipe for overcoming these weaknesses is to:**
 - **Understand them; each one contains solutions, sometimes obvious;**
 - **Keep going nonetheless, dissolving barriers and finding ever-deeper resolutions in action; and**
 - **Rinse and repeat. "Stay calm, have courage, and watch for signs."**

Some observations:

- It's not so much *what* we do as *how* we do it; the *what* will follow according to circumstances.
- Nothing but gestures are possible without commitment and the capacity that results from it.
- The arms control/nuclear disarmament/nonproliferation/antinuclear (AC/D/NP/AN) community is largely captured and misdirected. Most of its positions and talking points are drafted to be compatible if not supportive of the Democratic half of the war machine. That is, after all, where the money comes from. The atmosphere is often one of nostalgia for the lost 1990s, the Clinton Administration, Boris Yeltsin, and the unipolar moment (the "end of history").
- The nuclear disarmament movement was intentionally destroyed by a group of large foundations in 2002/2003 after the shocks of the CTBT debacle, 9/11/01, the dot-com crash, and the loss of the largest foundation funders.
- Citizens United (2010) was a serious, albeit inchoate, blow as well.
- The rise of the neocons in the late Obama administration, the Ukraine coup d'état, and then Donald Trump, along with the ensuing Dem Party/intel community-generated Russophobia and finally the profoundly-provoked proxy war in Ukraine (Biden), ended nuclear disarmament prospects as well as arms control as we once knew it.
- The U.S.-enabled Israeli genocide and wars, ongoing, with substantial Israeli takeover of this administration and Congress, together with our mad president, have crippled law and negotiation.
- **We can't just be for AC/D/NP/AN. We need to be for peace and against war, first and foremost.**

On opposing pit production – preliminary quick remarks

- **Oppose it here and now, not 10-15 years in the future. Oppose all pit production NOW. "No pits here and now" is a better objective than "Yes to pits here and now, but no to pits somewhere else 10 or 15 years from now." Huh? And we must choose, because Congress must choose.**
- **NNSA cannot and will not rely on LANL alone to make pits. SRPPF is necessary under all scenarios short of complete nuclear disarmament. LANL cannot support even a small arsenal for long, because its plutonium facilities are already quite old and the site is inadequate from many perspectives.**
- **We can conclude that NNSA will not support LANL pit production forever. It cannot.**
- **How long existing US pits will last is contested – and basically irrelevant. NNSA wants to make pits for several reasons, only one of which is pit aging. We all agree that there is no need to make pits right now to replace aging pits.**
- **That is, we all agree there is no need for LANL to make pits, beyond technology demonstration and training.**

Please join us at stopthebomb.org, and join us on Sunday 4/26 at 4 pm for more on the coming pit hearings. Register at

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/bBwRzME0R_aHhRbDY3PU6A