

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

Background, talking points, and key issues as we approach the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Plutonium Pit Production (P3 PEIS)

On-line May 20, 2025

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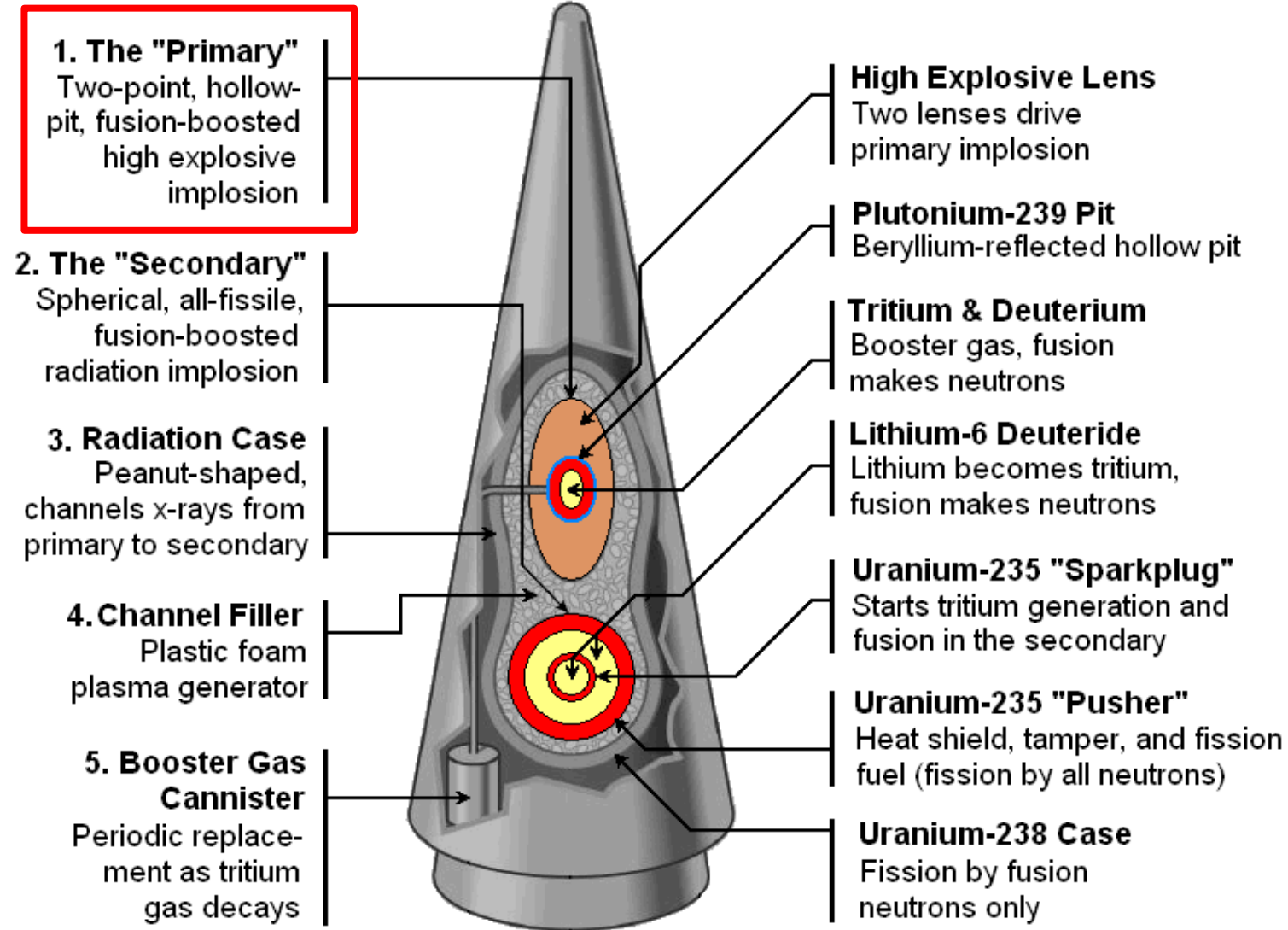
To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserve send a blank email to lasg-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

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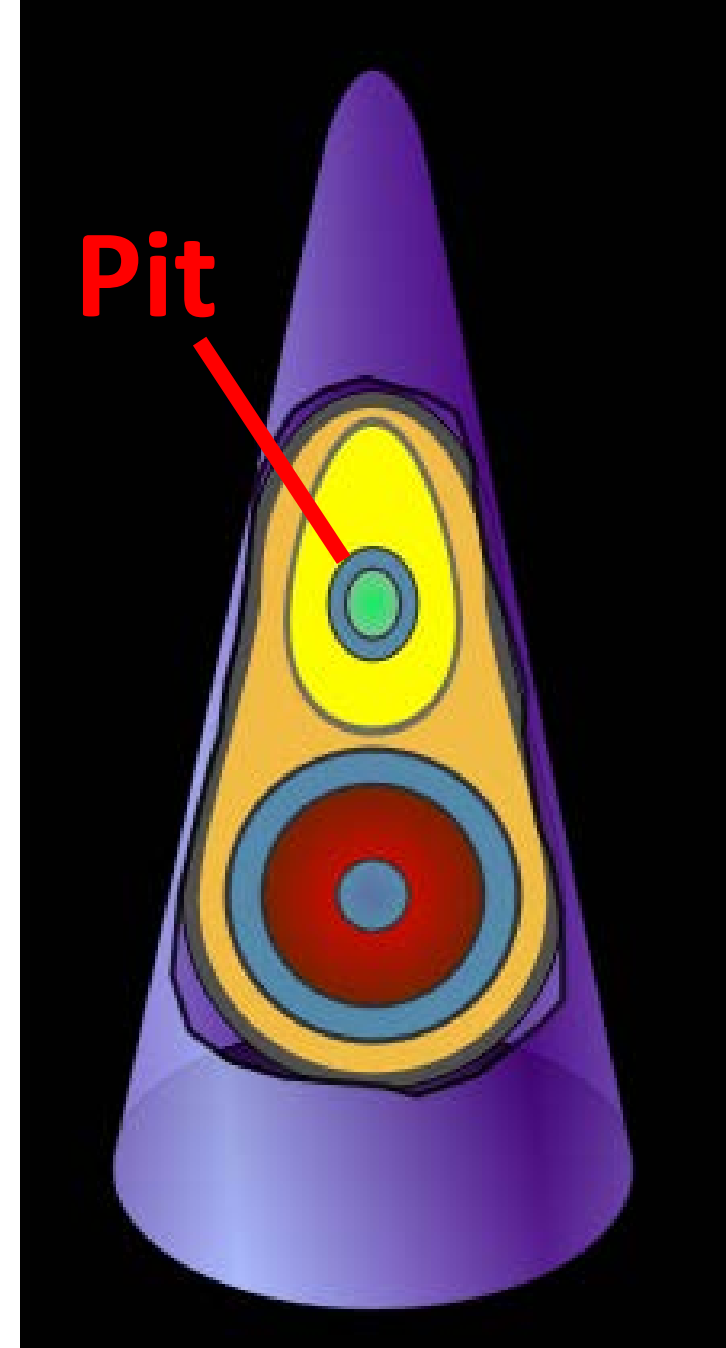
Blog: <https://lasg.org/wordpress/>

Modern U.S. ballistic missile warhead, late 1980s

W88 Warhead for Trident D-5 Ballistic Missile



Sources for illustrations: Wikipedia





**Mark 21/W87 on
single RV MM III
bus, the present
deployment
configuration.**

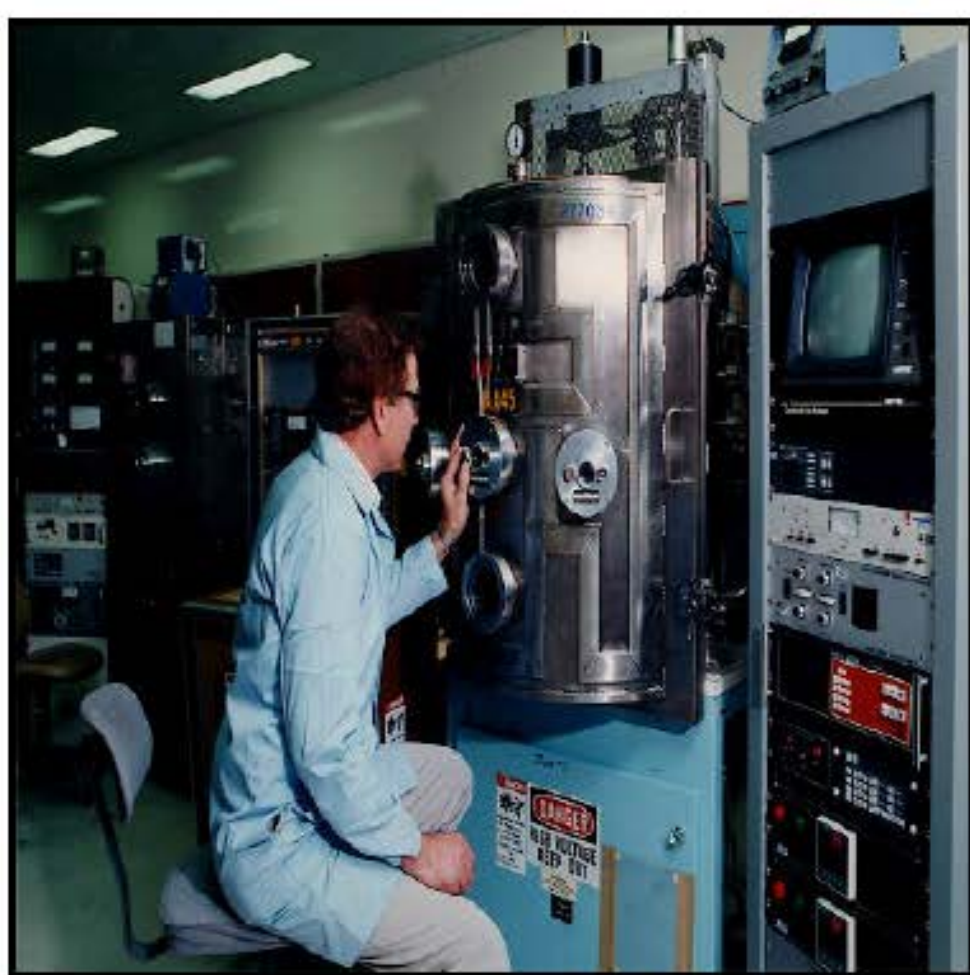
**This RV is too wide
and heavy for
MIRVing MM III.**

MM III in operation.

Result.

Summary – policy choices

- **NNSA will continue to build the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) regardless of what happens at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Why?**
 - **LANL cannot build enough pits to sustain any politically-foreseeable stockpile.**
 - **SRPPF, by itself, can sustain any politically-foreseeable stockpile.**
 - **NNSA will not pause SRPPF because dispersion of the design and construction teams and ending the specialized equipment contracts would end the project. Restarting SRPPF would take many years and essentially be a new project.**
 - **Building an adequate brand-new facility at LANL would take >15 years, cost more than SRPPF, and would likely be impossible.**
 - **Augmenting the old PF-4 with “modules” or equivalent would also take 15 years, interrupt operations, be very costly, and is likely impossible.**
- **The size of SRPPF is determined by the existing main building.**
- **There are no feasible locations in which to make pits besides LANL/PF-4 and SRS.**
- **The only remaining policy questions are whether, at what scale, and for how long NNSA will try to make pits at LANL, and what impact mitigations are possible and chosen.**



Coater

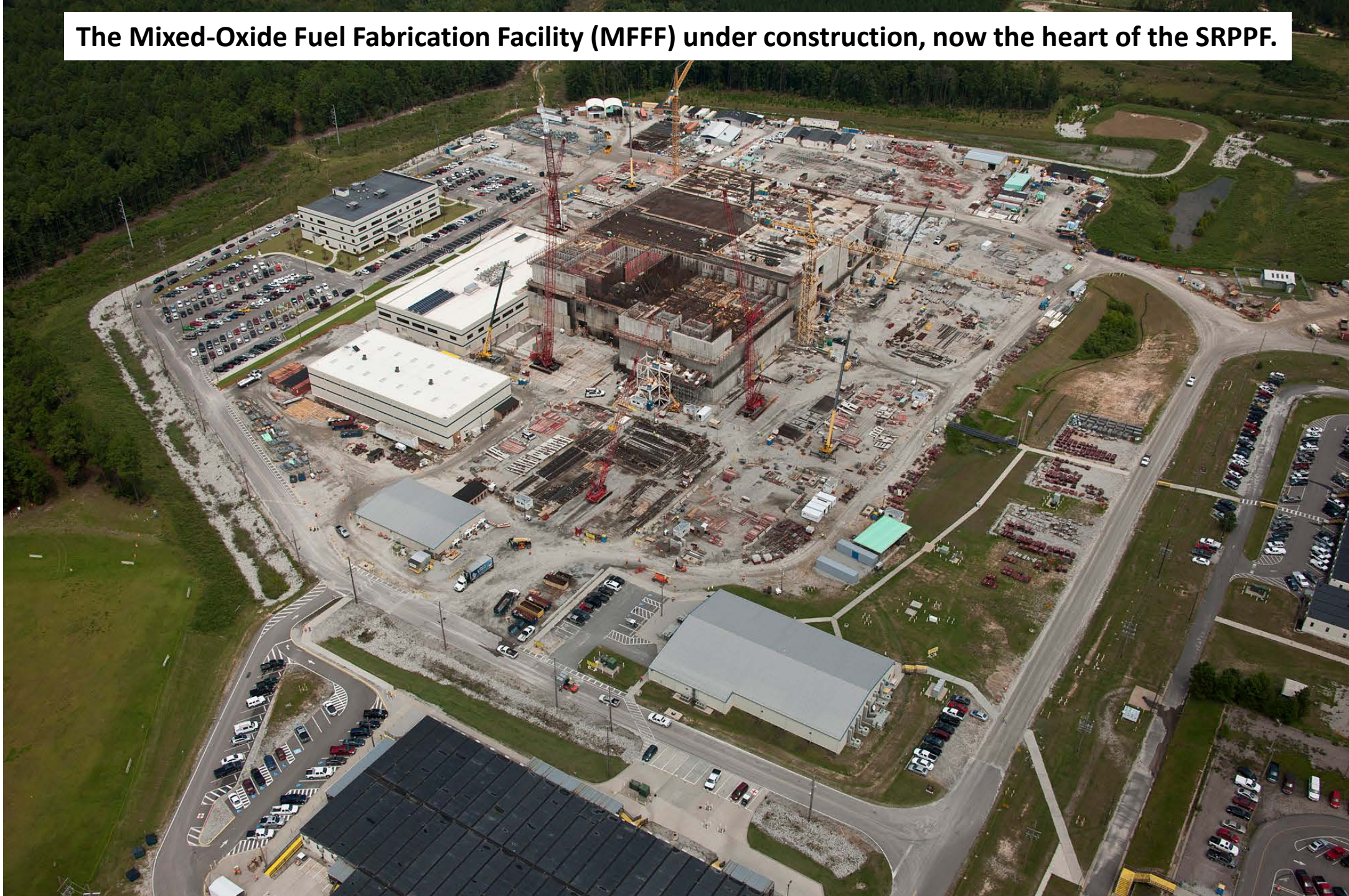


Plutonium Glove Box

Random scenes from the LANL pit production world



The Mixed-Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MFFF) under construction, now the heart of the SRPPF.





SRPPF under construction in early 2025, sand filter in foreground.



LANL TA-55 with its security fence, with PF-4 (large gray roofed building) in center; residences, public roads, and potentially exposed individuals in foreground. TA-55's location is not optimal for physical security.





An aerial photograph of the Los Alamos site. In the foreground, there is a large, deep excavation site, which was intended for the canceled CMRR-NF. To the left of the excavation, there are several industrial buildings, including a large one with a grey roof and a smaller one with a red roof. A tall lattice tower is visible on the left side. The site is surrounded by a fence. In the background, there are forested hills and a road with some vehicles. The text overlay provides context about the site's history and current state.

TA-55 and PF-4. Note canyons on N and S, cliff at bottom of slide; excavation for canceled CMRR-NF in foreground; forests surrounding. The site is very crowded.



Savannah River Site			Los Alamos National Laboratory									
		SRPPF	CMRR				LAP4	TLW	TRP III	Program	M and R Projects	EMC2 Projects
			PEI1	PEI2	REI2	RC3						
1	Process infrastructure											
2	Process equipment											
3	Transuranic waste storage and loading											
4	Material characterization and analytical chemistry											
5	Utilities and site Infrastructure (buried utilities, roads, lighting, waste stream lines, etc.)											
6	Administrative building											
7	Maintenance and construction support building											
8	Safeguards or security measures*											
9	Vehicle and pedestrian entry											
10	Measures to safeguard special nuclear material*											
11	Training and operations center											

From [GAO-23-104551](#), “NUCLEAR WEAPONS: NNSA Does Not Have a Comprehensive Schedule or Cost Estimate for Pit Production Capability,” p. 70.

LANL costs are spread across several budget lines, and program costs (the largest component) are opaque.

* - Represents a pre-existing capability at Los Alamos National Laboratory

SRPPF: Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility

CMRR: Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Project

PEI1: PF-4 Equipment Installation, Phase 1

PEI2: PF-4 Equipment Installation, Phase 2

REI2: RLUOB Equipment Installation, Phase 2

RC3: RLUOB Hazardous Waste

LAP4: Los Alamos Plutonium Pit Production Project

TLW: Transuranic Liquid Waste Treatment Facility Upgrade Project

TRP III: Technical Area-55 Reinvestment Project, Phase 3

Program: Plutonium Modernization Program

M and R Projects: Maintenance and Recapitalization Projects

EMC2: Plutonium Enhanced Mixed Oxide Conversion, Commercial Projects

Summary – politics

- Neither the Executive nor Congress, let alone both, will choose the inexorable, unilateral nuclear disarmament that would result from having no pit factory that is perceived to be adequate.
- The rush to build pits, i.e. build them at LANL ASAP, arises from:
 - contractor and political pork-barrel pressures to spend money and in particular to buoy and maintain Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL).
 - lack of technical/managerial confidence in pit production, largely due to LANL's own mishaps,
 - Specific warhead schedule commitments: W87-1/Mk21A/Sentinel at LANL and then W93/Mk7/UK/Trident D5/Columbia at SRPPF as a first pit type there,
 - geopolitical panic (Russia, China), fear of losing “compellance” (aka the arms race).
- Nuclear disarmament will not come prior to *convivencia* with Russia and China. Russophobia is the #1 enemy of arms control and disarmament. Old-style arms control is dead and gone, along with the “rules-based international order.”
- Congress has become incapable of detailed oversight – and this may never change.

Summary – audiences

- **NNSA will not listen to citizen or NGO comments about nuclear weapons policies. This is not a good-faith exercise as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) intended. Construction proceeds apace at LANL and SRPPF and this PEIS will not impede this.**
- **We can however fruitfully talk to each other and to other actors inside and outside the federal government as we are doing today.**
- **Journalists are obviously important.**
- **The donor community largely sets NGO priorities and is important.**
- **DOGE and other waste cutters are a terribly important audience, in the White House as well as Congress. So one day will be DoD, as the federal government is in a terrible fiscal crisis with no easy solutions in sight. In the end, it will be DoD, NNSA itself, and the White House which will change pit policy, because they have to.**
- **The U.S. as a whole is in a rising, inexorable economic crisis, for fundamental reasons. This and the international situation will force changes, but of what kinds?**

Processes

- **NEPA: 1-2 years, little or no effect by itself**
- **The budget process, annual and otherwise, creates numerous opportunities for redirecting policies.**
 - **The “normal” discretionary budget request and appropriations**
 - **Semi-hidden prior-year appropriations balances**
 - **Continuing resolutions, “clean” vs. those with “anomalies”**
 - **The alternative “budget reconciliation” process (creates mandatory spending)**
 - **Emergency appropriations, and White House sequestrations**
 - **Authorization and appropriations bill conditions and demands**
- **Executive branch policy documents (Nuclear Policy Review, Stockpile Memorandum)**
- **Studies and audits can set the stage (Internal NNSA, GAO, CBO, others)**
- **This year Congress has only about 2 months to review and pass the discretionary budget. There will no serious review in that window.**

Big picture: unsustainable budget priorities

- \$1+ trillion military budget proposed via flat discretionary spending plus a big plus-up in the current reconciliation bill. If off-budget defense functions and military-related interest costs are included, the total will approach \$2 trillion.
- At \$1 T, this costs \$7,600 per household. As will be seen sooner or later, this is going to be politically unbearable. It is a central narrative that could resonate with essentially all parts of the U.S. political spectrum among voters.
- NNSA and DoD are embarked on a gigantic nuclear modernization spree, the costs of which have grown 25% in just the last year ([“CBO predicts US nuclear weapons will cost nearly a trillion dollars over the coming decade, 25% more than two years ago; Most expenses are for modernization, not deployment and maintenance, LASG, Apr 28, 2025\).](#)
- NNSA to get a \$6 B increase (25% YoY) via reconciliation ([“Trump administration seeks huge increase in nuclear warhead spending, the largest since 1962; Meanwhile NNSA sits on a large pile of unspent funds, LASG, May 2, 2025\).](#) The details await the administration’s congressional budget request.

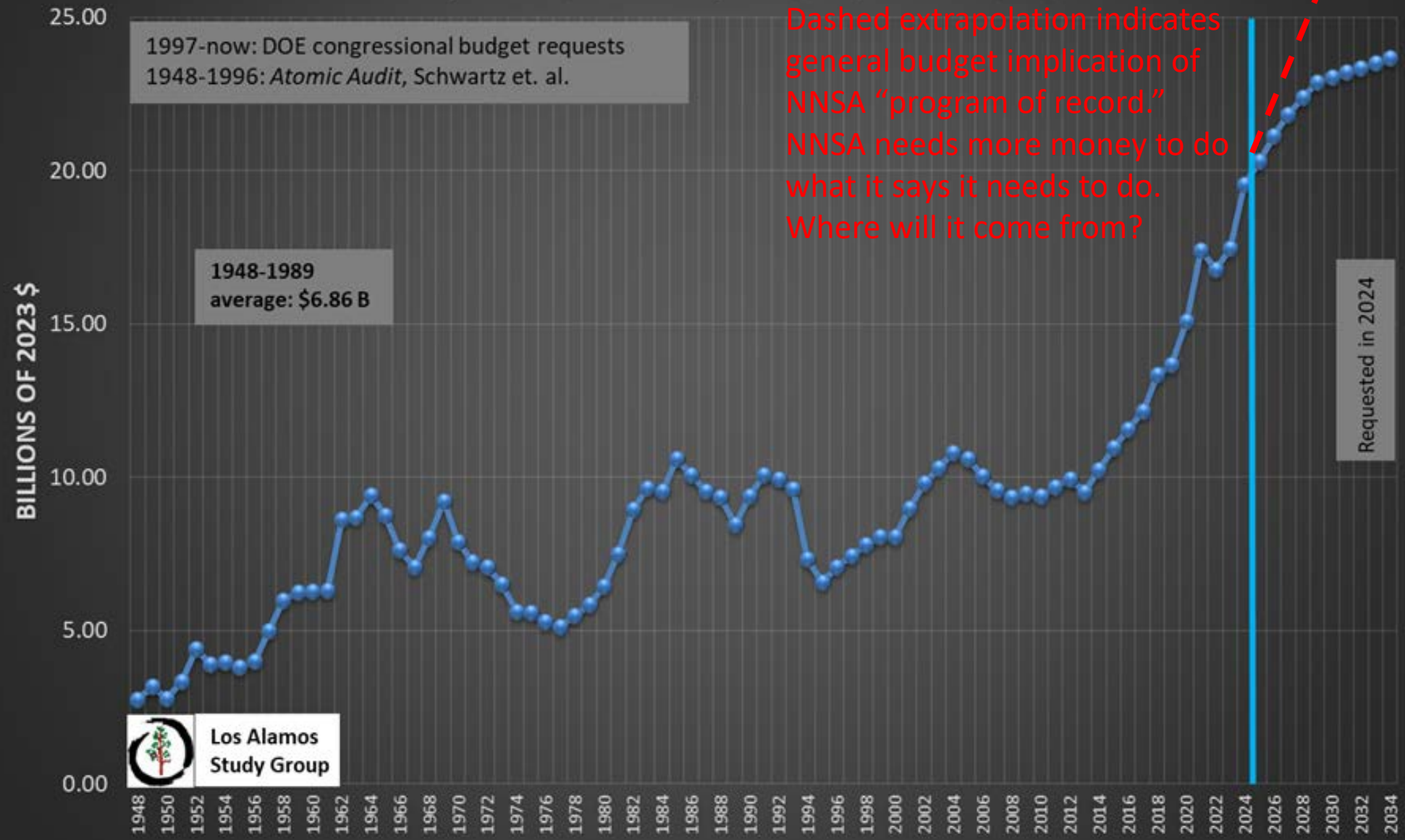
Cutting Military Spending Would Make for a Big and Beautiful Bill (Ron Paul)

“The reason Republicans are finding it difficult to offset their tax plan in a way that is politically palatable is that they are following exactly the opposite of the politically smart path to cut spending. **Instead of starting by cutting welfare for the poor, Republicans should have started by cutting welfare for the rich, particularly the military-industrial complex.**

Last week, while visiting the Middle East, President Trump delivered an important speech refuting the neocon crusade that has dominated American foreign policy thinking since 9-11. Yet, President Trump is proposing to increase the military budget to one trillion dollars.

President Trump and congressional Republicans will never cut spending until they stop pretending they can pay down the national debt, cut taxes, and continue massive spending on militarism. Similarly, fiscal conservatives need to stop targeting single mothers on food stamps while increasing federal spending on foreign intervention.”

**AEC/ERDA/DOE/NNSA Annual Spending for Nuclear Weapons
Research, Development, Testing, and Production: NNSA Weapons
Activities with administrative costs included; constant 2023\$;
≥FY25 requested, in then-year \$. Updated 3/11/24.**



Los Alamos National Laboratory Costs Incurred by Fiscal Year, billions 2023 dollars

Los Alamos Study Group, March 19, 2024

For FY2024, the amount shown is the annualized continuing resolution, not the final appropriation. For FY2025, the requested amount is shown. After 2002, "Strategic Partnerships" with other agencies, formerly called "Work for Others," are NOT included in LANL costs. Available WFO/SP data are shown in the red bars, also in constant 2023 \$. LANL gives its FY2024 budget, including SPs, as \$5.2 billion.

