LANL's CMRR project - monument of folly

Mello Aff #1, par 4, ref 1: http://www.lasg.org/CMRR/open_page.htm

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End funding for the **CMRR Nuclear** Facility at Los **Alamos**

The proposed Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility (CMRR-NF) is an unnecessary \$4.2 billion (B) boon to Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in New Mexico that will help keep LANL business booming well into the future -- not just business in general but nuclear weapons production in particular.

It is a real and symbolic provocation that will undermine global efforts toward disarmament and nonproliferation.

A Modern "Pit" Factory

The CMRR project is said to replace the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) building, an old structure that the laboratory has partially abandoned. The CMR was (and is) LANL's biggest all-purpose industrial-scale chemistry laboratory, capable of pilot production and of handling radioactive materials of all kinds. It has unique facilities which will not be replaced by CMRR (e.g. hot cells for remote handling of radioactive materials).

The "replacement" part of the CMRR name is deceptive in other ways too, given that the scope of the new facility includes a storage vault for 6 metric tons (6,000 kilograms) of plutonium, which would about triple LANL's inventory. Next door, but sharing the same security perimeter, is the existing Plutonium Facility, which contains all the necessary equipment and technology for assembling large quantities of plutonium warhead cores, known as "pits." If funded, this project would fulfill George W. Bush's plan to build a "modern" pit facility, capable



Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Technical Area (TA) -55, looking south, January 2009. Main Plutonium Facility (Building PF-4) in foreground. CMRR Radiological Laboratory, Utility, and Office Building (RLUOB) upper left. CMRR Nuclear Facility (CMRR-NF) site at upper center, where the construction yard is in this photo. © Los Alamos Study Group.

New this Week (Nov 14 - 20, 2010)

U.S. Plutonium "Pit" Production: Additional Facilities, Production, Restart are Unnecessary, Costly, and Provocative, Mello, paper, (pdf 242KB), published Nov 2010, (dated Mar 2, 2010)

CMRR-NF SEIS scoping comments, Nov 20, 2010

CMRR Nuclear **Facility** Litigation under the **National Environmental Policy** Act (NEPA)

Update to the National Defense Authorization Act of FY2010 Section 1251 Report, New START Treaty Framework and Nuclear Force Structure Plans, Nov 2010 (pdf 192KB)

Los Alamos' Proposed Plutonium Pit Palace, frequently asked questions, (pdf 488KB) Nov 18,

Nuclear Spending Plan Up, Albuquerque Journal, Nov 19, 2010

Environmental concerns circle LANL project, The New Mexican, Nov 15, 2010

NNSA halts procurement on plutonium warhead factory, "modernization" centerpiece at Los Alamos, LASG Press Release, Nov 15, 2010

LASG letter to Senators re: CMRR-NF, Nov 15, 2010

Procurements Related to CMRR-NF Process on Hold Due to NEPA Review, Nuclear Weapons Materials Monitor, (pdf 160KB) Nov 15, 2010

From last Week (Nov 7 - 13, 2010)

LASG files motion to halt CMRR-NF; procurements suspended; White House promises \$820 M/year more to nuke labs, plants, LASG Bulletin #102, Nov 13, 2010

LANL's Plutonium Pit Palace, What You Can Do to STOP it, 2-page flyer for your use, (pdf 2.2MB) Nov 9, 2010

Local governments, tribes, and Los Alamos residents are beginning to question the \$6 billion nuclear factory proposed for Los Alamos, LASG Bulletin #101, Nov 7, 2010

of turning out large numbers of pits for new warheads in short order, at a rate NNSA documents suggest would be 125 pits/year, surging to 200 pits/year if necessary.

Construction began on the first and smaller of two buildings in the CMRR project in January 2006. It will be complete in 2013. Current projections estimate that the Nuclear Facility will be complete in 2022.

During the Bush Administration, project funding rose slowly. House members in particular were aware that the big buildup seemed to be at cross purposes with dwindling needs and international treaties, and questioned its overall rationale. House appropriators resisted and then denied administration funding requests, but the project was kept alive by the Senate, particularly by Republican Sen. Pete Domenici's influence in conference committee negotiations.

Nuclear Rearmament

When the Obama administration submitted its budget proposal this year, the funding request for CMRR-NF more than doubled to \$225 million (M) from the \$97 million it obtained in 2009. Another increase, to \$305 M, is expected for 2012.

The overall project has been marked by escalating costs -- eightfold since the project's initiation -- and by an unsettling new seismic assessment that requires extraordinary compensatory measures. If built, CMRR would become the largest public project in New Mexico history by about a factor of ten.

To add to the folly, the additional pit manufacturing capability is no longer needed, because the existing spare pit inventory provides thousands of usable backups to the decreasing stockpile. All these pits will last until at least the last decades of the century. Without CMRR-NF, LANL already has a significant pit manufacturing capability, which has been only



RLUOB construction in the early stages, looking east. The face of the excavation shown is about 40' tall. CMRR-NF will require a pit at least three times this deep - a challenging problem on this crowded site. CMRR-NF will require many times more construction materials than the RLUOB.

More CMRR-RLUOB construction photos here

From previous weeks (Jun 14 - Nov 6, 2010)

Study Group Fights Motion to Dismiss CMRR Suit, Nuclear Weapons and Materials Monitor, (pdf 146KB) Nov 1, 2010

START: Arms Affirmation Treaty, Foreign Policy in Focus, Darwin BondGraham, article, Oct 29, 2010, also on Common Dreams.

Secretary of Energy Initiates Additional Review of UPF, CMRR-NF, and As New Enviro. Review of CMRR-NF Starts, Fed says NEPA Base Strong, *Nuclear Weapons and Materials Monitor*, (pdf 178KB) Oct 25, 2010

Study Group attorneys file response to DOE effort to quash lawsuit, DOE Secretary to initiate new study of LANL nuke facility, LASG Bulletin #100, Oct 22, 2010

Study Group's (plaintiff's) response to DOE/NNSA's motion to dismiss, (pdf 1MB) Oct 21, 2010

The illegitimate scoping hearings for the big new nuke weapons plant are upon us, tomorrow and Wednesday. Please go, or comment, or both – but the real action is elsewhere, LASG Bulletin #99, Oct 18, 2010

Lawmakers Back Nuclear Weapons Budget Boost, Global Security Newswire, article, Oct 4, 2010

Nuclear funding gets boost, Associated Press, article, Oct 2, 2010

Huge "emergency" funding increase for nuke labs today, LASG press release, Oct 1, 2010

NNSA promises "supplemental" EIS for massive Los Alamos facility; would bull forward on project regardless, LASG press release, Oct 1, 2010

Administration admits environmental analysis of LANL weapons facility is insufficient, LASG Bulletin #98, Sep 28, 2010

How you can Help Stop the proposed Nuclear Facility at LANL, Sep 28, 2010

Sample letter to local government officials to request a new EIS for the CMRR Nuclear Facility, (doc), Sep 27, 2010

Sample letter from local government officials to request a new EIS for the CMRR Nuclear Facility, (doc) Sep 27, 2010

NNSA plans new CMRR environmental analysis, but group won't drop suit, (pdf 179KB) *Nuclear Weapons and Materials Monitor*, Sep 27, 2010

New Study of LANL Project Planned in Light of Lawsuit, *Albuquerque Journal North*, article, Sep 23, 2010

loosely managed because there is no demand for the product. Among the sane and sensible ways to cut the federal budget, cutting the CMRR-NF is one of the best, on behalf of our country and the world.

If we do build CMRR-NF, don't ask where the money went for the schools we need, or the climate-and business-saving infrastructure, or the health and elder-care. We will have buried our hopes for a better future in a pit on a mesa in New Mexico.

Note on CMRR costs (4/19/10): Today we realized we had been misinterpreting National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA's) estimated CMRR costs since February. We gave these as \$5 billion (B) for the CMRR project as a whole and \$4.2 B for the Nuclear Facility. NNSA's current estimates are actually \$4.2 B for the project as a whole and \$3.4 B for the Nuclear Facility. Our estimates for the whole project include \$400 million for dismantlement and disposal of the CMR building, which is a mid-range figure escalated to today's dollars from NNSA's prior estimates. All NNSA's estimates are still preliminary and will remain so until at least 2012.

Although our data is incomplete, it appears the current estimated cost of the CMRR project is equal to all cumulative spending at Site Y and LASL, in constant 2010 dollars, from 1943 through 1954 (11 years). During this period atomic bombs were first developed, tested, and produced (all stockpile pits were produced at Los Alamos up to 1949), three plutonium facilities were built in Los Alamos to support these activities (Building D, DP Site, and CMR), fission bombs were rapidly miniaturized, and the first hydrogen bombs were developed. tested, and deployed.

The cost of all the plutoniumrelated facility upgrades presently underway is somewhat more than CMRR costs and is roughly equal to all cumulative Los Alamos spending for its first 13 years, from 1943 to 1956. In response to lawsuit, nuke agency admits huge plutonium bomb facility needs additional environmental analysis, press release, Sep 23, 2010

Lab, watchdog group spar over nuclear facility, Feds urge dismissal of environment suit, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, article, Sep 22, 2010

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LANL Proposal Needs New Study, Albuquerque Journal, Willem Malten, op-ed, Sep 5, 2010

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"New START", the proposed CMRR Nuclear Facility and the LASG lawsuit against the DOE and NNSA, *Op-Ed News*, Malten, article, Aug 27, 2010

Shooting an Arrow at the Beating Heart of Nuclear Weapons, *The Faster Times*, blog, Aug 24, 2010 (also here: *Foreign Policy in Focus*, blog, Aug 23, 2010)

CMRR litigation: One simple thing you can do to help, LASG Bulletin #97, (pdf 51KB), Aug 22, 2010

Nuke lawsuit part of bigger battle, Los Alamos Monitor, article, Aug 19, 2010

Greens Sue To Stop New Plutonium Plant At Los Alamos Lab, (pdf 370KB), *Energy Daily,* article, Aug 18, 2010

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Sen. Udall responds as nuke group sues government, KSFR - Santa Fe Public Radio, Aug 17, 2010

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Suit seeks to stop work on CMRR in Los Alamos, Atomic City Underground, blog, Aug 16, 2010

Group files suit to halt LANL nuke facility, Santa Fe New Mexican, article, Aug 16, 2010.

Plutonium building at Los Alamos lab needs environmental study, San Francisco Examiner, article, Aug 16, 2010, also here: Global Security Newswire.

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Los Alamos Study Group Files Suit against Department of Energy, NNSA, to Halt Design of \$4 Billion Los Alamos Bomb Factory, press release, Aug 16, 2010

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It's the Pits, Los Alamos wants to spend billions for new nuke triggers, Santa Fe Reporter, article, Jul 21, 2010

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Activist Group Calls for "Hard Look" at CMRR-NF, *Nuclear Weapons & Materials Monitor*, article, Jul 5, 2010

Lab Watchdog Threatening Suit, Albuquerque Journal, article, Jul 2, 2010

Group urges case against new facility at LANL, The New Mexican, article, Jul 1, 2010

NM Group Wants Another Look At Los Alamos Building, NewsWest9.com, Associated Press, article, Jul 1, 2010

A New Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is needed for the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility (CMRR-NF) at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), LASG letter of intent, Jul 1, 2010, (pdf 1.5MB)

Citizens call on nuclear agency to abide by environmental laws, analyze impacts of proposed warhead factory and alternatives, press release, Jul 1, 2010

Study: CMRR is especially dispensable, Rio Grande Tribune, Snodgrass, article, Jun 30, 2010

Congress Chafes Over Nuke Costs, Albuquerque Journal, Fleck, Jun 29, 2010

Nuclear weapons accounts don't add up, Santa Fe New Mexican, article, Jun 26, 2010

LANL management is lying about CMRR. Enough is enough. Throw the bums out, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Mello, letter to the editor, Jun 25, 2010

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LANL construction forum, Española, Jun 16, 2010: John Bretzke - presentation, (pdf 1.29MB) Tom McKinney - presentation, (pdf 1.29MB)

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LANL to unveil proposed plutonium project to Española business community Wednesday, press release, Jun 15, 2010

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("pit") factory annex, Bulletin #95, Jun 7, 2010

- A Hole Lot of Nothing, Environmental News for New Mexicans, Snodgrass, guest blog entry, Jun 7, 2010
- Mello comment on Santa Fe New Mexican, NNSA/Winchell op-ed, Jun 7, 2010
- Senate Armed Services Committee questions CMRR size, cart-before-horse approach; wants "truly independent" cost review.

The committee continues to believe that replacing the existing Chemical and Metallurgical Research facility is essential but that the new Chemical and Metallurgical Research Replacement (CMRR) facility has many unresolved issues including the appropriate size of the facility. CMRR will be a category I facility supporting pit operations in building PF–4. Now that the Nuclear Posture Review is completed the NNSA and the Department of Defense (DOD) are in a better position to ensure that the facility is appropriately sized. Elsewhere in this act the committee has recommended a provision to require construction project baselines and to track cost and schedule issues. The committee is very concerned that the NNSA follow the DOE 413 order series and project management and guidance. The NNSA is also directed to conduct a true independent cost estimate for the CMRR Nuclear Facility [CMRR-NF], phase III of the CMRR project. The committee is concerned that the phase III project [CMRR-NF] is being divided into multiple subprojects. Notwithstanding this management approach the committee directs the CMRR baseline to reflect all phases and subprojects for the purposes of the cost and schedule baseline provision and to be accounted for as a single project.

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- End funding for the nuclear facility at Los Alamos, information sheet on CMRR, (pdf 62KB) Apr 16, 2010
 - The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) plows ahead with a more or less \$4.7B program of replacement and expansion of plutonium facilities at Los Alamos National Laboratory.
 Why it must be stopped.

New Mexico's Largest Public Infrastructure Investments in Relation to Estimated CMRR Costs

(Costs are best available; dates mostly at completion; CMRR assumed to cost \$4.2B)

Project	Year	Cost Then (\$M)	Cost in 2010 (\$M)1	Percent CMRR
Elephant Butte Dam, NM	1916	5.2	222	5%
Golden Gate Bridge, CA	1937	35	850	20%
San Juan Chama Diversion	1964	>35	>272	>6%
Cochiti Dam, NM	1975	94.4	344	8%
LANL TA-55 PF-4	1978	75	213	5%
I-40 + I-25 highways, NM (treated here as one project)	1956-1995	~7.4 M/mile, 2006 dollars	Ballpark 6,666	159%
Big I Interchange, Albuquerque	2001	290	386	9%
San Juan Chama drinking water project, Albuquerque	2008	280	283	7%
Railrunner Heavy Rail Extension to Santa Fe (incl. track lease)	2008	~400	~404	10%
LANL DARHT (very approximate)	~2008	~400	~404	~10%
SNL MESA Complex	2008	516.5	522	12%

[1] Costs inflated to 2008 using the "Building Cost Index," from Engineering News-Record, Which began in 1923. Elephant Butte Dam costs were inflated from 1916 to 1923 using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). CPI used from 2008 to 2010. References are omitted here; inquire for details.

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- Thom Hartmann radio show, Mello, (MP3, 18.7MB), Apr 4, 2010
- Letter from Representatives Pete Stark, Edward Markey, et.al. about cutting the CMRR and the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) at Y-12 in favor of dismantlement, (pdf 38KB) Mar 31, 2010
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This was the groundbreaking for the RLUOB which when completed will account for less than 10% of the total CMRR cost. Neither NNSA nor Congress have approved CMRR-NF construction.

LASG archive on plutonium pit production and related issues - A print media history of the public debate about plutonium pit production at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Nov 1989 - Dec 2006.

LANL links

- CMRR project main site
- CMRR historical overview
- CMRR Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) & related documents
- CMRR public meetings

LANL semi-annual CMRR Public Meetings (pdf)

CMRR Public Mtg Mar 3, 2010 audio files - (courtesy Robin Collier, Cultural Energy).

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- Chemistry Metallurgy Research Replacement (CMRR) Project Primer (pdf 388KB), Dec 21, 2009 updated edition. This is the single most complete resource on CMRR we have.
- Defense Safety Board Strongly Criticizes Seismic Safety at Los Alamos Plutonium Facility, LASG press release, Oct 27, 2009
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- Administration Signals Nuclear Weapons Complex Preferences; Plan Calls for Billions in Weapons Plant Construction, LASG press release, Oct 9, 2008
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- Rick Holmes presentation
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- Steve Fong presentation
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Steve Fong, NNSA CMRR project mgr, Mar. 3, 2010 (photo courtesy Robin Collier, Cultural Energy)