

## DOE Sued for LANL Documents

BY IAN HOFFMAN  
Journal Staff Writer

10/31/97

A Santa Fe arms-control organization sued the U.S. Department of Energy on Thursday, accusing the agency of illegally stonewalling requests for public documents about nuclear weapons work at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

The Los Alamos Study Group's lawsuit takes the unusual tack of asking a federal judge to order an investigation of DOE employees.

DOE officials said they had not seen

the lawsuit and declined to comment.

The activist group contends the DOE has tolerated failure by its weapons lab in Los Alamos to adequately respond to information requests for up to six months.

Federal law and DOE rules set a response deadline of 10 days.

"I'm perfectly willing to believe the DOE (public information) people would like to do a good job, if only Los Alamos would let them," said the study group's

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# Energy Department Sued for LANL Documents

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leader, Greg Mello. "But in this, as in so many other matters, the contractor is running the DOE. The lab is supposed to work for DOE, not vice versa."

Mello's group alerts government officials, the public and media to unsafe or questionable lab operations.

In requests dating to the summer of 1996, Mello and colleagues first asked the lab for the information — ranging from lists of nuclear-weapons projects to details of lab spending in northern New Mexico.

Among topics of interest: the cost and purpose of thousands of trips by lab scientists to Washington,

D.C., and abroad, plus background papers on more than \$35 million in planned repairs to a nuclear-materials storage facility built for \$17 million but never opened.

When the lab didn't respond to these requests, the group filed formal requests with DOE officials in Albuquerque under the Freedom of Information Act.

The DOE then referred the requests back to the lab, which admits it has not responded promptly.

Only two lab workers handle requests under the Freedom of Information Act and the California Information Practices Act, which also applies to the lab because it is operated by the University of Cali-

fornia.

They are working on 50 open requests, 12 from the study group, said a lab spokesman, John Gustafson.

"They are working as fast as they can given limitations of staffing," Gustafson said. "We're part of the (FOIA) process and things are admittedly slow on our end."

Mello's group wants information on nuclear weapons, so each document must be reviewed by the lab's single classification officer assigned to FOIAs, Gustafson said.

Requests for travel records, he noted, can generate more than 1,000 pages and overwhelm the lab's travel office.

But Mello's group sees a pattern

of delays that is "deliberate...an abuse of discretion," according to the lawsuit filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Santa Fe.

The group filed a request in July for a single, unclassified summary of weapons work cited in a lab publication.

"This office is still waiting for LANL's response," DOE replied on Oct. 16.

In its lawsuit, the study group asks U.S. District Court Judge Martha Vasquez to order DOE to immediately hand over documents for six information requests and to appoint a special counsel "determine whether disciplinary action is warranted against any federal employee for DOE's unlawful pattern...of withholding information."

11 / 1 / 1997

Group: DOE violated public openness law

A Santa Fe watchdog group says the Department of Energy has violated a federal public openness law in not making available in a timely manner information related to Los Alamos National Laboratory's nuclear weapons program.

The **Los Alamos Study Group** says the DOE has failed to respond in a timely way to its information requests, filed under the Freedom of Information Act. The information requested is unclassified.

Energy Department officials were not reached for comment.

Earlier this year the study group won a FOIA lawsuit against the DOE that had to do with the group's efforts to obtain videotapes of a nuclear weapons conference sponsored by the lab.

Mayor to meet with neighborhood groups

Mayor Debbie Jaramillo will meet with the Neighborhood Network, an association of neighborhood groups, next Monday to discuss how her administration has dealt with neighborhood issues.

According to an announcement from the network, the mayor will take questions from members about how Jaramillo's policies have affected neighborhoods.

The meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Monday in the Southwest Conference Room of St. Vincent Hospital and the public is invited to attend. For more information, call Karen Heldmeyer at 982-3968.

Woman wants to run for representative

Diann Bradshaw of Mountainair, chairman of the Torrance County Planning and Zoning Board, announced Thursday that she will run as Democratic candidate for the District 50 state House of Representatives seat in 1998. Gary King, the District 50 incumbent, has announced that he will run for governor next year.

Bradshaw, who moved to the Mountainair area three years ago from Austin, runs a real estate business from her home. District 50 includes much of southern Santa Fe County, including the Edgewood area, Madrid and La Cienega.

The New Mexican

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*Section: Local*

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# DOE eyes expanded plutonium pit work

► Contingency plan would enable United States to build key nuclear bomb component at Cold War levels

By KEITH EASTHOUSE  
The New Mexican

At a time when the United States is dismantling part of its nuclear arsenal, the Department of Energy has been quietly laying the groundwork to ensure that the nation can — if needed — quickly crank up its ability to produce a key bomb component at levels reminiscent of the Cold War era.

The effort is mainly a DOE initiative, although scientists at Los Alamos National

Laboratory have provided some assistance.

A DOE report issued to Congress earlier this year says the purpose of a \$1.2 million "contingency plan" is to enable the nation to develop within just five years the ability to build as many as 500 plutonium "pits" annually.

Pits are the grapefruit-size radioactive metal spheres at the heart of most nuclear bombs.

That's 10 times more than is currently planned under a DOE program called "stockpile stewardship," which calls upon Los Alamos to develop the capability to

build an average of 50 pits per year by 2005.

A production level of 500 pits would represent a big jump toward Cold War production levels, when the Rocky Flats plant near Denver churned out more than 1,000 pits per year.

A large hike in pit production would probably take place only if there were an ominous change in the international situation — such as a resurgent Russia — or if a major defect were found in one or more weapons systems in the existing arsenal.

The expanded production work, if it is ever undertaken, would probably not take

place at Los Alamos due to a lack of facility space.

Instead, according to the report, the work would likely be based at existing facilities at one or more of the following DOE sites: the Savannah River site in South Carolina; the Y-12 plant in Tennessee; the Pantex plant in Amarillo, Texas; and the Nevada Test Site.

Anti-nuclear activists expressed outrage at the plan.

"This will only stir up the right wing in

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## PITS

Continued from Page A-1

Russia to pour in more money to their nuclear weapons complex," warned Christopher Paine, a senior researcher at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington D.C.

"We find no reason to acquire any additional capability to manufacture plutonium pits — let alone a level that is 10 times DOE's stated plan," added Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, a Santa Fe organization.

T.J. Trapp, program manager for nuclear component readiness at the lab, said the concerns about the plan are overblown.

He said if there is a need for expanded pit production, it would likely be geared toward replacing aging pits in existing weapons — not installing pits in brand new bombs as was the case in the Cold War years, when the nuclear arsenal was growing.

He also said it is unlikely there will ever be a need to replace 500 pits a year.

"I don't know that anyone is actually planning for 500 as much as they're planning for a larger capability in case we have a major problem in stockpile," Trapp said.

"It's hard to imagine a problem where we would need to replace more than 500 per year. It's just an upper bound on what's conceivable," Trapp added.

If an expansion is needed, it would be based on a "modular" pit manufacturing system currently under development at LANL, according to the DOE report to Congress. The system has the advantage of being relatively easy to put in place but it requires a good deal of floor area.

Paine accused the agency of "secretly plotting to maintain a very large nuclear weapons stockpile."

The report in which the plan is described, called the *Department of Energy Report on Plu-*

*nium Pit Production and Remanufacturing Plans*, was presented to key House and Senate leaders this past summer.

The issuance of the report to Congress was required by federal law.

Paine blasted the contingency plan as being "wrong from every perspective."

"It runs against every one of our treaty commitments," Paine said.

These include the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, designed to stem the spread of nuclear weapons; the START II Treaty, which places ceilings on the American and Russian nuclear arsenals; and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which bans nuclear weapons tests.

The treaty has been approved by the Clinton Administration but not yet ratified by Congress.

Paine said if pits have a lifespan of 20 to 25 years — a conservative estimate — then a production level of 500 pits annually would support a stockpile of 10,000 to 12,000 bombs.

"That's a ludicrously high figure in terms of future requirements," said Paine.

Paine said his organization, which is already challenging the DOE's stockpile stewardship program in court, would "fight with every means at our disposal" if the agency seeks a large expansion of its pit production capability.

An expansion would be contrary to recent recommendations made by the National Academy of Science and Adm. Stansfield Turner, head of the CIA under President Carter.

In a recent report, the academy called for an arsenal no bigger than 300 to 1,000 bombs. Turner, in a new book titled *Caging the Nuclear Genie*, said the country should not have any nuclear weapons deployed and should keep only a few hundred in reserve.



# Edition--Journal North Date--12/04/1997

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### DOE Plan Calls for More Bomb Parts

#### The Associated Press

The U.S. Department of Energy wants to make sure the United States, if it has to, could quickly crank up its ability to churn out a key nuclear bomb part.

The department, in a report this summer to Congress, proposed a \$1.2 million contingency plan that would enable the nation to develop, within five years, the ability to build up to 500 plutonium "pits" a year. Pits, about the size of a grapefruit, are radioactive metal spheres at the heart of most nuclear bombs.

Currently, the DOE stockpile stewardship program calls for Los Alamos National Laboratory to develop the capability to build an average of 50 pits a year by 2005. The stewardship program is aimed at making sure the U.S. nuclear arsenal is reliable.

During Cold War production, the DOE's Rocky Flats plant near Denver built more than 1,000 pits per year.

Anti-nuclear activists blasted the contingency plan.

"This will only stir up the right-wing in Russia to pour in more money to their nuclear weapons complex," said Christopher Paine, a senior researcher at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington, D.C.

Paine said his organization, which is already challenging the DOE's stewardship program in court, would fight if the DOE seeks a large expansion of pit production capability.

Paine accused the DOE of "secretly plotting to maintain a very large nuclear weapons stockpile."

"It runs against every one of our treaty commitments," he said.

Greg Mello of the Santa Fe-based Los Alamos Study Group said his organization sees "no reason to acquire any additional capability to manufacture plutonium pits -- let alone a level that is 10 times DOE's stated plan."

The proposed expanded production, if ever undertaken, probably would not take place at Los Alamos because the lab lacks a large enough facility. Instead, the report to Congress said, the work probably would be based at existing facilities at another DOE site, such as Savannah River in South Carolina; the Y-12 plant in Tennessee; the Pantex plant in Amarillo, Texas; or the Nevada Test Site.

T.J. Trapp, program manager for nuclear component readiness at Los Alamos, said concerns about the contingency plan are overblown.

If the need for expanded production arises, it would likely be geared toward replacing aging pits in existing weapons -- not installing pits in new bombs as was the case during the Cold War when the

nuclear arsenal was growing, Trapp said.

He also said it is unlikely the nation ever will need to replace 500 pits in a year.

"I don't know that anyone is actually planning for 500 as much as they're planning for a larger capability in case we have a major problem in stockpile," Trapp said.

"It's hard to imagine a problem where we would need to replace more than 500 per year. It's just an upper bound on what's conceivable," he said.

12/4/97

Los Alamos Monitor

# Report to Congress calls for establishing capacity to build up to 500 pits a year

By The Associated Press

The U.S. Department of Energy wants to make sure the United States could quickly crank up its ability to churn out a key nuclear bomb part.

The department, in a report this summer to Congress, proposed a \$1.2 million contingency plan that would enable the nation to develop, within five years, the ability to build up to 500 plutonium "pits" a year. Pits, about the size of a grapefruit, are radioactive metal spheres at the heart of most nuclear bombs.

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During Cold War production, the DOE's Rocky Flats plant near Denver built more than 1,000 pits per year.

Anti-nuclear activists blasted the new contingency plan.

"This will only stir up the right-wing in Russia to pour in more money to their nuclear weapons complex," said Christopher Paine, a senior researcher at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington, D.C.

Paine said his organization, which is already challenging the DOE's stewardship program in court, would fight if the DOE seeks a large expansion of pit production capability.

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"It's hard to imagine a problem where we would need to replace more than 500 per year. It's just an upper bound on what's conceivable," he said.

**Access World News****Paper: Albuquerque Tribune, The (NM)****Title: DOE wants ability to make more nuke pits****Date: December 4, 1997**

The plutonium pits are a vital component in nuclear bombs.

LOS ALAMOS -- The U.S. Department of Energy wants to make sure the United States, if it has to, could quickly crank up its ability to churn out a key nuclear-bomb part.

The department, in a report this summer to Congress, proposed a \$1.2 million contingency plan that would enable the nation to develop, within five years, the ability to build up to 500 plutonium "pits" a year. Pits, about the size of a grapefruit, are radioactive metal spheres at the heart of most nuclear bombs.

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During Cold War production, the DOE's Rocky Flats plant near Denver built more than 1,000 pits per year.

Anti-nuclear activists blasted the contingency plan.

"This will only stir up the right-wing in Russia to pour in more money to their nuclear-weapons complex," said Christopher Paine, a senior researcher at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington, D.C.

Paine said his organization, which is already challenging the DOE's stewardship program in court, would fight an expansion of pit production capability.

Paine accused the DOE of "secretly plotting to maintain a very large nuclear-weapons stockpile."

"It runs against every one of our treaty commitments," he said.

Greg Mello of the **Los Alamos Study Group**, based in Santa Fe, said his organization sees "no reason to acquire any additional capability to manufacture plutonium pits -- let alone at a level that is 10 times DOE's stated plan."

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T.J. Trapp, program manager for nuclear component readiness at Los Alamos, said concerns about the contingency plan are overblown.

He also said it is unlikely the nation ever will need to replace 500 pits in a year.

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*Author: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS*

*Section: Local News*

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Paper: The Dallas Morning News  
Title: Nuclear buildup proposed Contingency plan is for bomb part  
Author: Associated Press  
Date: December 4, 1997  
Section: NEWS  
Page: 37A

LOS ALAMOS, N.M. - The U.S. Department of Energy wants to make sure the United States, if it has to, could quickly crank up its ability to churn out a key nuclear bomb part. The department, in a report this summer to Congress, proposed a \$1.2 million contingency plan that would enable the nation to develop, within five years, the ability to build up to 500 plutonium "pits" a year. Pits, about the size of a grapefruit, are radioactive metal spheres at the heart of most nuclear bombs.

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During Cold War production, the department's Rocky Flats plant near Denver built more than 1,000 pits per year.

Nuclear opponents criticized the contingency plan.

"This will only stir up the right wing in Russia to pour in more money to their nuclear weapons complex," said Christopher Paine, a senior researcher at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington.

Mr. Paine said his organization, which is already challenging the Department of Energy's stewardship program in court, would fight if the department seeks a large expansion of pit production capability.

Mr. Paine accused the Energy Department of "secretly plotting to maintain a very large nuclear weapons stockpile. " "It runs against every one of our treaty commitments," he said.

Greg Mello of the Santa Fe-based **Los Alamos Study Group** said his organization sees "no reason to acquire any additional capability to manufacture plutonium pits - let alone a level that is 10 times DOE's stated plan. " The proposed expanded production, if ever undertaken, probably would not take place at Los Alamos because the lab lacks a facility that is large enough. Instead, the report to Congress said, the work probably would be based at existing facilities at another Department of Energy site, such as Savannah River in South Carolina; the Y-12 plant in Tennessee; the Pantex plant in Amarillo; or the Nevada Test Site.

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If the need for expanded production arises, it would probably be geared toward replacing aging pits in existing weapons - not installing pits in new bombs as was the case during the Cold War when the nuclear arsenal was growing, Mr. Trapp said.

He also said it is unlikely that the nation ever will need to replace 500 pits in a year.



"I don't know that anyone is actually planning for 500 as much as they're planning for a larger capability in case we have a major problem in stockpile," Mr. Trapp said.

"It's hard to imagine a problem where we would need to replace more than 500 per year. It's just an upper bound on what's conceivable," he said.

Author: Associated Press

Section: NEWS

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# LANL: Group Is Confusing Figures

BY IAN HOFFMAN  
Journal Staff Report

12/5/97

Arms-control advocates say the price tag of making plutonium pits — the radioactive cores for nuclear weapons — has escalated dramatically in less than two years.

U.S. Department of Energy analysts put a \$1.1 billion estimate on pit production in a report to Congress this summer.

That's nearly triple the \$312 million estimate that won the job for Los Alamos National Laboratory in 1996. After making demo pits for a two missile warheads and a bomb, the lab plans to start producing fully-certified, "diamond-stamped" warhead and bomb pits in 2001.

"In short, they're milking this for all they can get," said Greg Mello, head of the Los Alamos Study Group, a Santa Fe arms-control organization.

Lab weapons managers charge Mello's group with intentionally mistaking two very different dollar figures.

"The bottom line is they're trying to make an issue out of something that's not an issue," said T.J. Trapp, the lab's chief of weapons-component readiness.

Pits form the heart of a small A-bomb that weapons scientists use as a fission "match" to touch off a thermonuclear explosion. Workers at Rocky Flats turned out the last fully-certified pit in 1989.

Trapp said the latest DOE report to Congress on restarting pit production at Los Alamos entails more projects and more costs than did the 1996 estimates. It includes, for example, \$58 million to run the production lines, \$1.2 million for a contingency plan to produce up to 10 times as many pits and \$253 million for other, related projects.

And some of those costs have grown dramatically.

Producing non-nuclear parts of a pit — namely its beryllium reflector and its braces inside a shell of high explosive — were thought to cost \$14.2 million in 1995. Estimates today run eight times higher, at \$116.3 million.

But taking those extra costs aside, the cost of merely equipping LANL's plutonium-processing facility to make pits still has grown.

Trapp notes the DOE's 1996 estimate of \$312 million neglected inflation, which would boost the estimate to \$350 million in 1997 dollars.

"We've always said it would be in the \$350 (million) to \$450 million range," he said.

The latest comparable figure from DOE's July 1997 report to Con-

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gress is \$601 million or 70 percent more.

Mello charges the lab with "low-balling" the earlier figures it gave DOE for the 1996 estimates so the lab could get the work — an accusation Trapp vigorously denies.

"That's just plain-out, patently untrue," he said.

DOE analysts relied on those numbers in awarding pit production to Los Alamos and rejecting Savannah River Site's bid to do the work in South Carolina for \$488 million. Trapp said Los Alamos and Savannah River Site supplied the same kinds of numbers to DOE so they could be compared fairly.

But Mello suggested on Thursday that the discrepancy between the 1996 and 1997 figures shows lab officials are trying to use pit production to bolster the lab's budget.

"The lab said they can produce 50 pits a year if you just give them \$310 million. Now they say they didn't count all these other things, we need another \$800 million," Mello said. "It's absurd."

Mello and other activists oppose pit production as unnecessary to maintain the nation's nuclear arsenal.

Lab weapons scientists worry about losing the ability to make pits and later finding out they need to be replaced.

"I think it's absolutely imperative to have that capability in place if we are to maintain our stockpile," Trapp said.

Lab officials protest that they have estimated the costs of pit production honestly and say the costs remain close to their projections.

"We tried to put it in a consistent, up-front way — 'Here's what it costs'," Trapp said.

# LANL plutonium pit project plagued by cost overruns

By KEITH EASTHOUSE  
The New Mexican

An \$800 million construction project that would enable Los Alamos National Laboratory to build a key bomb component for weapons in the country's nuclear stockpile by 2005 could get more expensive.

The reason is that the project — begun last year — has already incurred cost overruns of several million dollars. That may force the lab to abandon its plan to upgrade existing facilities and instead construct a brand-new building to house work related to manufacturing plutonium triggers.

The triggers, also called pits, are the radioactive metal spheres at the heart of most nuclear bombs.

Building a new facility could

jack up the price of the construction project to close to \$1 billion.

"If it turns out we can't use (just existing buildings), it will

cost us more money," T.J. Trapp, program manager for nuclear component readiness at the lab, said Thursday.

So far, the lab has received about \$85 million from the Department of Energy to do the upgrade work, Trapp said.

The purpose of the upgrade work is to enable the lab to produce 50 plutonium pits per year beginning in 2005 under the DOE's "stockpile stewardship" program. The pits would be used to replace components in aging

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**LANL**

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weapons in the country's nuclear stockpile.

The country lost the ability to manufacture plutonium pits of sufficient precision to be used in stockpile bombs when the Rocky Flats plant near Denver closed in 1989 due to environmental and worker safety violations.

The cost overruns at Los Alamos have occurred at the lab's 44-year-old Chemistry, Metallurgy and Research facility. The aged facility has proven more difficult — and hence more costly — to upgrade than the laboratory thought, according to Trapp.

The problems at the CMR building, as it's called, have been compounded as the facility has not been fully operational since August because of problems with worker safety procedures.

Earlier this year, the laboratory analyzed five different upgrade alternatives, ranging in cost from \$800 million to \$950 million. The lab chose the cheapest alternative, which calls for major upgrades at CMR and at Technical Area 55, the lab's top secret plutonium research facility.

The three most expensive alternatives propose new facility construction at TA-55.

In addition to the extensive upgrades to the CMR building and TA-55, the upgrade plan chosen by the lab calls for:

■ Modernizing the Sigma Complex, where non-nuclear weapons components would be fabricated.

■ Building a 1.5-mile long "transportation corridor" between TA-55 and the CMR building that would be closed to the public.

Trapp said this would entail paving a gravel road.

■ Modifying the Special Nuclear Materials Storage Facility, which has serious construction flaws that date from when it was initially constructed in the 1980s.

There has been some confusion surrounding the cost of the upgrades.

The price of the TA-55 and CMR upgrades was initially said to be \$350 million. Thirteen months ago, when the upgrade contract was awarded to construction giant Fluor-Daniels, the price tag was said to be \$800 million.

Trapp said the discrepancy was more apparent than real.

"The \$350 million was for a piece of the work" related most closely to plutonium pit manufacturing, and did not include all of the upgrades, Trapp said.

Further confusing the issue is a July 1997 DOE report to Congress that lists the cost of the upgrades at \$1.12 billion.

The different price estimates led Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, a Santa Fe organization, to issue a press release Thursday charging that "the cost of establishing plutonium manufacturing work at Los Alamos has tripled."

Trapp said that was inaccurate.

Trapp said Mello was overlooking the 13-month-old announce-

ment of the \$800 million Fluor-Daniels contract.

Trapp said Mello was also misinterpreting the \$1.12 billion cost estimate that DOE provided to Congress.

That estimate includes costs associated with operating the facilities as they are being upgraded, Trapp said.

Mello said if that's the case, the operating costs ought to have been included all along.

"It seems like the whole thing has been low-balled," Mello said.

Mello also said in his press release that one reason behind the "rapid escalation" in costs was that the lab is developing the ability to manufacture all nuclear weapons components, not just plutonium pits.

That claim flies in the face of the Energy Department's plan — announced almost two years ago — to build replacement parts for bombs at multiple sites, not just at one site.

Trapp said the lab, at the Energy Department's direction, has studied the feasibility of manufacturing uranium "secondaries," another nuclear bomb component.

But he said there is no plan for the lab to actually do such a broad spectrum of work. He said, for example, that to the extent that existing weapons need to be fitted with secondaries, such work would be done at the DOE's Oak Ridge plant in Tennessee — not at Los Alamos.

Trapp said Mello "is confusing planning studies with someone actually doing it."

## CORRECTIONS

A workshop for kids on Capoeira Angola, an Afro-Brazilian dance and martial arts form, will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday at the Tutorial School, 400 Brunn School Road. An incorrect day was listed in Thursday's "Best Bets for Kids" column.

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An environmental study will not be done on the first test shaft for a Santa Fe city and county water diversion project at San Ildefonso Pueblo, but will be done before remaining parts of the project, that will actually divert water, are built, Mike Hamman of Santa Fe's Water Service Division said. A story in Thursday's *New Mexican* reported otherwise.

□ □ □

An 27-year-old former female employee of Lagarrote Elementary School, 1604 Agua Fria St., is being investigated for failing to deposit an unspecified amount of cash from a cafeteria register into the Santa Fe Public Schools bank account Tuesday. The name of the school was incorrect in a police notes item published in Wednesday's *New Mexican*.

□ □ □

The *New Mexican* will correct factual errors in its news stories. Errors should be brought to the attention of the city editor at 986-3035.

# Lab says LA Study Group misunderstood <sup>12/5/97</sup>

By STEPHEN T. SHANKLAND  
Monitor Managing Editor

An activist group said Thursday that the cost of Los Alamos National Laboratory's program to build plutonium pits for nuclear weapons has more than tripled in the last 13 months — but the lab said the group's analysis is wrong.

The Los Alamos Study Group, a Santa Fe-based anti-nuclear organization, said in a news release that the lab appears to have "low-balled" the pit production cost estimate so the Department of Energy would pick LANL over the Savannah River Site as the location for the work.

Greg Mello, director of the study group, said in the release that the cost rose from \$310 million in July 1996 to nearly \$1.1 billion in August 1997.

But T.J. Trapp, program manager for nuclear component readiness at the lab, said Mello "is taking several unrelated numbers and associating them with pit manufacturing," Trapp said.

The figure of more than a billion dollars describes several projects, of which the modifications for pit production are a subset, Trapp said. The billion dollars also apparently includes the operating costs (which fund the program) as well as the capital costs (which fund the construction work), Trapp said.

The capital cost of \$800 million includes fixing the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building, fixing the Nuclear Materials Storage Facility, upgrading security systems to protect nuclear materials better, and improving safety features —

work the lab must do "independently of whether we're doing pit manufacturing or not," Trapp said.

In addition, the \$800 million in capital projects includes \$350 million to \$450 million in other improvements to nuclear facility infrastructure at the lab that's not directly related to the pit production mission, he said.

The \$310-million figure Mello mentioned was used for comparing LANL to Savannah River and didn't include funding for all that's required for the pit production mission, Trapp said.

Instead, the \$310-million figure was used to estimate what would be required at LANL that wouldn't be required at the Savannah River Site. Savannah River had a comparable figure of about \$460 million that described what would have to be done there that wouldn't have to be done at LANL.

The \$310 million figure was listed in the Stockpile Stewardship and Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

Trapp also attacked other statements in Mello's release.

The study group said one reason for increasing costs in the Stockpile Stewardship and Management program is "LANL's acquisition of new manufacturing capability, not just for pits but for all the nuclear components of nuclear weapons, a closely-guarded secret until today. The capability to make a complete 'physics package,' as nuclear weapons innards are euphemistically called, duplicates the work of the Y-12 Plant in Ten-

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Los Alamos Monitor

## PITS

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nessee."

Trapp said the lab always has had a capability to make prototypes of all the physics package, but isn't getting responsibility for manufacturing the "secondaries" (the bomb parts made of uranium and other materials that are responsible for the secondary, or thermonuclear, explosion in a nuclear weapon).

Expanding the LANL manufacturing mission is described in the lab's 1996 report "Nuclear Facilities Master Plan for Stockpile Stewardship and Management Support," the study group said.

Trapp said that in the Stockpile Stewardship and Management environmental analysis, DOE examined the possibility of manufacturing secondaries at LANL, but made the "logical decision" to keep the activ-

ity at the Y-12 Plant, where it has been done in the past.

"We are not doing anything on putting in place any capability for making uranium secondaries," Trapp said.

The study group also said the price tag has increased for establishing the ability to manufacture non-nuclear components, such as the beryllium that reflects neutrons and thereby increases the explosive power of nuclear weapons.

The Non-nuclear Reconfiguration Project was expected to cost \$23 million in 1995, but by August 1997, the non-nuclear work was listed at \$118 million, the study group said.

Trapp said the study group confused two parts of the work. The \$23 million is for construction work, and the \$118 million is the operating cost, he said.

12/13/97

## Reason for Encouragement

**T**here may be reason for encouragement with the appointment of Dr. John Brown to head Los Alamos National Laboratory as the Lab assumes its role in Stockpile Stewardship and Management, the nation's \$4.5 billion-per-year, post-Cold War, nuclear weapons program. At a Dec. 4 "get-acquainted" meeting in Santa Fe, Brown, a friendly, direct ("what you see is what you get") man, discussed three priorities many New Mexicans share.

The first is education, or why Johnny, Mary, Jose and Maria probably can't read the words "Stockpile Stewardship." A Santa Fe Schools spokesperson at the meeting used the word "crisis" to describe our 40 percent student-dropout rate. We need a "Student Stewardship Program" to give children the priority we give weapons. It's no stretch to say an educated population would better defend its nation and government than one with a 40 percent dropout rate from school.

The second issue Brown acknowledged was a growing perception of Lab dishonesty and untrustworthiness. I state it more strongly than he did; his words were "credibility problem." Do citizens believe the Lab when it speaks on health, safety and environmental issues? Answer: No. Are we told the truth about Lab programs? Answer: No. Still fresh in my mind are a deputy director's many disclaimers about LANL ever doing plutonium pit (the nuclear heart of nuclear bombs) production. The Lab is becoming the national center for this dangerous and seriously polluting work that irretrievably contaminated Rocky Flats, Colo. Brown spoke

forcefully about modeling the behavior he wanted from others. Start with telling the truth.

The third of Brown's encouraging comments concerned the Lab's long-term future. He suggests that if LANL's mission, "reducing the nuclear danger," succeeds, the number of nuclear weapons in the world will decrease over time and with it LANL's role in their support. Currently more than 75 percent of LANL's budget is for work related to

weapons. Brown spoke of possible long-term new missions we could be proud of, in the areas of energy and climate. We could stop looking for a fig leaf big enough to hide the moral problems of nuclear weapons.

These three areas — education, a Lab trusted by its employees and the public, and working for less dependence on nuclear weapons — are urgent. With 75 percent of its budget weapons-related,

LANL's vision statement, "Science Serving Society," is nonsense. And "science" in its immense scope is ridiculed when Brown says Los Alamos National Lab is the "greatest scientific laboratory in the world." Great science serving society has nothing to do with weapons. But Brown's own comments are very encouraging and he cannot be shackled to the Orwellian mottos of public-relations geniuses of the past. I wish him every success; his new position is of importance to every citizen of the United States. We all need to help this man succeed. ■

*Cathie Sullivan is a Santa Fe citizen with a long history of interest in nuclear weapons issues.*

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