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## TAOS DAILY NEWS

### Whopping Expansion at Los Alamos National Labs

June 14, 2005

By Jane Odin

*Welcome to  
New Mexico*

*We invest in  
nuclear;  
P-Pits are our  
specialty.  
We invest in  
WMD;  
We make 'em,  
ship 'em, store  
'em.*

*Bombs are the  
name of the  
game.*

*Our politics are the same.  
Tons of unburied nuke waste  
Under tents in rusting drums.*

*Plutonium glows in the sun.  
In the land of nuclear fun.*

*But there's very little security  
At factories of nuclear purity.*

*Welcome to New Mexico.  
Roll or bowl a P-pit  
A penny a pitch.  
Capitol of WMD, capital of WMD.*



## INSIDE THE FLY

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**June 15, 2005**  
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The Alleged "Intimidator"

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#### The Grunt's View

### **Introduction**

LANL is permitted to burn 1,408 pounds yearly of depleted uranium (DU) in open pits. The amount is up from the May report of 528 pounds. But hopefully we have little danger of DU in Taos. The particles are so heavy they don't blow the distance. Dispersion models find that the particles travel 50 meters. That's the end of the good news. LANL is a bomb-making factory. The place is flowing with plutonium—from plutonium pits to unimaginable tons of high-level radioactive waste. And now the Department of Energy (DOE) is itching to expand into the world's largest unregulated radioactive waste dump and create the Rocky Flats of tomorrow: a Modern Pit Facility.

Meanwhile, will the Taos Town Council sign the resolution supporting U.S. compliance with the treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and the closure of the LANL nuclear waste dump? Los Alamos Study Group says Town Council support is very important. The vote is scheduled for June 28, after a presentation by Erlinda Gonzales, Town Council member and member of LANL's Citizen's Advisory Board (CAB).

If the Council fails to support the resolution, it is a vote in favor of the war machine, high-level radioactive waste, proliferation of nuclear warheads, terrorist threats, radioactive pollution and a philosophy of no more tomorrows.

### **Area G**

The DOE wants to expand the LANL nuclear waste dump (Area G) from 63 to 93 acres in fall '05. Greg Mello, Director of Los Alamos Study Group, says this must be stopped. Why focus on Area G? Fire, terrorism, environmental pollution, disease and proliferation are obvious concerns. Area G is said to have 2.5 million drums under three feet of sand. It's located on the regional aquifer that supplies water to Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque and Pojoaque. Area G has never been licensed, regulated or permitted. Although the Attorney General says the site is operating illegally, neither Governor Bill Richardson, A.G. Patricia Madrid, nor the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has acted to do anything about it. At least something should be done about the estimated 50,000 drums of plutonium waste under huge white nylon tents sitting on the mesa before expanding Area G.

A chemical engineer and past member of CAB says that in

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'99, unidentified radioactive gas-filled canisters piled up near Area G. "They would puncture tiny holes in the canisters and draw samples for analysis in an attempt to determine the exact nature of the waste," according to the engineer, who wrote in an extensive CAB memo that LANL needed to deal with waste-management situations "liable to have a major environmental impact on the surrounding communities." For example, according to NMED reports, there is noticeable Tritium and Strontium 90 contamination of groundwater in Mortandad Canyon. It is generally known that this was dumped through a sewer outlet into the canyon.

Details of health concerns and other issues are found at the Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety website [www.nuclearactive.org](http://www.nuclearactive.org). Look at "New Mexico's Right to Know: The Impact of LANL Operations on Public Health and the Environment." You will learn the Centers for Disease Control has found "the soil surrounding LANL may contain 100 times more plutonium than was previously estimated." That's just for starters.

Another major problem, according to Greg Mello and the Wall Street Journal, is poor security. Mello stated at a HUB meeting in Taos that on a scale of 1-10, LANL security is a 3. John Fialka writes in the Wall Street Journal that Army special-forces teams have tested security at LANL several times and demonstrated that "quick attacks by small, well-trained teams can penetrate department security forces and gain access to simulated nuclear materials used in the exercises."

#### **Rocky Flats Moves to LANL**

Currently, LANL is the only source of plutonium pits in the United States. These round, smooth grapefruit-sized pits are the trigger-explosive mechanism for W88 Poseidon submarine missiles. With Bush's push to expand Star Wars nuclear capacity ("Bush's New Nukes: Our Radioactive Future" in Earth Island Journal, Summer 2005) they need more than the 20 to 40 pits produced in LANL's facility.

Pit production was brought down from the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant when the FBI closed it for polluting the Denver-Boulder area, after faulty equipment created fires that released plutonium into the atmosphere. It had to be a critical scenario for the FBI to take action. The site was so contaminated the buildings and facilities were decontaminated and removed brick by brick. They are still working on closure.

#### **Fashion**

A Taos Jewel

#### **Casa Taos**

Cielito Lindo

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Guess what? According to an inside source, the DOE simply moved the Rocky Flats scientific personnel and pit-box equipment to LANL. Now LANL would like to win the government contract to build The Modern Pit Facility, capable of 450 pits per year, known as the new bomb factory.

The University of California stated in a letter to Hank Daneman in 1990 that plutonium production at LANL was a no-go. James Kane in the UC president's office stated, "the University has no intention of managing a plutonium production facility. Our contract calls for research only." Could this be an inside reason UC is out of the LANL management business?

Basically each pit is equal to a nuclear warhead. This is interesting, considering Article 6 of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), signed by the U.S., calling for nuclear disarmament. Town Council member Erlinda Gonzales is expected to urge the Council on the 28th to vote against a resolution supporting compliance with NPT and closure of the waste site. Why is this expected? In the past, when the CAB—appointed by DOE/LANL—has not supported LANL, it was removed from service. It is an interesting history, as reported to Horse Fly by a past chairman of the CAB.

#### **CAB History**

The purpose of the CAB, as set forth in the Federal Advisory Committee Act, is to identify environmental concerns of the local public, develop recommendations to prevent environmental degradation and to accelerate cleanup of legacy wastes. But this is not what occurs. A former long-term chairman of the CAB wrote in 1999 that the CAB was downgraded from "an independently aggressive board into a submissive one willing to sit placidly through the 'dog and pony' shows staged by the DOE at the beginning of every board meeting." DOE removed one entire CAB after it criticized LANL safety and waste management. LANL brought in new candidates and changed the bylaws for the purpose of "keeping the CAB within bounds." The head of waste management quit because LANL was diverting money that was supposed to be going to waste management to other places. "LANL treated budget allocations as discretionary spending," according to the former CAB chairman.

A DOE rep at LANL told me prospective CAB members are checked out by the site office manager and that DOE in

Washington makes the final decisions on CAB membership. So it seems it would be most difficult to criticize "the boss" and keep the job for two years. I hope the Town Council keeps this in mind when listening to Gonzales' presentation on the waste site. Taoseños should take a moment to let the Town Council and Mayor know how you feel about the resolution for nonproliferation and against nuke factories and radioactive waste storage in northern New Mexico.

**Conclusion: What You Can Do**

When Oppenheimer moved the Manhattan Project from Chicago to the boys' school ranch at Los Alamos in '42, the spot was chosen because of its total isolation. This is certainly not the case in 2005. Northern New Mexico is no longer the morally correct place to continue expansion of a whopping big radioactive waste site and P-pit facility. Also, plutonium pit production creates so much radioactive waste, it would make sense to move it closer to the WIPP (Waste Isolation Pilot Plant) in southeastern New Mexico.

On Aug. 6, the Los Alamos Study Group is sponsoring a Hiroshima commemoration celebration at Ashley Pond Park at Los Alamos, under the banner of "Stop the New Bomb Factory." Call 505-265-1200 to volunteer. Food and lodging will be provided. This will be an exciting event with music, drama, poetry and teach-ins.

Diane Gledhill needs volunteers to sign up more local businesses to the Resolution. So far approximately 65 have signed. Contact her at 751-3016.

There are a number of northern New Mexico groups working to stop expansion at LANL:

- Los Alamos Study Group, [www.lasg.org](http://www.lasg.org), 505-265-1200.
- Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, [www.nuclearactive.org](http://www.nuclearactive.org).
- Pax Christi New Mexico, [www.paschristinewmexico.org](http://www.paschristinewmexico.org), 758-1970.
- Nuclear Watch New Mexico, [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org) (a wealth of timely documents on this website).

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## TAOS DAILY NEWS

### Sprinkling Plutonium on Your Banana

July 15, 2005

By Jane Odin

#### **Background**

Back in the '70s nuclear scientists chowed down on plutonium. The catchphrase of the day was "sprinkle some plutonium on your banana." Sounds like a chachacha. In the '40s and '50s scientists



forced plutonium on others. The Manhattan Project and Atomic Energy Commission injected unsuspecting hospital patients and prisoners with plutonium and learned how total body irradiation had radically different effects from individual to individual. (Read "The Plutonium Files" by Eileen Welsome.) Some died—some are alive today. Many of the experiments were conducted by Nazi scientists brought to the U.S. in Project Paperclip. The Nazi legacy of arrogant ruthlessness, deception, and cover-up is perpetuated today by the Department of Energy (DOE), as witnessed in their general philosophy and the management of nuclear proliferation sites across America, including Los Alamos National Lab (LANL).

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### COLUMNS

#### Linda Fair

[The Steaming Dung](#)

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#### Word Play

As you know from the June Horse Fly, the DOE wants to expand the Area G nuclear waste site. Meanwhile, we've learned the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) may issue a draft closure for the Area G nuclear waste site in February 2006. This development focuses magnified importance on supporting the nonproliferation resolution in front of the Taos Town Council.

### **What's Hidden in Area G?**

The Town Council postponed the June 28 vote on the nonproliferation resolution, pending study at a council workshop on July 12. The council is scheduled to vote on July 19. (All of this, as usual, is subject to change.) Town Councilor Gene Sanchez knows where he stands. He will be voting in favor of the resolution and against the expansion of the Area G waste site. DOE Citizen's Advisory Board member and Town Councilor Erlinda Gonzales is expected to vote against the resolution. What else does one do when working for the DOE and LANL? At some point the council will view a DOE propaganda film on LANL.

What will the LANL film reveal? Will it point out the nuclear reactors buried under the sand at material disposal area TA 21? Nuclear reactors and spent fuel rods emit gamma rays, making it high-level radioactive waste. Will the film show Area C, where the super-hot waste is stored? And what about older sites—such as Areas A, B, T, and V—that date back to the Manhattan Project? No one knows what's in these sites.

LANL and the DOE say there is no high-level waste at Area G. According to the Los Alamos Study Group (LASG) this isn't the case. "LANL has routinely produced irradiated reactor fuel in its own reactors, of which there have been several since 1944, and this was buried at Area G and other Material Disposal Areas." What about the drill-back cores from underground tests containing the same radioactive isotopes in similar concentrations as spent nuclear fuel? Apparently there is high-level waste and every other type of ionizing radiation at LANL.

The DOE told Greg Mello, director of LASG, that Area G cannot close because some of the waste streams are so highly radioactive there is no possible way to ship them off-site. For example, no container will hold super-hot carbon accelerator beam stops. Should we be surprised that DOE continues to claim there's no high-level waste at LANL? Read about DOE's philosophy of deception and cover-up in the Caron

["A" is for "No"](#)

### **Subtext**

[Raw Power](#)

### **Nostalgia**

[Gringo Lessons: Paradox & Paradise](#)

### **Home and Garden**

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### **Baghdad Diaries**

[Recipe for Adventure](#)

The above selections are just part of what you'll find in this month's

Balkany and Wes McKinley book "The Ambushed Grand Jury."

### **Irresponsible Management**

Have you seen the large black plumes blowing into Taos from Los Alamos? Now we know they are beryllium plumes. At a blogspot known as LANL: The Real Story, LANL scientists discuss the April 2005 hydrotest at the Dual-Axis Radiographic Hydrotest (DARHT) facility, which evaluates munitions and studies high-velocity impact phenomena. Their comments say Taos Valley is affected: "The prevailing winds take the plumes from DARHT and PHERMEX (not decommissioned) directly over TA-3, the town site, and have been tracked all the way to the Taos Valley. The test Friday had a large black plume that followed the same path. The foam does concentrate more Be at Darht [sic] but a substantial portion is still released to the environment."

When the plume first became an issue, Senator Pete Domenici was told the foam protection technique in use could only be 20 to 40 percent efficient in controlling the beryllium. "Pete's response was that it didn't matter if it worked as long as we were perceived to be doing something about the problem. He had no interest in the hazards as long as he looked good. And so in the end we got a much more hazardous work environment at DARHT and the public got a healthy dose of Be," according to the Real Story blogspot.

A healthy dose of Be is known to produce Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD). According to a blogspot entry, "There are a number of people that work at or around DARHT that have contacted CBD and they will die from it. The disease has no cure. The symptoms are much like emphysema and it is debilitating before it is fatal. This is the information they don't want you to know." The authorities say some people are much more susceptible to CBD than others. Onset of the disease is signaled by shortness of breath, fatigue, night sweats, and coughing.

Other comments on the LANL blogspot go like this: "Why does nobody understand how badly LANL has deteriorated and how terribly irresponsible the management has been?" "Safety, security and environmental problems ... all these are solvable if someone cares. It's obvious that the bloated upper management at LANL doesn't care." "There are countless other examples of DOE's lip-service regarding safety and security."

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### **What's Happening?**

James Bearzi, Bureau Chief at NMED's Hazardous Waste Department, says LANL will be compelled to close Area G by February '06. Bearzi says the issue is not so much what they have in Area G but that LANL continues to use this site as they have in the past. He says the post-closure permit and scheduling of public hearings will be the beginning of an enormous fight whose success depends on citizen response at the public hearings. The DOE does not want Area G closed. According to Bearzi, "This will be the first time the state has played its hand."

LASG Director Greg Mello says if the state moves to close the waste site it will definitely be the first time the state has played its hand. Mello has heard this promise on multiple occasions before. The waste site permit expired in '89 but has been administratively continued by NMED. Mello says, "LANL is not now under any threat from NMED to close Area G nor will it be next year due to any RCRA [Resource Conservation & Recovery Act] process." The last time Mello spoke to Bearzi, he was told that the "cleanup" order would be proposed by NMED and DOE for inclusion en bloc into the permit. So we have two contradictory stories coming out of NMED. Sounds like they're sprinkling plutonium on our bananas again and again.

We have a unique opportunity in New Mexico to stand strong for peace in a country that is escalating weapons buildup and continuing the militarization of space. We have a unique opportunity because we are at the heart of the beast. If you want to know details of what is planned by the Department of Defense and the DOE for our future, check out a most important document on the Internet: "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century."

Contact Taos Town Council members and urge them to support the resolution against proliferation. And try to attend Hiroshima Day in Los Alamos on Aug. 6. LASG's website ([www.lasg.org](http://www.lasg.org)) has all the details.

**Angry** July 21-23, 2005  
Taos News

# citizens blast council

By Betsy Phillips  
The Taos News

Taos has gained a reputation as a hotbed for political activism. With Los Alamos National Laboratories just 80 miles away, it was only a matter of time before local activists and the federal facility collided.

The expansion of Area G at LANL seems to be the trigger issue for many. The normal peace and quiet of the town council chambers was shattered Tuesday night (July 19) by citizens asking some rather loudly that the town council approve a resolution opposing nuclear proliferation and the expansion of Area G.

Those concerned with the issue were hoping the passage of the resolution could come before the 60th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing.

See TOWN Page A16

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# FROM PAGE ONE



A standing room only crowd raised their hands when asked who was there for the citizens' resolution requesting a halt to nuclear waste disposal in Northern New Mexico Area G nuclear dump site at Los Alamos National Lab.

## Battle not yet over

From Page A1

The bombing of Hiroshima by the United States at 8:15 a.m. on Aug. 6, 1945, killed 140,000 people, caused 100,000 injuries and deformities, and survivors and serious congenital damage.

The Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board (NNMCAB) Web site describes Area G as one of LANL's nuclear waste disposal areas. Located on the Mesita del Baye along Palmito Road, Area G is about 8 miles southeast of Los Alamos, but only one mile from White Rock.

In operation since 1957, Area G has 32 pits, which are typically 600 feet long and 30 feet deep, 194 shafts and four trenches of disposed wastes of various classifications from low-level waste to transuranic waste. Beginning as a 5-acre site in 1957, the disposal site has received more than 10.7 million cubic feet of radioactive waste and now stretches across 65 acres.

It was described Tuesday

night as a tent city where they store nuclear waste above ground.

As the 2000 Centro Grande Fire proved, the Taos area is downwind from any emissions that may come from the lab area.

The council for three months has had the request for a resolution to support compliance of the treaty on Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Two changes were requested in the original resolution that also opposes expansion of Area G.

Town Attorney Rente Barera-Gutierrez drafted the original resolution. After speaking to activist Diane Gladhill, she added two provisions, stating opposition to Area G expansion.

John Acker of Peace Action Now told those gathered, "Many of us feel very strongly (about this issue) and ask that you support the citizens resolution."

Activist Cliff Bain told the council, "Thirty-five years ago the nonproliferation treaty passed — I don't think it's working. Your resolution gives lip service (to the concern) while ignoring the elephant in our state — LANL."

cl. "We can't continue to say we're the only ones allowed to have nuclear weapons. A green light for plutonium pits. We need to send a message — hevermore."

Joe Balsamo said, "As a member of the medical community for 35 years I'm concerned about your health. I used to be concerned about smoking, but this issue is way bigger."

Business owner Marc Campbell came to the meeting to speak in favor of Designation Taos' marketing program, but he found a connection between the two issues. "Visit Taos, the town that grows in the dark," he said.

After all the citizens had a chance to be heard, councilwoman Ethinda Gonzales, also a member of the NNMCAB, said she wanted the community to view a video that shows the other side, "they (LANL) are a big employer." This comment drew a chorus of boos from the audience.

"I think we deserve a little more respect," Gonzales told the crowd. "We take our responsibility seriously. I think we should view the video, so the community is completely

informed. I'd like to know what our congressmen have to say. We need to do some more studies."

This prompted shouts from members of the crowd, "You've postponed this so long, some of us are going to die." "Do your job." "Do the research" and "We've all done our homework now you need to do yours, Ethinda."

Gene Sanchez was the only councilor to speak for the resolution. "I know it is up to us to pass this resolution. I don't think we need to prolong this, I think we need to take action."

He said in an interview Wednesday (July 20) that he believes the NNMCAB is a rubber-stamp board.

"We have to address what's wrong before we can make it right," Sanchez said. "It was always bad, but now with terrorism — a terrorist could do as much damage. Think of all the good these millions could do if all that money was used for medical research or alternative energy."

Councilman Frank Cruz backed Gonzales. "I'm not against the resolution," he said, "but we have to give Councilmember Gonzales an opportunity as part of the

(NNMCAB) committee." Shouts of "Pass it!" filled the chamber.

"I don't know if these resolutions cover everything," Gonzales said. "I want to keep our community safe. I ask the community to give us a little time."

But that is just what the residents at the meeting felt the resolution would do. "This gives us an opportunity to start a dialogue," John Acker said.

Sanchez made a motion to pass the amended resolution, but it died for lack of a second. This drew further expressions of disgust from the crowd. "Don't forget to vote, everyone," one person shouted.

After the meeting several people expressed the opinion that Gonzales is "on the other side." Still others said they were "disappointed" but not shocked. On the 60th anniversary, this is the least that should be done.

Balsamo found the council's refusal to pass the resolution ironic. "What the resolution says is that we're against expansion and that it needs study."

■ betsy@taosnews.com