200 of 1000 DOCUMENTS

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

January 16, 2008 Wednesday

ANTI-NUKE GROUP PICKS SANTA FE AS NEW HOME BASE

BYLINE: SUE VORENBERG

SECTION: LOCAL NEWS; Pg. C-1

LENGTH: 610 words

Group: Los Alamos Study Group director says ANA needs to do more

A national watchdog has joined New Mexico's kennel of groups eager to chew on nuclear weapons policy and its environmental consequences for the state.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability moved its headquarters from Seattle to Santa Fe in November -- although not for any reason that would initially come to mind, like the increased production of nuclear bomb cores at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

No. It was love that brought Susan Gordon, executive director of the group, to decide to move her group's headquarters here.

She fell in love with a Santa Fean, she said.

"See if you can fit that and nuclear issues together," Gordon said with a laugh.

Beyond the romance, however, there's also a bowl full of juicy issues here, she added.

Her organization, which goes by the acronym ANA, is a 20-year-old network of local, regional and national watchdog groups. Its goal is to oppose production of a stockpile of replacement nuclear warheads and to campaign for a nuclear weapons free world, said Gordon, who's led the group for 13 years.

"We focus on the national strategies and we rely on all our local based groups to be the experts on their DOE facilities," Gordon said, adding ANA's New Mexico members are Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety and Nuclear Watch of New Mexico in Santa Fe, and the Southwest Research and Information Center in Albuquerque.

One thing she's especially proud of is that ANA, its member groups and associates like Union of Concerned Scientists generated 33,000 comments opposing the Department of Energy's Complex 2030 plan for restructuring the nation's nuclear weapons complex, she said.

Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, said he's familiar with ANA, but he doesn't think the group has gone far enough to oppose the production of nuclear bomb cores -- called pits -- at Los Alamos.

The lab plans to produce between 50 and 80 pits a year by 2014-2018, said Kevin Roark, a Los Alamos spokesman.

It built 11 in 2007 and is slowly increasing production.

"What we need now in

this world and from the NGO (nongovernmental organization) community is bold leadership that opposes death-oriented solutions to the world's problems, and specifically we need to give no quarter to attempts to make Los Alamos a weapons production facility," Mello said.

He hopes ANA will become a stronger player in efforts to stop any pit production at the lab, Mello said.

"My question is: Will ANA concretely help us oppose the construction and the operation of plutonium facilities at Los Alamos?" Mello asked.

Gordon had a quick response to that question.

"The answer is yes," she said. "We don't support pit production."

Studies have shown that nuclear weapons cores could last up to 100 years, so the need for production of any new pits "hasn't been validated," Gordon said.

She's also concerned that ramping up pit production at Los Alamos could create environmental problems in the state.

"DOE has a horrendous track record on environmental contamination," Gordon said. "There's very little reason on our part to think that won't continue."

Overall her group is more nationally focused, but she relies heavily on the input of local organizations in an effort to get the message to lawmakers, she said.

"I can help bring the local message to D.C.," Gordon said of her New Mexico partners.

ANA's major supporters include the Plowshares Fund, Town Creek Foundation, Colombe Foundation, Rockefeller Family Fund and the Aria Foundation. Information about the group is available online at ananuclear.org or by calling 473-1670.

Contact Sue Vorenberg at svorenberg@sfnewmexican.com

LOAD-DATE: January 21, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2008 The New Mexican

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

January 23, 2008 Wednesday

LANL GETS NEW STOCKPILE DIRECTOR

BYLINE: SUE VORENBERG

SECTION: LOCAL NEWS; Pg. C-4

LENGTH: 352 words

Acting associate director named to job that oversees manufacturing, support

Los Alamos National Laboratory director Michael Anastasio has appointed Carl Beard

as the new associate director for stockpile manufacturing and support at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Beard has been acting associate director since June 2007. He replaced Michael Mallory, who was promoted to principal associate director for operations at the lab.

The stockpile manufacturing and support directorate works on technology and sciences to maintain the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile.

That includes the controversial production of replacement nuclear weapons cores, called pits.

Anti-nuclear groups like the Project on Government Oversight and the Los Alamos Study Group have criticized the Department of Energy about the production of pits, saying they are unnecessary because existing bomb cores should last up to 100 years.

"There is no need under any possible policy or scenario to make new pits, let alone spend billions of dollars to build new factories as are now planned and under construction at Los Alamos National Laboratory," said Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group.

DOE has instructed the lab to produce between 50 and 80 pits a year by 2014-2018 to replace pits that are aging in the current stockpile.

The lab built 11 in 2007 and is slowly increasing production, said Kevin Roark, a Los Alamos spokesman.

Along with pit production, Beard's position will oversee five LANL divisions: program management, manufacturing capability, plutonium manufacturing and technology, weapons component manufacturing and manufacturing quality.

"Carl has been doing an excellent job as acting associate director, and I am confident

in his ability to combine

leadership skills with considerable engineering expertise

to guide the SMS organization to its ultimate successes,"

Anastasio said in a news release.

Beard has a doctorate in nuclear engineering from Texas A&M University and has worked at BWXT Pantex in Amarillo, Texas, as head of the applied technology.

Contact Sue Vorenberg

at 986-3072 or svorenberg@sfnewmexican.com

LOAD-DATE: February 2, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2008 The New Mexican

THE SANTA FE
NEW MEXICAN

February 4, 2008

DOE budget includes funds for nuke triggers, designs

"Browse the U.S. Department of Energy's fiscal '09 budget request, and you may be absorbed in a game of "now you see it, now you don't," said Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group.

At first blush, you'll notice a budget of $0 for the agency's "Pit Manufacturing and Certification Campaign," the technical category that has so far held most of DOE's efforts to renew its manufacturing of nuclear bomb triggers, called pits, the director of the nuclear watchdog group said.

But look closer. The funding isn't really gone.

It has just moved — to three new cryptically titled categories: Directed Stockpile Work, Science Campaign and Transformation Disposition, Mello noted.

Blink too quickly, and you might miss it — or at least get one hell of a headache, Mello said.

"This is about the maturation of the program," Mello said. "It's moved from technology development to actually making things for the nuclear stockpile. We think that's wrong — it's the wrong purpose. It's counterproductive and it's just plain ethically wrong."

DOE has instructed the lab to produce between 50 and 80 plutonium pits a year by 2014-2018 to replace pits that are aging in the current stockpile.

The lab built 11 in 2007 and is slowly increasing production, Los Alamos spokesman Kevin Roark has said.

The goal is to have Los Alamos make pits so that they can be used to replace aging pits in the existing nuclear stockpile — so the government can be sure that all of its nuclear weapons will function as intended.

But government studies have indicated pits already in the stockpile won't decay for about 100 years, which makes the project at the very least premature, Mello said.

"The problem we face is getting Congress' attention in an election year," Mello said. "The house has killed this project three times and deeply cut it twice."

But hidden in the budget, it's pretty much fully funded, he said.

The fiscal 2007 budget for the Pit Manufacturing and Certification Campaign was about $242 million. The fiscal 2008 budget is about $214 million, and the 2009 budget is $0.

The other budget categories don't define which funds are actually designated for pit production programs. But each shows a significant increases.

Directed Stockpile Work increases from $1.4 billion in 2008 to about $1.7 billion in 2009. The Science Campaign

increases from $288 million in 2008 to about $323 million in 2009. And Transformation Disposition goes from $0 in 2008 to $77 million in 2009.

Those numbers indicate the program is still going forward with about the same budget as it had in the past, said U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M.

And while he thinks the nation should be able to make bomb cores, he's not so sure that Los Alamos should become the new production facility for that work, Bingaman said.

"I've always taken the position that Los Alamos is capable of pit production, and I don't have a problem with maintaining that capability," Bingaman said. "But if we're going to significantly increase production, I think we should look at a site other than Los Alamos."

The budget also includes somewhere between $10 million and $40 million worth of work on the Reliable Replacement Warhead, which is basically a project to design new, more durable nuclear weapons.

"It's a change in the philosophy of designing," Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman said in a news conference Monday. But Congress flat- out denied DOE's prior requests for that project, Bingaman noted.

"I'm not sure exactly what they intend to do with that," Bingaman said. "Congress made it pretty clear at the end of the last session that we were not interested in a reliable replacement warhead project."

That's something very likely to come under harsh scrutiny when the budget gets to the Appropriations Committee, which starts up in the next month or so, he said.
When asked by a reporter at the conference about why the replacement warhead funding was included, Bodman said, "We think it's important."

But Mello argued funding for that program and for the pits is more about sustaining DOE's status quo.

"They're afraid that if they don't make new weapons, they'll lose their relevance and die," Mello said.

Contact Sue Vorenberg at 986-3072 or svorenberg@sfnewmexican.com.

Copyright © 2008 The New Mexican, Inc.. Permission granted for up to 6 copies. All rights reserved.
You may forward this article or get additional permissions by typing
http://license.icopyright.net/3.7515?icx_id=Department_of_Energy_Budget_includes_funds_for_nuke_triggers__d into any web browser. The New Mexican, Inc. and Santa Fe New Mexican logos are registered trademarks of The New Mexican, Inc.. The iCopyright logo is a registered trademark of iCopyright, Inc.

A pretty good mind

ROGER SNODGRASS
roger@lamonitor.com
Monitor Editor

2/5/08

ROGER SNODGRASS/Monitor

MIHALAS Dimitri Mihalas has not let his hardships stop him from becoming a well-published writer or a Laboratory Fellow.

He has a Ph.D. from Cal Tech in astronomy, mathematics and physics, and is a Laboratory Fellow, but Dimitri Mihalas has another remarkable distinction. And no, it's not just the fact that he is the only full-time staff scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory who is currently a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Give up?

He is – along with Astronaut Buzz Aldrin, poet John Berryman, actor Robin Williams, composer Ludwig van Beethoven and golfer John Daly – among those frequently included on a list of famous people with bipolar disorder.

SPOTLIGHT on Los Alamos

Bipolar disorder is a potentially debilitating mental illness, marked by depression and characterized by extreme, sometimes destructive or suicidal mood swings.

But it is treatable, as Mihalas, now approaching 70, would testify, and it is far from uncommon.

On the contrary; according to a recent study published in the Archives of General Psychiatry in September 2007, the number of visits by adults resulting in bipolar disease has almost doubled over the last decade. And according to the same citation by the Centers for Disease control, the number of children and adolescents diagnosed with bipolar disorder has increased by 40 times during the same interval.

"This is not the thing I think most about in my life, but it is one of my most valuable contributions," he said during a recent interview. "I get letters from people who say, 'You've saved my life.'"

Which is to say that Mihalas, his experiences, his own struggles on the precipice of

See **MIND**, *2*

MIND

From Page 1

life and death and what he has learned about and from them, have a lot of relevance.

Rather than a handicap, his mental disease has been turned completely on its head.

"I am an expert," he wrote a few years ago in one his essays that are freely available on the web, "because I have had bipolar disease for 46 years, and suffered with it, sometimes intensely, for 42 of those 46 years."

Although he now understands that there is no "cure" for what the psychiatrists call more generally "an affective disorder," he does understand what goes into achieving a sustained remission.

Two of his essays on "Surviving Depression and Bipolar Disorder" pop right up on an Internet search.

In one of them, "A Primer on Depression and Bipolar Disorder," updated in 2002, he wrote about a series of "interest groups" he led on depression and bipolar disease in the early '90s.

Although he would later trace the beginnings of the illness back to his childhood, it was not definitively diagnosed until he was 47. His journey to recovery has been both physical and spiritual.

"I had to realize that I had a physical illness," he said. "The brain is an organ and like any other organ it can malfunction."

He called bipolar disorder "the Mercedes of brain disorders," because it is relatively easy to diagnose and treat with the appropriate medication – in general, a class of pharmaceuticals known as Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors that include Paxil, Prozak and Zoloft.

But along with the medical treatment and monthly visits to a psychiatrist "to be my witness," as he describes it, he has developed a spiritual and mystical appreciation about his life and the human condition.

A Quaker, Mihalas believes he has experienced both "light" (in the deeply religious sense described by the Quaker's founder George Fox) and "grace," which Mihalas understands as "a free, unexpected gift by God to man."

The definition is intellectual, he cautions, but real grace is "experiential, emotional and spiritual."

He describes this spiritual strengthening more fully in a second essay, "Bipolar Disorder and Spiritual Growth." Written from "an unabashedly Quaker point of view," it describes "how a struggle with a major depression or serious mania can lead seemingly paradoxically to spiritual growth by the victim of the illness."

It is this spiritual strengthening, Mihalas said, that has enabled him to feel protected, and that enables him to get beyond simply being "medically well" to something approaching "healed."

"The totality of the experience taught me something," he said. "If I could go back and change something, I don't know what I would change."

Mihalas is currently working on a third edition of a landmark book, "Stellar Atmospheres," first published in 1968, one of several that he has written, co-written or edited.

At Los Alamos his more recent research has contributed to spectrographic analysis of rapidly moving plasmas.

"I'm just intelligent," he said, as a fair self-assessment. "I'm not a genius."

Budget roller coaster opens season

ROGER SNODGRASS
roger@lamonitor.com
Monitor Editor 2/5/08

President Bush released a $3 trillion budget proposal for next year that includes a 7 percent increase for defense, plus additional costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan War.

Of special interest to Los Alamos was the presentation of the Department of Energy budget by Secretary Sam Bodman Monday, which included requests for Los Alamos National Laboratory and the nuclear weapons complex.

Los Alamos, according to one breakdown of the DOE budget, request would receive $1.838 billion in Fiscal Year 2009, a reduction of less than $15 million from the current year.

After all the dramatic events related to the LANL budget last year, including plans for layoffs and voluntary self-selections, the laboratory break-out reveals that LANL actually received $50 million more in its FY 2008 appropriation, $1,852,802 compared to $1,800,324 in

Overall, the Department of Energy Budget is positioned to go up by $1.073 billion next year, a 4 percent increase.

The National Nuclear Security Administration budget would increase by $267 million or 3.3 percent. Weapons activities would increase by 5.1 percent, under the proposal.

In a press statement, Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said the budget overall was "good for the labs," but he predicted close scrutiny and substantial changes before the appropriation process comes to a close.

On first review, he noted that the budget plan includes $162 million for environmental cleanup at LANL and $100 million to continue work on the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility.

He highlighted the following details:

- Los Alamos National Laboratory: DOE proposes spending $1.83 billion in FY2009, a decrease of $14.5 million below FY2008 requested level;
- Weapons Activities – $1.37 billion, up $12 million;
- Nonproliferation – $173 million, down $45.84 million;
- Directed Stockpile Work - $375 million, up $185 million;
- Advance Simulation and Computing – $139 million, down $69 million;
- TA-55 Reinvestment Project - $7.9 million;
- Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility – $19 million; and
- LANSCE Refurbishment – $5 million to study upgrade.

In another other area of the budget Domenici noted the Forest Service has zeroed out funding for the Valles Caldera National Preserve for next year, after the Caldera received $6.8 million in funding for the current year.

He saw a more positive development in the National Park Service budget, where there are plans to give the

BUDGET

From Page 1

itors center at the Bandelier National Monument a $3.17 million face lift.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has called Energy Secretary Bodman before the committee Wednesday.

Bingaman welcomed signs that funding for the American Competes Act has grown along with several energy technology programs. At the same time, he noted that the administration's priorities for energy activities were not the same as those Congress had in mind last year.

He objected to cuts in funding for solar energy research, hydropower and industrial energy efficiency.

Bingaman objected to DOE's apparent abandonment of a $220 million weatherization program that, he said, increases energy efficiency and lowers energy costs for heating dwellings occupied by low-income Americans.

Laboratory critics were wary of many signs that the transformation of Los Alamos into a nuclear pit manufacturing facility was becoming a foregone conclusion.

In a white paper analyzing the factory scenario at Los Alamos, Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, called into question the gap between the signed commitments by nuclear nations to cease the arms race and the American determination to invest heavily in nuclear weapons infrastructure.

Rather than continue with the billions of dollars in new construction at Los Alamos, he proposes using the pits that are available from the weapons dismantlement program at the Pantex site in Texas.

"(Pantex) Pits are fully certified, they don't have any waivers or program risks," he said. "They would have highly positive non-proliferation impacts, vastly reduced environmental impacts and no additional waste and they are exactly the pits that would provide redundancy for existing stockpile systems."

Jay Coghlan and Scott Kovac of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, pouring over the hundreds of pages of budget documents, also noted the first official mention of the new cost estimate for LANL's Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building Replacement, a key facility for the pit manufacturing mission at LANL.

Once budgeted at under $1, the NNSA budget request notes as a "significant change," the estimated total project costs for the CMRR is now currently above $2 billion.

Albuquerque Journal (New Mexico)

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Business News

February 5, 2008 Tuesday

Stable Budget Proposed for N.M. Labs: But some items likely will raise red flags with Congress

BYLINE: John Fleck and Michael Coleman, Albuquerque Journal, N.M.

SECTION: STATE AND REGIONAL NEWS

LENGTH: 525 words

Feb. 5--The Bush administration on Monday proposed a stable budget with no major changes for Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories.

But the spending plan does make clear that the two labs, which focus on nuclear weapons, are not in line for any significant part of a major increase being proposed for some areas of U.S. government energy research.

The budget proposal for the National Nuclear Security Administration, which runs the labs, has several programs likely to raise red flags with Congress, which last year sought to rein in the nuclear weapons program.

The administration asked for $10 million for the Reliable Replacement Warhead, which Congress in December voted to kill. The budget asks for $100 million next year for work on a new plutonium laboratory at Los Alamos.

"NNSA is continuing with projects that Congress is skeptical of," said Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group in Albuquerque, an anti-nuclear weapons organization.

At Los Alamos, total Energy Department spending under the plan would be $1.84 billion, down from $1.85 billion this year. Sandia's Energy Department budget would rise to $1.43 billion from $1.4 billion.

The budget now goes to Congress, which can modify the spending plan. The 2009 fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, a New Mexico Democrat who is chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said the DOE budget for New Mexico's labs is "slightly down but not a significant reduction."

He lamented proposed cuts in nuclear nonproliferation work, much of which is done at LANL.

"I think that is shortsighted," Bingaman said. "It would seem to me that nonproliferationrelated work would be a priority for the administration, given all that is going on with Iran and everywhere else."

Bingaman also said Bush's $10 million funding request for the controversial reliable replacement warhead is likely to meet resistance on Capitol Hill.

"That does surprise me," Bingaman said. "I think it's going to run into the same resistance this year as it did last year."

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the budget is fair to the labs but will certainly be altered by Congress.

"This budget overall is good for the labs and should work to put them on stable footing," Domenici said.

The proposal calls for a cut in spending at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant nuclear waste disposal site near Carlsbad, drawing a rebuke from Domenici.

"The budget for WIPP is unacceptable and will compromise the transportation and disposal of defense wastes from around the DOE nuclear weapons complex," Domenici said.

Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., complained about the nonproliferation cut and called the proposal "just a starting point for negotiations."

To see more of the Albuquerque Journal, or to subscribe to the newspaper, go to http://www.abqjournal.com. Copyright (c) 2008, Albuquerque Journal, N.M. Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services. For reprints, email tmsreprints@permissionsgroup.com, call 800-374-7985 or 847-635-6550, send a fax to 847-635-6968, or write to The Permissions Group Inc., 1247 Milwaukee Ave., Suite 303, Glenview, IL 60025, USA.

LOAD-DATE: February 5, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

ACC-NO: 20080205-AQ-Stable-Budget-Proposed-for-N-M-Labs-0205

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

JOURNAL-CODE: AQ

Copyright 2008 Albuqerque Journal

Comic artist dies
Cartoonist Gus Arriola one of first to depict Hispanic characters **C3**

METRO & NM

C

ABQjournal.com ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL •••• Tuesday, February 12, 2008

Report Raises Concerns About LANL

Problems Include Safety, Accounting

Copyright © 2008 Albuquerque Journal

BY JOHN FLECK
Journal Staff Writer

It's been a bad five years for Los Alamos National Laboratory, according to a report issued Monday by congressional investigators, who found:

- Fifty-seven security incidents "involving the compromise or potential compromise of classified information";
- Nineteen violations of rules meant to protect against nuclear accidents;
- Shoddy accounting for nuclear materials; and
- Management problems that delayed and drove up the cost of two major nuclear research machines.

Some of the problems have been reported before, including the discovery of classified documents in a lab worker's home in October 2006. But many of the revelations, including the nuclear safety violations, are new.

A Los Alamos spokesman welcomed the Government Accountability Office report, noting improvements since a new corporate management team took over in June 2006. The lab is run by a consortium headed by Bechtel Corp.

Security incidents, for example, have declined since the lab's new managers took over, according to the report.

"It captures much of the history and also much of the progress," said lab spokesman Kevin Roark.

Greg Mello, a lab critic with the Los Alamos Study Group, questioned Roark's assertion that the report demonstrated progress in dealing with the lab's problems. "I don't think it does show that," Mello said.

The report's authors were also not so sanguine about the suggestion that progress was being made. "In our view," the investigators wrote, "this short period of time is not sufficient to provide a basis for meaningful trend analysis."

Furthermore, some of the problems highlighted in the report happened after the new management took over. In July 2007, for example, a lab area was found to contain 40 percent more nuclear materials than allowed by safety regulations.

In September 2007, key plutonium operations at Los Alamos had to be shut down because of safety concerns.

In addition to security and safety problems, the report criticized Los Alamos for its

See **LANL** *on* **PAGE C2**

LANL Report Raises Concerns

from **PAGE C1**

management of large construction projects. Among the problems was a large nuclear weapons X-ray machine that is finally scheduled to begin operations this summer, five years after it was originally supposed to be completed.

Los Alamos also bungled its part of a major research machine being built at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, threatening the project's schedule and budget, according to the report.

The report comes at a critical time for Los Alamos. Members of the House of Representatives last year attempted deep cuts in the lab's $2.1 billion budget. A final budget deal in December forestalled the cuts.

The new report was requested by the two leaders of that budget-cutting effort — Rep. Peter Visclosky, D-Indiana, and Rep. David Hobson, R-Ohio. Visclosky and Hobson head the House Energy and Water Appropriations Committee, and they are widely expected to renew their efforts to cut the budget this year.

"I think they're preparing ammunition," said David Culp, a lobbyist with the anti-war Friends Committee on National Legislation.

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

February 29, 2008 Friday

SCIENTISTS LOOKING SKYWARD FOR FUEL

BYLINE: SUE VORENBERG, ILLUSTRATION: COURTESY LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY

SECTION: HEALTH/SCIENCE; Pg. D-1

LENGTH: 754 words

Los Alamos researchers discover way to make gasoline by recycling carbon dioxide in the air

Fuel: Cost for the gas about $5 per gallon

Carbon dioxide is a rebellious chemical.

There's too much of it in the air, where it acts as a greenhouse gas, and not enough of it in the ground, where it's mined and used to make gasoline, said Jeff Martin, a scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

But Martin and Los Alamos Engineer Bill Kubic have come up with an idea to bring pesky carbon dioxide to task -- and mine it from a place its never been mined before: the atmosphere.

"This is actually a new, old idea," Martin said. "For decades people have thought about getting carbon dioxide out of the air and making fuel, but no one could come up with a concept that was practical."

Getting carbon dioxide out of the air isn't the tricky part, although you do need to mine it from a place with a lot of air blowing through.

If you find a spot like that, you can capture it using a solution of potassium carbonate and potassium hydroxide -- chemicals that are sort of like baking powder and not environmentally dangerous, Martin said.

And the two LANL employees have found such a place, in the cooling towers of nuclear power plants.

"Finding a place with a lot of air has been hard," Martin said. "But power plant cooling towers do that, and we can process that air as it passes through."

So far in their studies, it seems likely they can capture 95 percent of the carbon dioxide from a tower, he said.

But then comes the harder part.

"Once we have captured it, we have to figure out how to get it out of solution," Martin said.

And they've come up with a solution to that, too.

Kubic invented an electro-chemical process that releases the carbon dioxide from the solution without using an enormous amount of energy. Previously, the energy required to do something like that made ideas of mining the air for gasoline impractical, Martin said.

Their new method uses about 96 percent less energy than previous technologies, he said.

"And not only does it release carbon dioxide, but it also releases hydrogen, which we can use," Martin said.

And from the byproducts, it's easy to make methanol, gasoline, diesel and jet fuel, he said.

Still, Greg Mello, executive director of the **Los Alamos Study Group**, a watchdog organization, says he's a bit skeptical of the claims.

"You can't get around the laws of thermodynamics," Mello said. "It takes a tremendous amount of energy to get fuel from carbon. If you think about it, the process of using gasoline and making carbon dioxide releases a lot of energy. It takes the same energy to turn the carbon dioxide back into fuel. You don't get something for nothing."

Mello looked at the team's white paper on the subject, "Green Freedom -- A Concept for Producing Carbon-Neutral Synthetic Fuels and Chemicals," and said he found the scientists' claims interesting, but not convincing.

"I'm just extremely skeptical," Mello said.

But Martin and Kubic have already proven the process can work, and they will go into a demonstration phase for the next year, where they will gather more evidence to support the concept, Martin said.

After that, they'll work on prototypes for about five years and then it should be ready for commercialization, he said.

"We already have several companies talking to us that

are interested in this," Martin said, adding that plants could

be using the technology in about 10 years, and it could be ubiquitous in the market in about 20 years.

Still, the cost of the gasoline produced from the process might make some people unhappy. The method should steadily produce gas for about $5 a gallon, Martin said.

"That's higher than the current market price, but by the time we build these out, it will be comparable to market prices," Martin said. "It can at least stabilize the price of gasoline and give us a domestic source of fuel. Otherwise, we're dependent on foreign markets and there's no ceiling to fuel costs."

One nuclear power plant retrofitted with the technology could provide enough fuel for a city slightly smaller than Albuquerque, he added.

And while it's not exactly a technology aimed at fighting global warming by taking carbon dioxide out of the air, since that carbon dioxide will be recycled into fuel and re-used, the technology can limit the amount of new carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere each year, Martin said.

"We're not going to get rid of carbon dioxide, we're going to recycle it," Martin said.

Contact Sue Vorenberg at 986-3072 or svorenberg@sfnewmexican.com

LOAD-DATE: March 2, 2008

4529 03-01-08 4P 4S **C028
LA STUDY GROUP
GREG MELLO
2901 SUMMIT PL NE
ALBUQUERQUE NM 87106-2028

Los Alamos Monitor

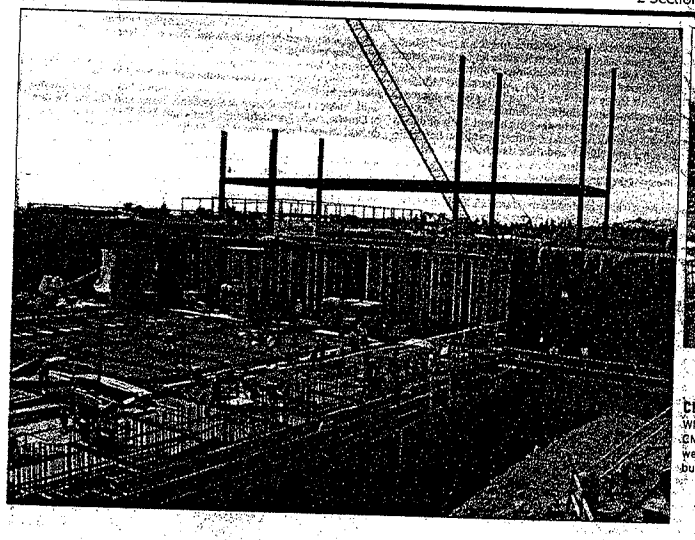
Your Town...Your News

Vol. 45, No. 43 | Sunday, March 2, 2008 | 2 Sections, 16 Pages | www.lamonitor.com

EMPTY BOWLS

Eat so
for a
good
cause
Saturd

SEE PAGE



KEVIN ROARK/LANL/Court

CMRR CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS (Directly above) Pictured are T Whitacre, Steve Fong, Joe Martz and Rick Holmes discussing progress on CMRR Construction Project during tour Thursday. (Right) Some 70 work were on the job at the CMRR construction site, which is on schedule, wit budget and expected to be completed by September 2009.

LANL tapped for key role in complex transformation

CAROL A. CLARK
lanews@lamonitor.com
Monitor County Editor

As part of the government's efforts to minimize its nuclear footprint, Los Alamos National Laboratory is positioned to play a central role in the National Nuclear Security Administration's proposed "Complex Transformation" plan.

That plan was detailed by LANL Director Michael Anastasio and Joe Martz, a program director in the laboratory's nuclear weapons program, during a Regional Community Leaders Breakfast Tuesday at the Cities of Gold Hotel Conference Center in Pojoaque.

The quarterly breakfast, coordinated by LANL's Community Programs Office, also featured Don Winchell, manager of NNSA's Los Alamos Site Office.

Martz, as keynote speaker, said the complex transformation plan effects several national research facilities throughout the country. The plan seeks to update the laboratory's aging infrastructure, making it smaller and more agile, more secure, environmentally responsible, and more efficient and cost-effective, he said, adding that LANL also will become better able to respond to changes in congressionally mandated national security requirements.

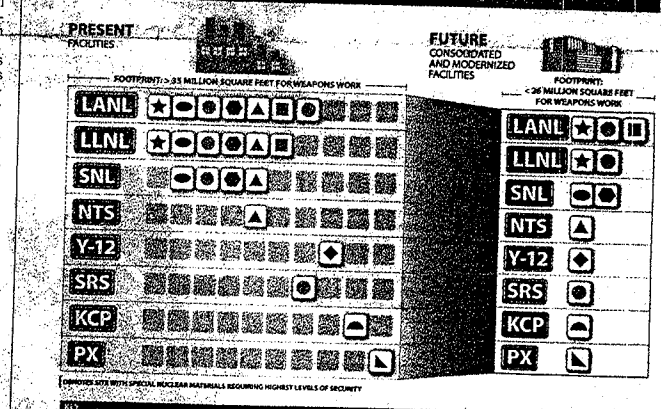
"In the future, our security will depend not so much on the products of our work rather more so on our work itself," Martz said.

A member of the Los Alamos Study Group criticized the project as nothing new, saying the lab "is making a difference without a distinction."

During an interview Thursday, Martz spoke about the lab's responsibility in managing the nation's weapons stockpile and the proposed transformation of the nation's nuclear weapons complex.

"This transformation is the future of one of the main programs at the laboratory and offers stability to the community," he said. "LANL's unique combination of technological capabilities and its concentration of the world's top scientific minds in virtually every discipline will allow us to reduce our nuclear operations footprint by nearly 50 percent, reduce our building footprint by 20 percent and reduce the number of staff supporting nuclear weapons activities by 20 percent over the next 10 years."

See **COMPLEX**, *A3*



COMPLEX

From Page A1

Old vs. new

Since Tuesday's breakfast, laboratory officials have discussed various elements of the complex transformation plan beginning with a tour Thursday morning of the exterior of the old Chemical and Metallurgy Research (CMR) facility and a visit to the TA-55 site where construction of the new Chemical and Metallurgy Research Replacement (CMRR) project is underway.

At the time construction on the CMR facility began in 1948 to its completion in 1952, it was the second largest concrete building in the nation, behind the Pentagon, said Kevin Roark of LANL's public affairs office. "The CMR building encompassed half a million square feet of mostly metallurgy and chemistry and frankly it's falling apart."

Radiological lab

Rick Holmes heads up the CMRR field office. He explained the project consists of two buildings. The first is the Radiological Laboratory/Utility/Office Building (RLUOB).

RLUOB will total some 225,000 square feet, with about 190,000 square feet of laboratory space, Holmes said. The structure will comprise five levels including two floors of office space, one floor for training and a basement for utilities for both buildings.

"RLUOB will have a 'light laboratory' meaning the most significant operator input went into the design features of the facility, he said.

Depending on funding, early site preparation on the nuclear facility should begin sometime in 2009, Holmes said.

The main CMRR project contractor is Austin Commercial out of Dallas that has done work at LANL in the past.

"They subcontract about 75-80 percent of the work to New Mexico firms," Holmes said, adding that the project recently won a national environmental award for its soil recycling efforts, which have saved nearly $2 million.

Project oversight

There are four to five safety professionals overseeing the construction site at all times, Holmes said.

Tom Whitacre with DOE's project oversite division was monitoring the project Thursday and described reportable injuries at the site as minimal. "A guy hurt his elbow tossing trash in a dumpster and was given time to rest and occasionally someone needs a band aid," he said. "Craft employees continually evaluate each other, watching for potential safety concerns. They have a great program of worker involvement here."

Moving the CMR functions within the TA-55 compound, Whitacre said, makes so much sense because it's easier to guard an operation when it's in "one small spot."

Opposition

Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, an activist organization based in Albuquerque, expressed concern Friday that pits will be manufactured in the new facility. He described a meeting he had in November in the Washington, D.C., office of George Allen, head of NNSA's Office of Complex Transformation.

"George Allen told me the CMRR is necessary for any pit production at all," Mello said. "What the laboratory is doing is making a difference without a distinction."

Martz replied to Mello's comments, saying, "CMRR replaces existing functions in the CMR facility and we've built dozens of pits over the last six years using those services. CMRR is intended to improve the security, safety and efficiency of those operations."

Project oversight

The Office of Management and Budget at the White House, Mello said, states in their FY 2009 Passback Guidance document that DOE/NNSA is requesting funding in FY 2009 for the CMRR project. This facility will be used to manufacture the central core of nuclear weapons, known as the "pit."

The document further states that DOE/NNSA has assumed a future production rate of 50-80 pits per year at LANL, consistent with their preferred alternative for complex transformation. The document requests DOE and DOD to collaborate on an analysis of future pit production needs.

For the record

Martz emphasized that the pits are and will continue to be manufactured in PF-4 at TA-55 with analytical chemistry support from CMRR.

"There's so much misinformation out there of what CMRR really is and we feel Project is to relocate several mission critical projects including analytical chemistry, materials characterization, and actinide research and development capabilities to a newer facility, he said.

On the horizon

Because LANL is receiving the significant share of responsibility under the complex transformation plan, Glen Mara, principal associate director for nuclear weapons, said Friday that there is a tremendous amount of confidence and trust being placed on the Laboratory.

"The future looks exceptionally bright," Mara said. "We want to reach out and make sure all of the stakeholders understand it."

Winchell also sees a bright future for LANL. "A key element is that LANL is going to be the center for this thing," he said. "They've got to have what we make in order to maintain the stockpile. We're here for the long term, there's no question about it."

Public input

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, DOE-NNSA has released an environmental impact study called the Draft Complex Transformation Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, or Draft Complex Transformation SPEIS.

Mara explained that as part of this process, DOE has scheduled a number of public hearings in New Mexico this month.

Two public hearings are set in Los Alamos, including 6-10 p.m. March 12 and 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. March 13, both at the Hilltop House Hotel.

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS.com

Reductions in weapons complex affects Los Alamos, Sandia

By SUE MAJOR HOLMES Associated Press Writer

Article Launched: 03/05/2008 04:23:53 PM MST

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories will be leaner in the future as the federal government reduces the nation's nuclear weapons complex.

The National Nuclear Security Administration is proposing to consolidate operations from eight nuclear weapons sites around the country to move the Cold War complex into a smaller, more secure and less expensive operation. The eight facilities would get various "centers of excellence." None will close.

The plan would give Los Alamos the centers for excellence for nuclear design and engineering and for plutonium. Sandia would get the centers of excellence in non-nuclear design and engineering and for major environmental testing.

NNSA will hold hearings in Socorro, Albuquerque, Los Alamos, Santa Fe and Espanola later this month and take written comments.

Environmentalists and others have suggested the proposal transforms the laboratory complex into more of a "bombplex" than it has been, sacrifices science in favor of weapons manufacturing and doesn't diversify into other important areas, such as research on alternative energy.

NNSA Deputy Administrator Robert Smolen—who calls the labs a national treasure—said he'd like people attend the hearings with an open mind and let the agency explain its proposal.

"Our mission is principally to maintain a safe and secure and reliable stockpile without testing (nuclear weapons)," he said. "That's the mission we're focused on. All those other missions are collateral missions. I'm not averse to doing any of those things, but my mission to maintain the stockpile."

The NNSA, a semiautonomous Department of Energy agency that oversees nuclear weapons research and production, decided on specific centers of excellence for each lab based on studying what each site does now, where efforts might be consolidated, where various skilled workers are located and a lab's capacity for the future, Smolen said.

"There was no shortage of opinion of what might go where," he said.

In essence, Los Alamos will be reduced to nuclear design and engineering, including plutonium work. The plan envisions a new Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement complex, or CMRR, at an estimated price tag of $2 billion or more.

Los Alamos also will keep its supercomputing mission, but will reduce work in non-nuclear design and engineering, major environmental testing and high hazard testing.

All non-nuclear weapon component work would be consolidated at Sandia in Albuquerque by 2010. Sandia, which will do non-nuclear design and engineering and major environmental testing, will have a Microelectronics and Engineering Science Applications complex.

Sandia won't be responsible for high hazard testing and supercomputing. However, Sandia officials have said that since Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore in California would have high performance computing, they intend to develop

Advertisement

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS.com

partnership relations with them to remain deeply involved in high-performance computing development.

Smolen said the labs always have spun off other kinds of scientific research, and that scientists will continue to have those opportunities, which range from research to support counterterrorism to research that benefits private industry.

"There's lots of pure science going on tangentially to the nuclear enterprise," he said.

Greg Mello of the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group said the core of the NNSA proposal is that it wants new nuclear weapons factories—the most important of which would be a Los Alamos factory to make pits, the triggers of nuclear weapons.

Science is being de-emphasized in favor of manufacturing in a time when, Mello contends, the nation is "awash in nuclear weapons."

"The manufacturing of warhead cores is the pivotal step in adding new kinds of nuclear weapons to the arsenal," Mello said. "They don't have the capability to do this in any quantity now and as a result the nuclear stockpile can't evolve on demand."

Smolen also said that although the U.S. no longer needs a large Cold War nuclear complex, that doesn't mean it doesn't need new facilities such as Los Alamos' CMRR complex. The current facility dates to the early days of the Cold War, and the deteriorating building is only going to get worse, he said.

CMRR is "vital to the science experiments we need to do to ensure our remaining stockpile, whatever size it is, remains safe," he said. "We have to have that facility."

Mello suggests people attend the hearings but take concerns to Congress, which sets policy through its budgets.

"We have to look at the big picture. We are beginning a recession that is likely to be deep and long and may never really end because of the underlying energy crisis," Mello said. "We need to make an emergency recommitment of resources toward real national security out of the unproductive patterns of the Cold War. ... We have to move hundreds of billions of dollars into building infrastructure that will enable our society and our economy to persist in this century."

Don Hancock of the Southwest Research and Information Center in Albuquerque doubts Congress will fund the NNSA's plan and urged people to attend the hearings to discuss whether they agree with the proposal.

He's pushed for the labs to diversify into renewable energy, environmental cleanup and nonproliferation work.

"That's the flaw in the plan," he said. "They don't look at these issues."

The NNSA plan lacks a "no production" alternative. Instead, the agency wants billions for a "bombplex" that includes the new pit production facility, Hancock said.

"They're talking about nuclear weapons forever, and a lot of us have a different version of the future," he said.

Advertisement

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

The Taos News (New Mexico)

March 6, 2008 Thursday

IN FOCUS;
BEST BETS FOR THINGS TO DO AROUND TAOS

SECTION: TEMPO; Pg. TE-32

LENGTH: 723 words

Early Easter party

The Taos Youth and Family Center invites everyone to the third annual Wet 'n' Wild Easter Event. The event will take place on Saturday (March 8) from noon-4 p.m. at the Taos Youth and Family Center and the Taos Swimming Pool, according to center director Judy Esquibel. The main attraction will be a free Easter Egg Hunt for children up to age 12 in the swimming pools. The 1-6-yearold sessions will be held in the shallow water kiddie pool and 7-12-year-old sessions will be held in the larger recreation pool.

Check for time when each event takes place. Due to limited space in the dressing rooms it is recommend children wear swimsuits under their clothing. All participants need to be prompt and will be required to take a shower before entering the pool. There are also a limited number of life jackets available. Esquibel said Easter baskets will not be required. Children will be provided with a green-netted bag instead of an Easter Egg Basket to gather their eggs and rubber duckies. There will be rubber duckies and bright colored eggs filled with small treats or tickets that can be redeemed for an Easter Egg Basket, lollipops, egg decorating kits and an assortment of small toys. Other activities will include: Wacky bubbles, temporary Easter Tattoos, bunny crafts table and a Kids Page "Color Me Bunny" Contest for children ages 3-10. The Easter Bunny "Pepito Conejito" will be available for visits and pictures from noon until 2 p.m.. If you would like a photo, the cost will be $3. The Easter Bunny will have a treat bag for the first 150 children. As usual you can play arcade games or play pool, Esquibel said.. The pool also will be offering a recreation swim time from 3-5 p.m. The cost is $2 for children and $3 for adults. For more information, call Esquibel at (575) 758-4160.

Garden: Temple Edition

Friday (March 7) marks the official new moon, and Garden resumes with its Temple Edition. "A temple is a building dedicated to worship and regarded as having within it a divine presence," event promoter Christalyn Concha said. "As a room full of people dance in unison to rhythmic beats, one can feel a sense of the divine - its a place to release stress, fear, let go and give thanks for life. To celebrate this night, Concha says there will be "an extra-talented lineup of guest deejays." Adem Joel of Albuquerque returns with his funky break beats, tribal house, and dub-step sounds. Also Uplifter of Denver returns to Taos, with a mix of dance-hall, roots, and reggae. Uplifter who has been a staple on the reggae scene in Denver for more than 10 years, provides positive, conscious vibes, the press release states. Resident DJ Chrystalline (Concha's alter ego), will open the night with a blend of electro, tribal, percussive sounds "to evoke a sacred space of booty freedom!" Add to that visual projections by Chameleon and quality sound by Sound Works. All ages are invited to Garden's Temple space! Admission is $3 before 10 p.m., $5 after. It's all at Car Tunes, 814 A Paseo del Pueblo Norte. The 25-30th callers to call the info line at (505) 779-3440 and mention The Taos News Tempo article will win two free passes for the night. Visit online ladydjs.com or freethebooty. org.

Mike Hearne live

Your chance to hear some of the smoothest Southwestern Americana around is today (March 6) when Michael Hearne takes the stage at 7 p.m. at the Old Blinking Light Restaurant. The venue is at mile marker 1 NM 150 (Taos Ski Valley Road) Call (575) 776-8787 or go to www.oldblinkinglight.com. Hearne will be back for more on Monday (March 10), 7 p.m. While he's there, be sure and pick up a copy of his latest CD, "The High Road to Taos."

Anti-nuke doc to be screened

"Do It For Uncle Graham," a documentary film about New Mexico's nuclear history will be shown Saturday (March 8) at 7 p.m. in the Kit Carson Electric Co-op Board Room, 118 Cruz Alta Road. Afterwards, Eduardo Griego, the cinematographer, the Peace House Taos and the **Los Alamos Study Group** will head a discussion about the making of the film and how **Los Alamos** National Lab and the nuclear industry impacts our local Taos community, especially in terms of the Department of Energy hearings on Complex Transformation ("Nukes Forever") that are taking place in Santa Fe and **Los Alamos** March 12-13. For more information, call (575) 770-3338.

LOAD-DATE: May 8, 2010

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: See pdf's for exact rendition, caption, graphics and photographer info.

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2008 The Taos News
All Rights Reserved

189 of 1000 DOCUMENTS

Albuquerque Journal (New Mexico)

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Business News

March 9, 2008 Sunday

Nuclear Future Unclear: Hearings Reflect LANL Uncertainty

BYLINE: John Fleck, Albuquerque Journal, N.M.

SECTION: STATE AND REGIONAL NEWS

LENGTH: 1406 words

Mar. 9--LOS ALAMOS -- Plutonium chemist Joe Martz looked up at the forbidding concrete building where much of the Cold War's nuclear weapons science was done.

"It is state-of-the-art 1940s technology," Martz said as he gazed through the fence at Los Alamos National Laboratory's Chemistry and Metallurgy Research building.

To people like Martz, a senior manager in the lab's nuclear weapons program, the problems of "CMR," as it is called, are central to the future of the lab's ability to do its job.

Built from 1948 to 1952 and still stuffed with lab space for the study of plutonium and the other dangerously radioactive materials used in nuclear weapons, the building is "past its useful life," Martz said in a recent interview.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, an independent body that monitors lab nuclear safety, believes the aging building is vulnerable to earthquakes and could not contain a radiation leak.

"Continued operation of the CMR facility in its current condition poses significant risks to workers and the public," the board concluded last year.

"That's a dangerous building," said Jay Coghlan, head of the Santa Febased Nuclear Watch New Mexico.

A mile down the road, Martz pointed to a beehive of construction that Los Alamos officials hope will solve the problems posed by CMR. Notched into a volcanic mesa, the massive CMR Replacement project will, if it is ever completed, replace the old CMR and the work that goes on inside.

But, as federal officials and members of the public gather this week for public hearings across New Mexico on the future of the U.S. nuclear weapons design and manufacturing complex, the future of the CMR Replacement project is a big "if."

To read the mountains of reports related to the hearings accumulating in Coghlan's Santa Fe office, you might miss the role of CMR and its planned replacement. But for the lab and its opponents, the fate of the aging Cold War building and its multibillion-dollar replacement have landed in the center of the debate over whether we should manufacture new nuclear weapons, and if so, where and how it should be done.

The proposal up for discussion at this week's hearings includes manufacturing 50 to 80 nuclear weapon plutonium cores per year at **Los Alamos**.

The cores, called "pits," were once built at Rocky Flats, outside Denver. But for nearly two decades, since Rocky Flats closed amid safety and environmental problems, the United States has not made new pits.

'The critical facility'

That changed last year, when **Los Alamos** started making 10 per year. Expanding that to the proposed 50 to 80 per year requires replacing the CMR building, National Nuclear Security Administration chief Tom D'Agostino told members of Congress in February.

"The CMR Replacement is the critical facility, just as pit production is the critical production mission," Coghlan said.

Since Rocky Flats' closure, the federal government has made numerous attempts to build a new plutonium factory. Each effort failed because of concerns over how much it would cost and whether it was needed.

Faced with those problems, D'Agostino decided last year to abandon the idea of a new factory and do the work at **Los Alamos**, partly in a 1970sera plutonium building and partly in the new CMR Replacement.

Lab and National Nuclear Security Administration officials say the CMR Replacement is about more than plutonium manufacturing.

"We need (the CMR Replacement) regardless of whether we build any warheads at all, ever," said Bob Smolen, deputy director of the National Nuclear Security Administration.

Phase one of the CMR's replacement is already under construction, a 225,000-square-foot building that is primarily office space with some modest laboratory space for working with radioactive materials.

But to truly replace the old CMR, lab officials are planning a second phase that could cost more than $2 billion, with much more extensive plutonium handling and storage capabilities. Decisions on that second phase lie at the heart of the current debate.

Among other jobs done in the old CMR that need a new home in the yet-to-be built second phase, according to the agency, are nuclear nonproliferation studies, nuclear power plant fuel research and studies of how existing U.S. nuclear weapons age.

Congressional critics disagree. In a report last year, members of a House subcommittee concluded that the second phase of the new CMR building "has no coherent mission to justify it" other than building new pits.

Making pits at **Los Alamos** rather than building a large new factory for the job might sound like exactly what the agency's critics asked for. Two of those most vocally opposed to the current plan -- Coghlan and Greg Mello of the Albuquerque-based **Los Alamos Study Group** -- argued in hearings held in 2002 that **Los Alamos** could meet U.S. nuclear weapons production needs, eliminating the requirement for a large new factory.

At the time, both opposed building bombs at all. But they said that if plutonium production is needed for the future U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, **Los Alamos** could do the job because of existing plutonium capabilities.

In recent interviews, both argued that **Los Alamos** should not get the pit-making job because weapons manufacturing is not needed at all.

Mello said that whatever pits might be needed for future U.S. nuclear weapons could be obtained by removing them from old, dismantled bombs.

Reusing bomb parts rather than building new ones sends a much better message to other countries at a time when we are trying to prevent nuclear proliferation, Mello said.

"Diplomatically, it's a product that you can, with honor, take to the world," he said.

The NNSA, in a report published in December, rejected pit reuse, saying it would prevent the development of new weapons with improved safety features and greater reliability.

Martz argues that building a modest nuclear weapons manufacturing capability will, in the long run, help nuclear disarmament.

Reducing the size of the current U.S. nuclear stockpile, he argued, can only be done if there is a backup capability to build new bombs if needed. Without the confidence such a capability would provide, he said, we would need to retain a much larger arsenal of existing weapons.

Open for opinions

The battle over CMR and its role in this week's hearings reflects a broader reality about the politics of nuclear weapons.

Major decisions about U.S. nuclear weapons policy tend to be made in Washington, D.C., in classified policy reviews and in congressional budget processes that are largely closed to the public.

That leaves hearings like this week's in New Mexico as one of the only forums for the public to try to influence U.S. nuclear weapons policy.

The National Environmental Policy Act requires environmental studies of federal government actions, including public hearings.

The problem is that the hearings' legal focus is narrow: in this case, what the environmental impact of building new nuclear weapons would be, rather than whether they should be built at all.

"To some extent, the (environmental impact study) process is a parallel universe," Mello said.

If past experience is any indication, that fact will not dampen the enthusiasm brought to the hearings -- weapons opponents seizing on one of the rare opportunities to protest government policies, and by government officials trying to explain them.

"The (National Environmental Policy Act) process is political theater on both sides," said Mello, a veteran of many such hearings. "It engages the attention of the public."

Hearings ahead

New Mexico public hearings on the National Nuclear Security Administration's nuclear weapons complex transformation plans:

Monday

Socorro Macey Center (at New Mexico Tech) 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Tuesday

Albuquerque Convention Center 11 am to 3 p.m., 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Wednesday

Los Alamos Hilltop House 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Thursday

Los Alamos Hilltop House 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Santa Fe Genoveva Chavez Community Center 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

March 27

Espanola San Gabriel Mission y Convento 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

To see more of the Albuquerque Journal, or to subscribe to the newspaper, go to http://www.abqjournal.com. Copyright (c) 2008, Albuquerque Journal, N.M. Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services. For reprints, email tmsreprints@permissionsgroup.com, call 800-374-7985 or 847-635-6550, send a fax to 847-635-6968, or write to The Permissions Group Inc., 1247 Milwaukee Ave., Suite 303, Glenview, IL 60025, USA.

LOAD-DATE: March 9, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

ACC-NO: 20080309-AQ-Nuclear-Future-Unclear-0309

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

JOURNAL-CODE: AQ

Copyright 2008 Albuqerque Journal

DAILY BRIEFING C2 • PUZZLES C3 • SEW SIMPLE C3

Dear Abby
Love is wilting, thanks to cheapskate boyfriend C3

METRO & NM

C

ABQjournal.com ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL •• Wednesday, March 12, 2008

LANL Officials Defend Bomb Proposal

▪ *Public hearing held on plan to make nation's plutonium parts at lab*

BY JOHN FLECK
Journal Staff Writer

Los Alamos National Laboratory officials went on the offensive Tuesday, supporting a proposal to make the nation's plutonium bomb parts at the lab.

The proposal is in the nation's best interest and the lab's, Los Alamos associate director Terry Wallace said during a public hearing on the proposal.

Wallace's appearance was part of a broad effort, as lab heavy hitters testified at the hearing and made the news media rounds, including a drive time talk radio appearance on KKOB-AM (770).

The unusual public relations initiative comes as the National Nuclear Security Administration takes public comment on a far-reaching initiative that would make Los Alamos the nation's permanent plutonium manufacturing center for the entire U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Giving Los Alamos the plutonium manufacturing assignment is part of a plan to create a small-scale capability to build new nuclear weapons, something the United States cannot currently do.

Tuesday's hearings were the latest in a series of 20 being held around the country. A final decision on whether to go ahead with the plan is expected later this year.

Federal officials say they are creating a capability that may not be needed, but that is critical for U.S. nuclear security if new threats emerge, or if weapons in our current nuclear arsenal need to be replaced.

Critics say it is unneeded, and national security needs can be met

See **LANL** *on* **PAGE C2**

MORGAN PETROSKI/JOURNAL

Pam Fraser, left, Mona Bryant, Penelope Foran, Toots Obenshain, Ellen Robinson and Floy Barrett, collectively known as Raging Grannies, protest at a hearing Tuesday about making bomb parts at LANL.

LANL Officials Defend Bomb Proposal

from **PAGE C1**

using parts salvaged from existing nuclear weapons as they are dismantled.

Opposition to the federal bomb plant plan was on display at Tuesday's hearing, held at the Albuquerque Convention Center.

"Say 'no' to the continued production of nuclear weapons," said Marlin Good of Albuquerque Mennonite Church.

Good called continued work on nuclear weapons "immoral and unjustifiable."

Such testimony is common at hearings like Tuesday's, which offer one of the few government-sponsored venues for the public to directly engage government officials on U.S. nuclear weapons policy.

"What you're seeing now is a desperate effort."

GREG MELLO OF THE ANTI-WEAPONS LOS ALAMOS STUDY GROUP

But the appearance by the Los Alamos team was unusual. The usual pattern for such hearings is for members of the anti-weapons community to hold forth while lab officials largely stay away.

Lab officials said they were tired of what they view as "myths" being perpetrated, including a widespread but mistaken belief that the proposal calls for an increase in the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

"That's not true," said Glenn Mara, head of the lab's nuclear weapons work.

"We're at a major crossroads," Mara said during a meeting with the Journal's editorial board. "It is time for the public to be as informed as I can make them."

Greg Mello of the anti-weapons Los Alamos Study Group, one of the lab's leading critics, had a different view of the public relations offensive.

Nuclear weapons officials realize that a new president in less than a year, along with the retirement of the weapons program's chief congressional defender, Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., has created a "now or never" situation for the weapons program.

"What you're seeing now is a desperate effort," Mello said.

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

The U.S. nuclear weapons complex: Pushing for a new production capability

BY GREG MELLO | 20 MARCH 2008

On January 15, the *Wall Street Journal* published an op-ed by former secretaries of state George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former Defense Secretary William Perry, and former Georgia Democratic Sen. Sam Nunn, which 37 other national security experts also endorsed. Entitled "Toward A Nuclear-Free World," it was the second such essay in the *Journal* by these authors in as many years. (See also "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons.") Both essays concerned the benefits--some immediate, others long-term--of specific nuclear policies the authors believe would be best advanced under the nuclear disarmament banner.

These authors do not mention that the United States and four other nuclear states (Russia, Britain, France, and China) are already legally bound to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament . . ." by Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The opinion of the World Court and subsequent U.S. diplomatic agreements has confirmed the binding character of these twin commitments to end the arms race and achieve nuclear disarmament. [1] Most observers agree that the collective unwillingness of the five NPT nuclear weapons states to persuasively implement these Article VI obligations has harmed the NPT and the law-based nonproliferation regime it underpins. [2]

If the disarmament aspiration expressed in these two essays means anything, it means refraining from long-term investments in the specialized, "responsive" infrastructure needed to make novel warheads. Nuclear weapons infrastructure investments that require large, long-term commitments of capital and skilled technical labor--scarce resources in any country--are good indicators of national nuclear intent. In other words, infrastructure investments make, and are, nuclear policy.

The U.S. government says as much. In 2006, Linton Brooks, the then administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), emphasized the importance of long-term manufacturing investments as a foundation of more aggressive nuclear policies a "couple of decades" hence. "We can change our declaratory [nuclear] policy in a day," he said during a speech to the East Tennessee Economic Council. "We can make operational and targeting changes in weeks or months. In a year or so we can improve integration of nuclear and non-nuclear offense. By contrast, the infrastructure and the stockpile it can support cannot change as quickly. Full infrastructure changes may take a couple of decades."

Brooks is right. The factory complex at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) needed to produce the fissile plutonium cores, or "pits," for RRW or another new warhead isn't expected to be completed until at least 2017. But as long as design and construction of these production facilities proceeds, Congress could "halt" RRW for a few more years, as it did in late 2007, without significantly affecting its final delivery schedule, assuming it were eventually approved.

Warhead design and engineering development are short-term activities compared with designing, constructing, equipping, and standing up operations in the facilities needed to actually build RRWs. The new buildings needed are orders of magnitude more complicated than the warheads and there is considerable managerial risk involved in acquiring them. [3] For example, the nuclear explosive portion in a warhead or bomb contains at most a few hundred components, nearly all of which are inert until use. By contrast, a typical automobile has more than 10,000 parts. A plutonium production complex contains millions of parts, and such a complex is anything but inert. To successfully operate it would require training and coordinating at least 1,000 people and would also

require some success in meeting safety, security, and environment standards. Construction of the most recent large-scale U.S. pit production-related facility, Building 371 at Rocky Flats in Colorado began in 1973 and was completed in 1981 at a cost of $225 million ($524 million in today's dollars). It operated for only one month before the Energy Department realized that the technology on which it was based would not work. The repair cost $400 million and took eight years. Energy called it a "fiasco."

NNSA describes the proposed new factories at LANL as merely providing "capacity," as if "capacity" could be created and then mothballed. One cannot build, equip, and stand up highly specialized factories that cost billions of dollars and hire and train hundreds of highly specialized technicians over many years without actually making the objects these costly and complex arrangements were meant to produce.

The proposed Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement (CMRR) Facility at Los Alamos

The United States has now begun to heavily invest in the specialized manufacturing infrastructure needed for new nuclear weapons, pivotally at LANL. The flagship of this complex is the CMRR project to be built at LANL's Technical Area (TA)-55. NNSA describes the current cost for CMRR as at least $2.2 billion. But if completed, it would probably cost more. [4]

The CMRR consists of two buildings--the Nuclear Facility (NF), comprising roughly nine-tenths of the project in dollar terms, and the Radiological Laboratory, Utility, and Office Building (RLUOB). Together, the two buildings would comprise some 400,000 square feet of new interior space, and the NF's 6-metric ton vault would approximately triple LANL's plutonium storage capacity. [5] If completed, the CMRR would be the largest construction project in the history of LANL in inflation-corrected dollars.

The two CMRR buildings would be linked by tunnels and connect to LANL's existing 30-year-old plutonium facility (PF-4), which has been modified for production using operational funds over the last decade or more. NNSA has now begun a more extensive renovation of PF-4 in an open-ended, long-term construction line item called the "TA-55 Reinvestment Project."

At present, pit production utilizes approximately one-quarter of PF-4's 59,600 square feet of nuclear floor space; the CMRR NF would add at least 22,500 additional square feet of this type, some with greater ceiling height, providing greater operational flexibility. Ceiling height has been a limiting factor regarding manufacturing equipment and production processes in PF-4.

RLUOB construction is approximately 40 percent complete, while after four years, the Nuclear Facility is still in preliminary design and it's unclear when, or if, it will be completed or when construction might begin if approved. Physically, the 90,000-cubic-yard pit dug at the NF site, ostensibly to investigate seismic conditions, is now the staging yard for RLUOB construction. Therefore, the earliest possible construction start date for the NF is spring 2009--the earliest RLUOB could be completed. [6]

Such a schedule seems optimistic, as a number of significant NF design issues remain unresolved, including seismic design, overall safety design, and building size. (See the summary of the "Draft Complex Transformation Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement".) As of March 2007, conceptual vault design, including provisions for fail-safe cooling of plutonium stores, hadn't been finalized. [7]

It's difficult to predict the ultimate capacity of a LANL pit production complex anchored by a renovated PF-4 and the two CMRR buildings--especially if additional production space or an additional two production buildings were subsequently added, as NNSA suggests might happen. [8]

Whether built with just the RLUOB, the RLUOB and the NF as planned, the RLUOB plus a "supersized" NF, or with the whole project doubled in size by subsequent construction, the CMRR is unnecessary to maintain the present nuclear arsenal or any subset of it for several decades. The CMRR *is* needed, however, to manufacture significant quantities of pits for novel nuclear explosives. [9]

How many pits could LANL make--with and without CMRR?

LANL has possessed the capability to make pits since 1945. But until last year--when it produced 11 new pits,

some or all of which were assembled into W88 Trident warheads at the Pantex nuclear weapons plant near Amarillo, Texas--LANL hasn't made pits for the stockpile since 1949, with one or two possible exceptions. [10]

LANL's current pit manufacturing capacity is uncertain and open to interpretation. On the one hand, NNSA could choose to displace or terminate certain programs currently housed in PF-4; on the other hand, some of those programs are likely needed for new-design nuclear explosive package certification, without which pit production has no reason to proceed.

At a minimum, successful certification of new-design nuclear explosives requires the use of extensive design, testing, and simulation capabilities. These might not be sufficient; nuclear testing might also be required. So any decision to resume pit production has long coattails, tasking most of PF-4 and much of the nuclear weapons complex as a whole.

In February 1996, Energy said LANL's pit production capacity, prior to any investment, was "10 to 20 pits per year." [11] Later that year, Energy stated that LANL pit production of "up to 50 [pits] per year" is "inherent with the facilities and equipment required to manufacture one component [pit] for any stockpile system." [12] In 2005, the Secretary of Energy's Advisory Board (SEAB) Nuclear Weapons Complex Infrastructure Task Force said LANL's existing pit production capacity could (and should) be increased by a ratio of "1:20." This twentyfold increase wasn't a rhetorical flourish; rather, it was predicated on producing an RRW or RRW-like pit designed for mass production involving simpler design, broader tolerances, robotic production technologies in some steps, and fewer toxic materials, which would allow greater ease, flexibility, and speed of production. [13]

This year, NNSA stated, "A reasonable judgment of the inherent capacity of a production line for nuclear components exceeds 50 per year. A modern factory-style layout could result in a *minimum* [emphasis added] inherent capacity in the range of 125 components per year." [14]

Existing LANL pit production capacity is somewhat predicated on the nine-wing Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) building in TA-3. Despite extensive recent upgrades, much of the CMR *may* be nearing the end of its usefulness for this purpose. According to NNSA Administrator Tom D'Agostino, pit production could continue at LANL without either the CMRR or CMR, or possibly with part of the CMR, as NNSA wrote in response to congressional questions in 2007. [15]

How many pits per year LANL could produce if CMRR *were* built is even less clear, as the uncertainties--including uncertainties in CMRR's size and the number of facilities ultimately available at TA-55--are compounded. In addition, as a senior Energy official explained to me in 2002, the achievable production rate in a given number of square feet of plutonium space is a sensitive function of the technology used. It is also a function of the complexity and tolerances required in the type of pits produced. Any capacity cited today isn't necessarily what might be available 10 years from now if technology development were to continue--and RRW were approved.

Production capacity is also a function of *flexibility*, e.g. whether two or more kinds of pits are to be produced simultaneously or in rapid succession.

The *lowest* capacity is governed by what might be called the "fiasco factor." Accidents and malicious acts, previously unknown or undisclosed infrastructure or management inadequacies, enforcement actions, and preventive stand-downs have all occurred at LANL and are real possibilities. A production capacity of zero could easily result from any of them, possibly for a long time.

The highest capacity achievable could be significantly greater than the advertised maximum of 200 pits per year.

CMRR's congressional funding

CMRR appeared in 2003 as a "project engineering and development" line item, becoming a standalone construction project the following year. Since then the Senate, thanks to New Mexico Republican Sen. Pete Domenici, has reliably backed CMRR funding. The House of Representatives, however, has zeroed out the CMRR in three of the past five years and proposed cuts of more than one-half in the other years. The Senate has largely won these battles.

In its most recent markup (for the fiscal year 2008 appropriation), the House Appropriations Committee zeroed

out the project and wrote: "Proceeding with the CMRR project as currently designed will strongly prejudice any nuclear complex transformation plan. The CMRR facility has no coherent mission to justify it unless the decision is made to begin an aggressive new nuclear warhead design and pit production mission at Los Alamos National Laboratory." The House as a whole agreed with this assessment by a wide margin, rebuffing an amendment introduced by New Mexico Democratic Rep. Tom Udall to restore funding for the CMRR, pit production operations, and nuclear weapons overall.

But Senate appropriators had fully funded the project. When the omnibus appropriations bill finally passed in mid-December, the CMRR was funded at $75 million for fiscal year 2008, about 86 percent of NNSA's request. Neither the bill nor the report contain specific guidance as to which parts of the CMRR project are to receive the abridged funding; project management is privileging RLUOB construction. [16]

What dire consequences would occur if the CMRR Nuclear Facility wasn't built?

None. Halting the CMRR would not even remotely threaten any existing U.S. nuclear capability--not now and not for many decades to come. But such a step *could* reflect an aspiration toward disarmament, depending on other policies adopted. In that case, it would express the spirit of the Shultz, Perry, Kissinger and Nunn editorials.

If the United States isn't prepared to take even this kind of baby step toward fulfilling its NPT obligations, it's difficult to see how Washington could ever play a constructive role in the international cooperation necessary to prevent nuclear proliferation.

This article has been adapted from a larger piece entitled "Build Warhead Factories Now, Worry About Weapons Policy Later: Will Congress Take Back the Reins?", available at the Los Alamos Study Group website.

[1]The United States reiterated its commitment to nuclear abolition in the consensus statement of the 2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, agreeing to a set of 13 detailed, "practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI." Prior to this, the World Court unanimously ruled in 1996 that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith *and bring to a conclusion* [Emphasis added.] negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."
[2]The author speaks from personal observations at several NPT preparatory and review conferences but also see the formal conclusions of Lewis Dunn et al, Science Applications International Corporation, "Foreign Perspectives on U.S. Nuclear Policy and Posture", December 4, 2006, prepared for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Another recent testimony to this view is a speech delivered by IAEA Secretary-General Mohamed ElBaradei on February 11, 2008.
[3]Keith Schneider, "U.S. Spent Billions on Atom Projects That Have Failed," *New York Times*, December 11, 1988, p. A1.
[4] Energy Department Congressional Budget Request for FY2009, Vol. 1, National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), p. 298. The cost of more than $2.2 billion for the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Facility (CMRR) is derived from NNSA's estimate of "above" $2 billion for the CMRR Nuclear Facility (NF), its estimate of $164 million for the Radiological, Utility, and Office Building (RLUOB), and an allowance in the low tens of millions for specialized RLUOB equipment and furnishings--carried now in a separate CMRR project account, "Phase B"--bringing the total to "above" $2.2 billion. Construction costs for even ordinary construction are inflating rapidly and can be expected to continue to increase for the next decade. The CMRR NF is a complex project that involves large quantities of concrete and steel. For these reasons, the CMRR can be expected to increase in cost significantly over the nine years NNSA allots for further design and construction. These CMRR costs don't include the required new $240 million Technical Area (TA)-55 security perimeter, which must in part be built *twice* to accommodate construction, the new Pit Radiography Facility ($47 million), the TA-55 Reinvestment Project (at least $200 million), the Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility Upgrade ($80 million), or the TA-54 nuclear waste disposal expansion project (at least $60 million). Nor do they include demolition and disposal of the existing Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) facility ($400 million). All of these projects (save for CMR demolition and disposal) are functionally required for CMRR operation.
[5]Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), CMRR briefing slides, p. 8, no date.
[6]Personal communication with Steve Fong, NNSA CMRR project staff, January 18, 2007.
[7]Oral response to author's questions, CMRR public meeting, Fuller Lodge, Los Alamos, New Mexico, March 2007.

[8]See NNSA, "Draft Complex Transformation Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement," pp. S34, 35. Similar plans have been internally available at LANL since at least 2001, e.g., LANL 2001 Comprehensive Site Plan, "TA-55 Preconceptual Plan," Los Alamos Study Group files.

[9]Neither the CMRR nor Technical Area (TA)-55 as a whole is needed to produce nuclear explosives made with uranium.

[10]According to a personal communication with Ken Silver at East Tennessee State University, there are indications LANL's TA-21 site may have briefly resumed quantity pit production in the immediate aftermath of the disastrous 1969 fire at Rocky Flats.

[11]Energy Department, Draft Stockpile Stewardship and Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (SSM PEIS), Los Alamos Study Group.

[12]Energy Department, Final SSM PEIS, Volume 1, pp. 3-4, Table 3.1.1.2-1, note "A," September 1996. Note: "A" is note "1" there.

[13]Anonymous congressional source.

[14]NNSA, "Complex Transformation Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (CTSPEIS)," pp. 2-22, December 2007.

[15]House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, March 29, 2007, supplemental questions for the record, p. 584 in printed version of "Energy and Water Development Appropriations for 2008." The use of CMR as solely a radiological laboratory rather than a nuclear facility, to my knowledge, hasn't been investigated. Neither to my knowledge has there been any comprehensive study of current and planned mission requirements for LANL's nuclear facilities or radiological facilities.

[16]Personal communication with Steve Fong.

Copyright © 2009 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/30/2009 - 17:02):
http://www.thebulletin.org/node/118

IT IS 5 MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT
www.thebulletin.org

BOMBS AWAY!

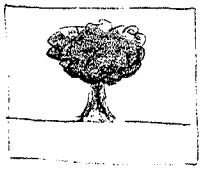
By Suzy T. Kane 4/15/08

Fifty-five miles downwind of Los Alamos, Taoseños may be surprised to learn that, according to Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group (LASG), eleven new nuclear warheads or plutonium "pits" were manufactured for the first time since 1949 at Los Alamos National Labs (LANL) in 2007. Confirming the number of pits, Kevin Roark, a spokesperson at the Labs, explains, "The pits are the nuclear triggers, what initiates the nuclear reaction."

Almost twenty years ago in Santa Fe, Mello helped found the now Albuquerque-based LASG, a nuclear disarmament watchdog organization that gathers, analyzes, discusses and disseminates information about what's going on at LANL. The hot topic is funding and plans for a new plutonium pit factory at LANL, the first since Rocky Flats in Colorado was shut down twenty years ago.

"We did not get funding to make a bigger 'factory,' which Mello keeps calling it," Roark protests. "We got funding for the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement project (CMRR)," that is, replacing the old CMR building, where the pits were made. Roark justifies their manufacture with an analogy: "If Ford stopped making cars and bulldozed all the factories and never made cars for another twenty years, think how hard it would be to make a car."

Roark defines the mission of LANL as "maintenance of U.S. nuclear deterrence. We do the science that confirms that if our country should require their use, the weapons will work as designed. [The CMR building is] where we currently do a variety of actinide chemistry. Certain types of actinide chemistry are in support of plutonium science."



DIENKE

Mello argues that the White House documents he has obtained do not support Roark's statements. According to the Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is requesting funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 for the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Project: "This facility [at LANL] will be used to manufacture the central core of nuclear weapons known as the 'pit.'"

"Making pits makes nuclear waste," says Mello, "lots of it." [At LANL], there are tens of thousands of drums sitting in stacks on [the area called] TA-54, "... and some of them contain a lot of plutonium. Someone could crash an airplane into them. The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and

Continued on page 8

ple, if we start pouring concrete on the new pit factory [at LANL], it's going to be harder to stop it. This has already happened on one building. Fortunately, construction is not supposed to start until 2009 at the earliest on the main new factory annex."

Mello gives the people who work at LANL the benefit of the doubt. "Nobody really likes nuclear weapons. LANL people are not wanting to destroy cities full of people. Nuclear weapons are meant to scare everyone who interacts with the U.S."—one point on which Mello and Roark would agree.

"More simply," Mello asks, "should we try to remain an empire, clinging to failing policies even as the country now heads into steep decline, or could we be a nation that puts its own house in order, investing in 'full-spectrum sustainability' at home rather than the fantasy of 'full-spectrum dominance' abroad, and so, lead by example?"

Los Alamos National Security (LANS) and in June 2006, won the contract to take over management and operation of LANL that will eventually be worth almost $40 billion with little federal oversight. No actual bids were required. Now LANS may continue at LANL for twenty years without competition.

In an incestuous industry, the Bechtel Corporation is building the plant to treat hazardous waste at Hanford, and Bechtel is developing the repository for nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. BWXT manages the Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas, where thousands of nuclear weapons were assembled up to 1991. According to its own history, Pantex has also "dismantled thousands of weapons retired from the stockpile by the military and placed the resulting plutonium pits in interim storage." (So why do we need to make more pits at LANL? Mello asks.) Pantex additionally works on "life extension programs designed to increase the longevity of weapons in the stockpile." The Washington Division of URS Corporation manages the Savannah River site, where by 2004, 10,000 drums of glassified radioactive waste have been shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico. Mello points out that the private corporations now running LANL for profit have little accountability.

"The biggest challenge facing the Study Group today," Mello says, "is whether we can educate key policy makers fast enough

BOMBS AWAY

Continued from page 1

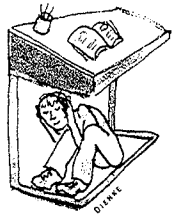
the NNSA have identified these stacks of drums as probably the single most dangerous thing at Los Alamos," Mello warns. "And they are poorly guarded."

Mello's experience as far back as elementary school with "Duck and Cover" drills foreshadowed his suitability for heading the LASG. Mello was only a second grader when his class was shown a movie of an atomic blast and the children were instructed how to protect themselves during such an event by taking shelter under their desks. "I looked at the film and looked at my desk," Mello remembers, "and realized that something did not add up."

But Mello is less interested in talking about himself than he is in talking about nuclear issues, subjects about which his talent, education and experience qualify him to speak. He insists he doesn't want the messenger to detract from the urgency and importance of his message.

Mello's first job after college in 1971 was as an intern in Washington, D.C., with the newly formed Environmental Protection Agency—what he considers his first real encounter with the nuclear weapons industry. On a field trip to the Hanford site in eastern Washington State, a site that reprocessed waste nuclear reactor fuel to make weapons grade plutonium, "I was made to take the day off because my superiors were afraid I would ask embarrassing questions. So I drove around the area interviewing Hanford's neighbors.

"The thing that really impressed me, a rather naïve young man then," Mello says, "was what a federal wildlife manager told me. He said there were ponds at Hanford so toxic that wildfowl would land in them and just die. Hanford's solution was to put a chain link fence over the ponds."



DIENKE

Mello saw that the problems at Hanford were well-known to everybody involved long before 1991, when it was listed as a Superfund site and eligible for federally-funded cleanup. Hanford would have been so much easier to clean up, he says, if they had started earlier, a wish he has for the work at LANL. "But they don't want to do cleanup at LANL," Mello says, "because they are still dumping nuclear waste in unlicensed shallow trenches and shafts, to be covered with a meter of crushed tuff [volcanic rock]. Cleanup will never happen in earnest until the dumping stops."

"The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has been complicit in allowing the dumping to continue," Mello adds, "when they could have stopped it at any time from November 1985 to the present, given the will and given support from the Governor. That support has never come."

"NMED has never even chosen to enforce the New Mexico Ground Water Protection Act at the site," Mello says. "This regulatory laxity is a big reason why LANL is getting all the dirtiest manufacturing work in the weapons complex today."

"At the time [of the closing of Hanford and Rocky Flats in 1988-89]," Mello says, "there was no known contamination of the ground water at Los Alamos. The Hanford site had contaminated drinking water. If Los Alamos were evaluated now, it might well meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Priorities List under Superfund. In the scoring formula, known ground-water contamination bumps up the score dramatically."

Asked if he thought LANL could be declared a Superfund site, Roark replied, "There's nothing at LANL that would come close to a Superfund issue. We have never been a production site, but a research and development site." He insists, "LANL does nothing on an industrial scale," but admits to "some limited small-scale manufacturing"—no doubt referring to the manufacture of the eleven nuclear warheads. "Hanford and Rocky Flats were production sites. LANL's role has been research and nothing that constitutes a factory."

However, as Mello points out, "LANL began as a factory, and the replacement of LANL's old Chemistry and Metallurgy building, not to mention other manufacturing-related products, is the largest capital project in the history of the lab. It will cost at least $2.2 billion over a ten-year period, or $3 billion, if the other projects are included.

"Even the Bush Administration believes that by the time the CMRR is completed," Mello says, "each warhead type in the arsenal will be present to surfeit. Manufacturing novel kinds of nuclear weapons is the real reason, and the only reason, to build these facilities."

In 1984 Mello was a hazardous waste inspector with New Mexico's Environment Department (NMED), then a division of the Health Department. In that capacity, he led the first environmental enforcement actions at LANL.

Mello contrasts the attitude he saw, and still sees, at LANL with that of the Intel Corporation, the semi-conductor and microchip company in Rio Rancho, also a site he regulated at the time. "Intel was quite cooperative," Mello says. "The people there would say, 'Tell us what we need to do, and we'll do it.' And they did. The people at LANL weren't interested in solving environmental problems. They went to the [State] legislature to fix things their way. Within days of receiving their first notice of violation, they [the legislature] threatened to cut our NMED budget."

From its inception, LANL had been managed solely by the University of California (UC), Mello explains. But in December 2005, Bechtel put together the team of UC BWX Technologies (BWXT), and Washington Group International (now the Washington Division of URS Corporation) to form

back to story page Printed from ABQjournal.com, a service of the Albuquerque Journal

URL: http://www.abqjournal.com/north/300815north_news04-16-08.htm

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Cleanup Likely to Fall Behind

By Raam Wong
Journal Staff Writer

Los Alamos National Laboratory is unlikely to stay on schedule with an environmental cleanup agreement with the state, according to a federal report released Tuesday.

Federal budget shortfalls and delays in the shipment of hazardous waste from Los Alamos will likely hamper U.S. Department of Energy efforts to carry out the cleanup agreement, or consent order, according to the report.

The delays "may increase the risk of employee and public exposure to contaminants," states the audit by the DOE's Inspector General.

The agreement was reached between DOE, Los Alamos and the state Environment Department in 2005. It calls for the identification and cleanup of decades of hazardous waste over the lab's 40-square-mile property by 2015.

But funding has been a major concern since the agreement was signed and the state has already fined the lab $750,000 for violating the order.

Projected shortfalls for cleanup will peak at a cumulative $236 million, which does not include an additional $947 million for "unfunded contingencies," the report states.

DOE spokeswoman Joann Wardrip said parts of the cleanup agreement may need to be renegotiated now that the agency has a better handle on the cost and scope of cleanup.

"Our ultimate goal is to complete the cleanup," Wardrip said.

State Environment Secretary Ron Curry said in a statement that DOE appeared to be engaging in "wishful thinking" if it believed projects could be reprioritized.

"The state of New Mexico will not renegotiate the Consent Order," Curry said.

DOE met 54 of the agreement's 56 milestones in fiscal year 2007 but has acknowledged falling behind in 2008, according to the report.

The audit focused on two major waste disposal sites. Area L was used for nearly 25 years to deposit drums of nonradioactive liquid waste in deep underground shafts, while Area G is the lab's largest disposal site.

Decontamination and decomissioning of dozens of structures in the two areas did not begin in 2007 as planned, according to the audit, while delays have hampered the removal of high-activity transuranic waste from Area G.

Absent a "dramatic change in approach," the audit found DOE is unlikely to fulfill the agreement's requirement that remediation of areas L and G be completed by 2011 and 2015 respectively.

The audit also found DOE failed to fully identify its cleanup funding needs until November 2007 and that major budgetary shortfalls are likely in the years to come.

Greg Mello of the anti-weapons Los Alamos Study Group, said these sorts of problems were expected because the cleanup agreement was front-loaded with costly investigatory work that had little bearing cleanup solutions.

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said the report highlighted DOE's budget woes.

"I believe it is vital that the (National Nuclear Security Administration) begin immediate work with the state of New Mexico to prioritize the projects that pose the most immediate risks," Domenici said in a statement.

DOE officials have said the Bush administration's 2009 budget proposal for cleanup at LANL is about $100 million short of what's needed to meet the year's milestones.

All content copyright © ABQJournal.com and Albuquerque Journal and may not be republished without permission. Requests for permission to republish, or to copy and distribute must be obtained at the the Albuquerque Publishing Co. Library, 505-823-3492.

Back to story page

SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN.com

My view: Focus on food security, not military dominance

By Willem Malten |

4/27/2008

What we are seeing is the confluence of different but related crises: peak oil and peak food, both of which are exacerbated by global warming — the overarching crisis that humanity is facing. Whereas people are increasingly aware that we are just past the point of peak oil, most people don't know that we passed "peak food" 10 years ago. At that point in time, there was the largest surplus of grain stock available in the world, but since that time reserves have been dropping. Grain storage now is at the 1947-1948 level.

The sense that global food stocks are running low because of scarcity has only recently become an issue of wider concern — not just to the poor and starving nations, but even in the U.S. there should be an acute sense of imminent collapse of the food system without alternatives being in place. Twenty -eight million people on food stamps sounds like a very loud alarm.

A weak dollar continues to increase the exports of farm commodities, including wheat, dramatically, and make the wheat increasingly unaffordable for the internal American market. This hollowing out of the food and grain supply is further exhausted by the production of subsidized bio-fuels from food crops, one of the dumbest "green solutions" ever.

Many have recently identified the housing crisis as the main reason for a failing economy. But the real causes lie much deeper. They are rooted in the fact that neo-con capitalism has chosen resource war as its main economic vehicle and legitimacy. The puppets at the top are there solely to perpetuate a state of disinformation, secrecy, denial, betrayal and brutality (such as threats of torture and imprisonment) in order to hide and legitimize corrupt cronyism that robs resources from everything in sight and turns them into war diplomacy: bullies and bullets. An old saying says: "The warring nation becomes infertile."

Lies, torture, militarism, criminal leadership, corruption — they all carry a price in credibility that is eventually felt in the wealth of a nation and ultimately in the pockets of increasingly disenfranchised masses. Models suggest that once past peak oil, the available supplies of oil may drop off by as much as 6 percent each year; geopolitical interests shift because of the acute sense of scarcity. If fuel competes with food, it is time to invest all our last resources into food security rather than military dominance or empire. The ultimate nightmare for the United States is a dollar collapse. After all, the dollar represents the value of our credibility, and that is what is dropping. The true reason behind our economic crisis is in this crisis of values. We've bet on protracted war as an economic vehicle far too long.

The problem with such an escalation of folly is in its logical conclusion: having, promoting and eventually using a nuclear arsenal to secure energy resources. The renewed pressure to develop a pit-production facility in Los Alamos is an example of where the true intent of the U.S. lies. Imagine if

the Iranians in this day and age would develop a factory for 50 to 80 pits per year. How would we feel ?

Despite lip service to being "green," New Mexico's congressional representatives are not working to actively create economic alternatives to the nuclear destiny of New Mexico: Ultimately, they bet on reprocessing nuclear weapons, nuclear-waste disposal, military spaceports, nuclear-weapon design and storage to secure the main federal income stream for New Mexico. They could easily stop the new nuclear-pit factory, but they won't. So, that is what they really stand for regardless of what they say.

What we have to realize about "green" is that it includes a social dimension — from now on we need to critically evaluate all policies against one looming reality: How will this policy impact and affect the poor? The technology we would need to invest in creates jobs and opportunity, lifts people into meaningful work, promotes environmental remediation and a sense of common destiny and justice. That is the social dimension of "green," and it is incompatible with the warring war economy.

Social activist Willem Malten lives in Santa Fe, where he manages Cloud Cliff Bakery.

MAY 2, 2008

One minute to midnight

Greg Mello, Los Alamos Study Group

We have entered an era of global crises that have neither obvious ends nor easy solutions. These crises are not something that might happen in the future. They are present now and are growing in severity and import week by week.

These emergencies are plowing up prospects for "business as usual" outcomes in every field, including international security. In addition to the usual and predictable litanies of woe about nuclear proliferation, failure to disarm and so on, frightening and powerful realities—such as large-scale famine—are here now. The hoary assumptions, hesitations, complacencies, and gradualist priorities that states and NGOs alike have brought to nuclear diplomacy must be reexamined. We need to discard many of these assumptions or our efforts are going to end up being irrelevant and overtaken by events. History is speeding up.

Disarmament advocates can and must take heart even in the face of these events, most of which will be tragic. Humanity's unprecedented crises make our work more imperative, meaningful—and yes, much more politically salient than ever. The turbulence of the times brings opportunities, provided we have the wisdom to see them and the gumption to seize them. And seize them now we must.

What are these emergencies? Here are four of them.

A long-expected crisis in the availability and price of grains, threatening starvation for millions of people, is now upon us. In the absence of rapid and effective new policies, very large numbers of people may be priced out of existence. At present there is little to stop famine from growing more widespread and pronounced, affecting literally hundreds of millions of people. Effective policies are available but so far we only hear of stopgap measures.

In the case of U.S. and European biofuel policies, terrible damage is being done. Prices communicate very quickly and compound with other market stresses, predictable and otherwise (weather, disease). Policies that convert billions of bushels of grain, other foods, and megatons of palm oil into fuel can kill more people, more quickly, than U.S. policymakers (to pick an especially benighted group) can imagine.

Second, petroleum production has been flat for the past three years and will begin its inexorable decline very soon, very likely within the next half decade. Exports (and therefore imports) will decline farther and faster than production as exporting states husband their resources and use more domestically. Prices are rising and will keep on rising. Supplies are now unreliable in many places and this will become more common, with dramatic consequences.

In North America, home of the current military hyperpower and would-be global hegemon, natural gas production is also dropping, masked for the time being by a steep decline in total industrial use. Prices are likely to rise, and shortages appear, far more suddenly than is the case with oil.

The economic, social, and political consequences of "peak oil" are starting to ramify through our economies. Their full impact is difficult to overstate. Obviously access to fuel is a potent cause of conflict within and between states. We do not have a lot of time to prevent this. Neither do we have a lot of time to sufficiently stigmatize nuclear weapons, and sufficiently damage nuclear weapons enterprises, so that nuclear war is taken "off the table" as a war planning option.

Third, the world's climate has degraded past major tipping points and could pass an apocalyptic "point of no return" in just a few years if immediate and drastic action isn't taken. Global environmental security is not just threatened. It's been lost and must be regained, not only by reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also by active removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. The hour is very late.

Fourth, the crisis in global finance exported from America, and inextricable from these other crises, is much more than any cyclical adjustment. It is a global crisis of capitalism in which the very survival of civilization, billions of people, and most species, are at stake. In the U.S., the primary alternative to a "soft landing" seems to be accelerating economic and social decline accompanied by unpleasant political transformations and horrific foreign policies. The total U.S. debt, public and private, now exceeds $50 trillion, making the United States a very dangerous country. It must be externally restrained; the prospects for internal democratic restraint are in grave jeopardy.

Disarmament advocates seldom if ever have had less time to act than today. In this context, a nuclear gradualism that leaves the basic legitimacy and ideas of nuclear militarism unquestioned (such as nuclear "deterrence," so-called) does not serve us well.

Yet in the U.S., the business of arms control continues more or less unchanged—much as if the Cold War never ended. Nuclear deterrence is discussed not only as if it were real but as if it were good. We know that the assumptions of stability, control, predictability, and an all-defining single conflict that is primarily ideological in character, all of which help form the foundations of arms control as we know it, are false. We have not yet changed what we are doing to match these realities. All too often we are still fighting the struggles of 10, 20, and 30 years ago.

Still more insidious are assumptions of stability in our personal lives and careers. There is, in nearly all professional discourse, a deep-seated aversion to taking risks that could end one's privileged and seemingly-empowered position. So people go along to get along. In the U.S., arms control is a largely-bureaucratic endeavor, and its mores and priorities also influence NGOs in many other countries. It is not the nuclear belligerency of the Bush administration (or the next administration) that is our central problem. It is our own lack of opposition.

Perhaps we need to examine whether more vague, aspirational platitudes endorsed by celebrities of various kinds (diplomats, scientists, etc.) will get us anywhere. I don't know about other countries but here in the U.S. they have little or no value, either in actual policy forums or for organizing in civil society. We've done that work and done it well.

What's missing is specificity. Global civil society is four-square with us already—we could hardly have more support. What has been lacking is true leadership on our part, leadership of the kind willing to call a spade a damn shovel, to do so in the places that actually matter and in a manner that will inform and awaken consciences. Generally speaking this can only be done by a conscious sacrifice of status and prestige.

continued on next page

One minute to midnight (cont.)

For one thing we need to get out of the United Nations and go to the nuclear labs and plants. Talk directly to the workers there. Because the healthy human conscience cries out against mass slaughter, and against the threat of mass slaughter, the transmission of nuclear weapons ideology from year to year, from manager to worker, and from generation to generation is fragile and deeply problematic. It is very sensitive to rhetoric, intervention, and of course to the direction of funding. The PrepCom is very important, but when it's over we need to bring our concerns directly to the labs and plants just as Gandhi went to the mills of Lancashire. Very few of the people at the American nuclear labs and plants actually want to make weapons of mass destruction. They want good jobs, of course. Congress could help provide those jobs, but their elected representatives find it simpler and easier to speak for laboratory management. We can help them. The U.S. nuclear weapons program of today is primarily a jobs program.

We needn't linger over victories that are in essence already won, such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). In the U.S., enormous hand-wringing continues over whether the U.S. will always be able to "certify" its nuclear arsenal (as if that were an appropriate goal) and ratify the CTBT. A host of issues are related to these. This swamp of issues, seemingly unresolved, is the primary breeding ground for pestilential ideas like the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) and so many others. For example, a possible "master deal" is under development in some circles that would advance the RRW, CTBT ratification, the construction of new weapons factories and more, together.

These issues are "unresolved," and such deals attractive, only because we allow them to be. There are no technical obstacles, only political ones.

In this regard we need to consider whether the U.S. will ever conduct another nuclear test under any circumstances whatsoever. Think about it. Nuclear testing is deeply contrary to U.S. interests and almost everyone whose opinion matters understands this. What's missing, again, is firm opposition—and a willingness to have a debate in the glare of domestic and international opinion. The "threat" of nuclear testing is a political bluff that should be straightforwardly called, even ridiculed, at every occasion—not assigned to panels of interest-conflicted scientists for more secret study. This bluff can be called in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) context as well as in Congress. Doing so is the fastest, surest path to CTBT ratification.

A great deal of fine work has been done by NGOs and diplomats within the NPT framework. Our greatest technical, legal, and diplomatic expertise relating to nuclear weapons and related issues can be found in these circles. How can these talents, and centuries of combined experience, find the most traction?

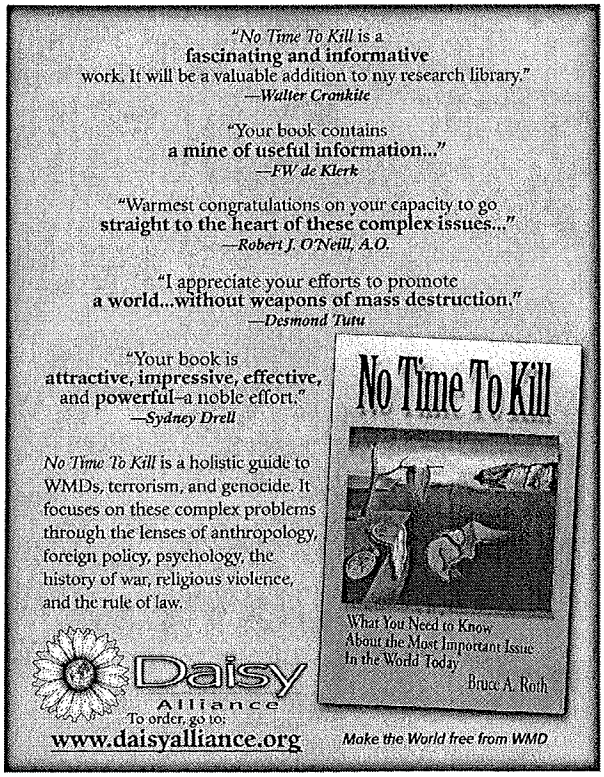
I think a clue lays in the potential interplay between specific domestic nuclear decisions and international actors in highly-intrusive forums, which in the U.S. at least we have not had. Why not? Why is the U.S. in particular, and most other nuclear weapon states as well, virtually free from the detailed analyses, site visits, and examinations foisted upon states defined as potential proliferators? Hypothetical future nuclear weapons of a decade from now are indeed a proper concern, but what about the real weapons of today and tomorrow?

The NPT's disarmament requirement famously lacks detail and implementing institutions. International civil society can and should provide that. With near-total international popular, as well as legal, stigmatization of nuclear weapons, very productive efforts could be made with no further legal or diplomatic basis. •

Abolition 2000-Europe General Assembly
Friday, 2 May 2008, 3:00-5:00 pm
NGO Room, United Nation, Geneva

Agenda:
1- News of the network
2- Abolition 2000-Europe and PNND
3- Abolition 2000-Europe and BANg
4- Abolition 2000-Europe and the World Court Project
5- Meeting at the EU parliament, July 1st 2008
6- project of campaign on the NWC in the EU
7- update secretariat organisation
8- odds and ends

Contact person: Dominique Lalanne
Email: lalanne@lal.in2p3.fr
Website: www.abolition2000europe.org



LANL Lab Price Tag Hits $2.6B

Cost Is 4 Times Original Estimate

By John Fleck 5/16/08
Journal Staff Writer

The estimated cost of a proposed new nuclear materials lab at Los Alamos National Laboratory has ballooned to $2.6 billion, according to a Senate report, up from the most recent estimate of $2 billion published by the Bush administration in February.

The new price tag is more than four times the initial estimate when Los Alamos and the National Nuclear Security Administration first proposed the project in 2003.

The new number was included in the Senate Armed Services Committee's report on the fiscal year 2009 budget. The committee recommends cutting funding for the project, in large part because of uncertainty of what it will cost to meet safety requirements for the project.

A Los Alamos spokesman said that lab officials are still working on the proposed building's design and that any firm cost estimates at this point are premature. There is still significant uncertainty about the scale of the project, which makes such estimates premature, spokesman Kevin Roark said Thursday.

Los Alamos officials insist the project is vital to the lab's future. It would do the scientific analysis for the lab's future nuclear weapons manufacturing work, as well as work related to nuclear power and nuclear nonproliferation, they say.

Critics of the lab and the U.S. nuclear weapons program have made fighting the project one of the centerpieces of their agenda, saying the project is unneeded.

The new laboratory building at Los Alamos, called the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building Replacement, would supplant an aging building at the lab where scientists analyze samples of plutonium and other radioactive materials.

Escalating costs have plagued efforts to replace the old complex. When the project was first proposed in its current form in 2003, it carried a price tag of $500 million. A year ago, NNSA Administrator Tom D'Agostino told members of Congress he was concerned about the project's rising costs. At the time, the price tag was $1.5 billion.

The committee's action to oppose funding for the new lab is the first of four key congressional committee votes the next four months that will determine the fate of the project.

JUNE 2, 2008

Print this article

GAO: Pit plans in flux

By ROGER SNODGRASS, Monitor Editor

A Government Accountability Office report found discrepancies between shifting plans and subsequent expenses in the National Nuclear Security Administration's effort to reestablish a national capability for pit manufacturing. GAO said pit production at Los Alamos National Laboratory was a positive step.

"However, NNSA's long-term strategy for the pit manufacturing mission, and its attendant cost and schedule, is in a state of flux," the report concluded.

The capability to make the first-stage plutonium detonation devices, known as pits, for nuclear weapons was lost when the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado ceased operations while working on line of pits for the W88 warhead in 1989.

In 1996, the Department of Energy designated Los Alamos National Laboratory as the interim pit manufacturing facility, capable of making 10 pits a year and up to 50 pits per year by 2005. The GAO report, released Monday, noted that, LANL pits were to be made under the restrictions of a nuclear testing moratorium that has been in effect since 1992, unlike pits made at Rocky Flats, which were tested.

The initial plans for the LANL project were redefined, according to NNSA officials interviewed by GAO, to establish a capability to produce 10 pits per year by 2007, a goal that NNSA said LANL has exceeded by manufacturing 11 pits during fiscal year 2007. NNSA also maintains that the costs were about $260 million under one of their earlier estimates.

An NNSA spokesperson said by e-mail Monday that the agency is proud to have met an "extraordinary challenge."

John Broehm in the NNSA public affairs office said, "It cost what we said it would cost, but we actually certified the first replacement pit about three or four months ahead of when we said."

But GAO said that NNSA has changed its requirements over time and only recently established a final definition of what was required. Further, they found, NNSA's explanations are partially based on plans related to a Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) concept that has not been fully supported by Congress and a "complex transformation" plan for reducing the size of the nuclear weapons complex that has not been finalized.

The GAO report, released Monday, found more than $1 billion in expenses for related activities, including scientific experiments, security and facility operations and maintenance between 2001 and 2007 that were not included in NNSA's cost estimates.

A spokesman for the laboratory referred all questions on the report to NNSA. But the report quotes indirectly from "one LANL official " who said the laboratory expects next year to provide a more representative allocation of the cost distribution across the various programs that share the pit production infrastructure at the laboratory.

"This GAO report is helping provide a true accounting of the costs associated with pit maintenance. It will be useful in future debates on funding levels," U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said in a prepared statement.

Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M. said that questions about the pit program influenced the recently passed Defense Authorization legislation, which did not pass the president's funding request for the RRW.

"A comprehensive understanding of this program must be gained before any decisions are made for the future," Udall said in a prepared statement.

The GAO report also noted three major constraints on pit manufacturing operations at LANL.

• The current Chemistry and Metallurgy Research building has major limitations due to aging and seismic vulnerabilities;

• LANL's storage capacity for pits and associated waste is in short supply; and

• LANL's main nuclear facility lacks space for efficient expansion.

Looking to the future, the authors of the report wrote, "...(W)e continue to believe that in order for NNSA to be able to successfully mange future pit manufacturing missions, such as those proposed in NNSA's Complex Transformation documents, it will need a cost baseline that accounts for all costs, including an appropriate portion of necessary support costs, as well as clear, well-defined production goals,"

"The report came out just before House and Senate appropriators take up the NNSA budget," said Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a laboratory watchdog. He noted that the chairman and ranking member of the House appropriation subcommittee for energy and water requested the GAO study. "It's sure to play a role," Mello said.

The investigation was conducted between April 2007 and May 2008.

Copyright www.lamonitor.com. All rights reserved.

Print this article | Close this print window

183 of 1000 DOCUMENTS

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

June 3, 2008 Tuesday

REPORT: PIT PLANS LACK CONSISTENCY

BYLINE: SUE VORENBERG

SECTION: LOCAL NEWS; Pg. C-1

LENGTH: 724 words

LANL

GAO criticizes NNSA's paperwork over nuclear bomb core production

Plans: GAO urges cost, schedule baseline

It's good to have a solid plan when you're working with billion-dollar budgets and dangerous radioactive materials.

But a new report by the Government Accountability Office suggests the National Nuclear Security Agency's plans for the production of nuclear bomb cores, called pits, at Los Alamos National Laboratory have been sketchy. The report says the agency has mixed pit-production costs with the costs of other programs, with the net effect being a lack of "clear, consistent goals."

In 2002, NNSA told the lab to be able to make 10 pits per year, including one "war reserve pit," for a Navy sub by 2007. NNSA estimated the cost for that work at about $1.55 billion.

In 2007, the lab delivered 11 pits, including eight Navy war reserve pits, and the cost of the entire project came in at about $260 million less than the original estimate, according to NNSA.

But there's a catch, according to the GAO.

"NNSA's cost baseline did not include almost $300 million in costs for a number of activities, such as conducting plutonium experiments to certify LANL-produced pits, which were directly associated with the pit manufacturing and certification," said the report, written by GAO Director Gene Aloise.

NNSA Associate Administrator for Management and Administration Michael Kane, in his response to the report, said the costs weren't included "because those facilities (used in pit production) and their capabilities were required to address other program requirements, regardless of the presence of the project."

Because facilities at the lab are used for a variety of projects, not just pit production, the costs of the work were already covered, he said.

"No additional funds were required to expand those facilities to meet the objectives of the pit manufacturing and certification project," Kane said in his reply.

The report also found that NNSA's plans to expand production at the lab to up to 80 pits a year will probably be held back because of limitations at the current building used to make them, called the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research, or CMR building, which was constructed in the early 1950s and isn't equipped to handle large amounts of plutonium.

That building is used not only to make pits but for a variety of other operations at the lab.

Plans for production will also be held back because of limited storage space for pits and pit waste, and because a solid timeline and cost estimate doesn't exist for NNSA's planned replacement facility for the CMR, called the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement building, or CMRR, the report said.

"NNSA has not established a reliable cost and schedule baseline to support its projected efforts," the report said. "Using the best available data, we estimate that NNSA's plans would entail spending about $1.5 billion over the next 5 years to continue funding activities associated with the Pit Manufacturing and Certification campaign and up to $500 million to install a second pit manufacturing line."

GAO also identified another $4 billion that NNSA is planning to spend on support for pit production, including the CMRR, which is "the largest single cost."

"While NNSA has not established a cost and schedule baseline for the construction of this facility, NNSA estimated in its

fiscal year 2009 budget request that this project could cost over $2 billion," the report said.

And all that has Greg Mello, executive director of the **Los Alamos Study Group**, wondering why NNSA wants to build all these pits in the first place.

"What leaps out of these pages is great uncertainty among senior officials about pit production," Mello said. "There are no clear answers as to when NNSA believes production should occur, how many pits NNSA believes are needed -- let alone how many pits DOD (Department of Defense) has tasked NNSA to make, if any -- what kinds of pits are 'needed,' and what all this may cost."

The GAO report recommended NNSA establish a cost and schedule baseline for future pit manufacturing.

NNSA didn't comment to GAO on the recommendations, but explained that costs for pit manufacturing are often associated with support facilities used in other programs, and so they often fall in other budget areas.

Contact Sue Vorenberg at 986-3072 or

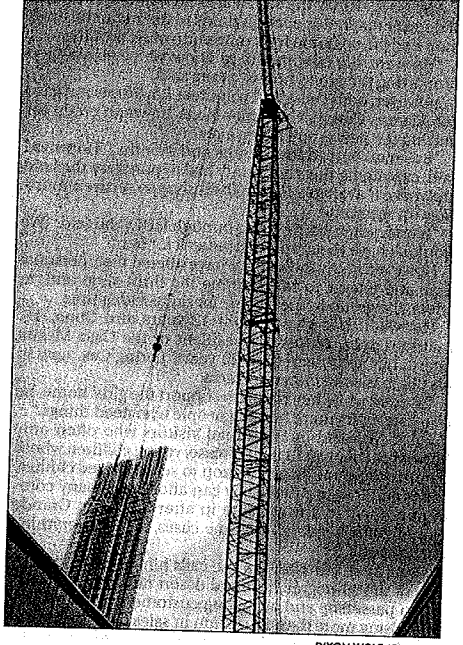
svorenberg@sfnewmexican.com

LOAD-DATE: June 3, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2008 The New Mexican



DIXON WOLF/Courtesy

UNDER CONSTRUCTION A crane swings a rebar structure into place at the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement building in a recent photo from Technical Area 55 at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

GAO: Pit plans in flux

ROGER SNODGRASS
roger@lamonitor.com
Monitor Editor

6/5/08

A Government Accountability Office report found discrepancies between shifting plans and subsequent expenses in the National Nuclear Security Administration's effort to reestablish a national capability for pit manufacturing. GAO said pit production at Los Alamos National Laboratory was a positive step.

"However, NNSA's long-term strategy for the pit manufacturing mission, and its attendant cost and schedule, is in a state of flux," the report concluded.

The capability to make the first-stage plutonium detonation devices, known as pits, for nuclear weapons was lost when the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado ceased operations while working on line of pits for the W88 warhead in 1989.

In 1996, the Department of Energy designated Los Alamos National Laboratory as the interim pit manufacturing facility, capable of making 10 pits a year and up to 50 pits per year by 2005. The GAO report, released Monday, noted that, LANL pits were to be made under the restrictions of a nuclear testing moratorium that has been in effect since 1992, unlike pits made at Rocky Flats, which were tested.

The initial plans for the LANL project were redefined, according to NNSA officials interviewed by GAO, to establish a capability to produce 10 pits per year by 2007, a goal that NNSA said LANL has exceeded by manufacturing 11 pits during fiscal year 2007. NNSA also maintains that the costs were about $260 million under one of their earlier estimates.

An NNSA spokesperson said by e-mail Monday that the agency is proud to have met an "extraordinary challenge."

John Broehm in the NNSA public affairs office said, "It cost what we said it would cost, but we actually certified the first replacement pit about three or four months ahead of when we said."

But GAO said that NNSA

See **PIT PLANS**, *5*

PIT PLANS

From Page 1

has changed its requirements over time and only recently established a final definition of what was required. Further, they found, NNSA's explanations are partially based on plans related to a Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) concept that has not been fully supported by Congress and a "complex transformation" plan for reducing the size of the nuclear weapons complex that has not been finalized.

The GAO report, released Monday, found more than $1 billion in expenses for related activities, including scientific experiments, security and facility operations and maintenance between 2001 and 2007 that were not included in NNSA's cost estimates.

A spokesman for the laboratory referred all questions on the report to NNSA. But the report quotes indirectly from "one LANL official " who said the laboratory expects next year to provide a more representative allocation of the cost distribution across the various programs that share the pit production infrastructure at the laboratory.

"This GAO report is helping provide a true accounting of the costs associated with pit maintenance. It will be useful in future debates on funding levels," U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said in a prepared state-

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

June 13, 2008 Friday

HEALTH AND SCIENCE - IN BRIEF

BYLINE: THE NEW MEXICAN

SECTION: HEALTH/SCIENCE; Pg. D-2

LENGTH: 392 words

Collaborative seeks public input

The New Mexico Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative is collecting public input on a draft request for proposals for the next behavioral-health services contractor.

The request for proposals details what the collaborative is looking for in a contractor as the state continues to work toward improving and streamlining its behavioral-health system.

The group will hold a public meeting today from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Albuquerque at The University of New Mexico Student Union Building.

It will hold a tribal consultation Saturday on the subject from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque.

Those who cannot attend can submit written comments by e-mailing bhcollaborative@state.nm.us or by mail to P.O. Box 2348, Santa Fe, NM 87504, attn: Angel Roybal.

UNM professor selected as fellow

The Hedwig van Amerigen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine Program has awarded a fellowship to Leslie A. Morrison, a University of New Mexico School of Medicine professor.

Morrison and 47 other women representing 46 medical, dental and public health institutions make up the 14th class of fellows in the program.

The program, part of the Institute for Women's Health and Leadership at Drexel University College of Medicine, is designed to prepare senior women faculty members to move into positions of leadership.

Fellows get training similar to traditional MBA programs to enhance and develop their skills in personal and professional leadership, career advancement, communication, and the use of new information and learning technologies.

Morrison is a professor of neurology and pediatrics at UNM, and is vice chairwoman of the Department of Neurology.

UNM hosts nuclear lecture series

The University of New Mexico Law School will host two public lectures on nuclear-related topics later this month.

On June 18, from 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m., Peter Neils from the **Los Alamos Study Group** will present "Nuclear power: Too cheap to meter or too costly to matter?"

And on June 25, from

11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m., Michael Spies, an arms-control reporter, will present a lecture tentatively titled "Overview of recent international developments in nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament."

The lectures will be held at the Law School, on Stanford Drive N.E. near Tucker Avenue.

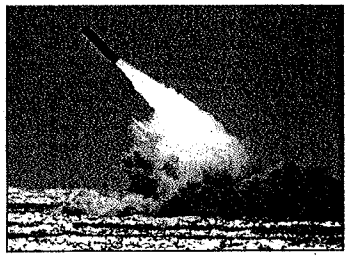
Call the **Los Alamos Study Group** at 265-1200.

LOAD-DATE: June 14, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2008 The New Mexican



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The warhead atop the Navy's Trident missile, seen here in a 1989 test launch, is obsolete, according to a congressional committee.

LANL Funds May Be Sliced

House Committee Wants Nuke Production Halted

Copyright © 2008 Albuquerque Journal

By John Fleck
And Michael Coleman
Journal Staff Writers

6/25/08

The nuclear warhead at the heart of Los Alamos National Laboratory's current plutonium manufacturing program is an "obsolete" Cold War relic and the program should be shut down, a House spending committee has concluded.

Federal officials gathered at Los Alamos last summer to celebrate the successful manufacture of a plutonium core for the W88 warhead, which is carried aboard U.S. nuclear submarines. The celebration marked the culmination of a $1.29 billion effort that began in 2001.

But the House committee that oversees the U.S. nuclear weapons budget said in a report last week that the weapon "serves obsolete Cold War concepts rather than current or future needs," according to a copy of the committee's report obtained by the **Journal**.

The report recommending a halt to production of new W88 parts at Los Alamos is part of a spending bill by House appropriators that would put the brakes on U.S. nuclear weapons research, development and manufacturing.

Los Alamos received $1.4 billion for nuclear weapons work this year. It is not yet clear how that would change under the House spending bill, but the cuts in plutonium manufacturing alone could cut $100 million or more from that

See **COMMITTEE** *on* **PAGE A6**

Committee Calls LANL Warhead Obsolete

from **PAGE A1**

number.

The spending bill will be made public today at a meeting of the House Appropriations Committee.

The Senate must also weigh in before a final spending plan is developed. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., a traditional lab defender, sits on the key spending committee in that chamber.

"This is early in the game," said John Broehm, a spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration.

Broehm said his agency is "concerned."

"This budget would have a significant effect on jobs, and would also have a huge impact on NNSA's ability to maintain the safety and security of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile," he said.

A Los Alamos spokesman declined detailed comment on the spending bill, issuing a statement saying: "The Laboratory will work closely with Congress, particularly the New Mexico delegation, and the NNSA to sort through next year's challenges. Clearly though, it will be many months before any final budget scenario is solidified."

The bill poses a dilemma for Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., who represents Los Alamos and is running for the Senate seat being vacated by the retiring Domenici.

Udall, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, told the **Journal** last week that he "would be inclined to vote against" the nuclear weapons budget cuts proposed by the subcommittee, but at that time he also said he hadn't had a chance to review the budget in depth.

On Tuesday, the congressman's press aide, Sam Simon, said Udall was not available for additional questions in advance of today's hearing. Udall is running against Rep. Steve Pearce, R-N.M., for the Senate seat. Pearce has criticized Udall for voting against a lab budget bill last summer, but anti-nuclear activists are also likely to criticize Udall if he votes for the budget today.

The proposed Los Alamos cuts are at the heart of a broad effort by the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee to stop major new nuclear weapons initiatives until the next presidential administration has a chance to review U.S. nuclear weapons policy.

The review is needed to determine the role of nuclear weapons in the United States' post-Cold War defense policy. Until it's completed, it is impossible to know how many nuclear weapons are needed and what sort of complex of labs and factories are required to maintain them, the committee's report concluded.

The W88, according to the committee's report, is a Cold War warhead designed to have the maximum explosive power in the smallest possible package. Designed in the 1980s at Los Alamos, the W88 is believed to have about 30 times the destructive power of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in World War II.

Los Alamos took on the job in the late 1990s to make replacements for W88 pits that are routinely removed from the nuclear arsenal to be tested for defects.

After years of preparation, the work culminated with the production of the first stockpile-quality pits last year. But critics question why more W88s are needed.

"The W88 is a high-yield Cold War weapon," said Greg Mello of the Los Alamos study group, an Albuquerque-based organization opposed to nuclear weapons. "By any measure, we have a surfeit of such weapons."

The spending proposal being considered today also cuts funding for the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building Replacement, a billion-dollar lab for analysis of plutonium samples. The lab is a centerpiece of the National Nuclear Security Administration's future plans to expand plutonium manufacturing at Los Alamos.

The House spending proposal also cuts all funding for the proposed new Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility, an $87.5 million project to replace an aging treatment plant at Los Alamos that has caused problems in recent years because of its inability to process the lab's waste.

Panel OKs Cuts At LANL

Udall Votes Against Measure To Cancel Warhead Production

Copyright © Albuquerque Journal 2008

By Michael Coleman and John Fleck
Journal Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — House appropriators voted Wednesday to shut down a billion-dollar plutonium manufacturing program at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Rep. Tom Udall voted against the bill, and Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., fiercely criticized the House measure.

Udall, a New Mexico Democrat who represents the lab and sits on the House Appropriations Committee, issued a lengthy statement explaining his vote, but he refused to take questions from a **Journal** reporter at the hearing.

The lab money is included in a $33.3 billion spending bill covering energy, nuclear weapons and water projects.

The Appropriations Committee agreed that the W88 nuclear warhead, a weapon at the heart of LANL's plutonium manufacturing program, is an "obsolete" Cold War relic and should be canceled. The warhead is carried on U.S. submarines.

"Although this legislation contains many good provisions, it does not provide a path to the future for our national laboratories, and I could not support it," Udall's statement said. "This bill not only cuts critical programs that are essential to the strength of our labs and the security of our nation, it rescinds funding that LANL and Sandia (National Laboratories) have already been promised and have budgeted for the current fiscal year."

See **PANEL** *on* **PAGE A2**

Panel OKs LANL Cuts

from **PAGE A1**

good provisions, it does not provide a path to the future for our national laboratories, and I could not support it," Udall's statement said. "This bill not only cuts critical programs that are essential to the strength of our labs and the security of our nation, it rescinds funding that LANL and Sandia (National Laboratories) have already been promised and have budgeted for the current fiscal year."

Udall's statement did not directly address W88 pit production at Los Alamos. Sam Simon, Udall's spokesman in Washington, said: "I don't have a statement for you on that."

The congressman's vote was under scrutiny Wednesday from anti-nuclear and pro-laboratory advocates because he supported LANL funding cuts last year, saying the lab needed to move away from nuclear weapons and into new scientific endeavors, especially alternative energy, before he tried to restore some of the money.

Udall is running for the U.S. Senate and faces Rep. Steve Pearce, R-N.M., in the November election for the seat Domenici will vacate in January. Domenici, a Republican and longtime Senate appropriator, has long been viewed as the chief congressional protector of New Mexico's two national laboratories and their approximately 10,000 employees.

According to Domenici's office, the House spending bill could cut $300 million from the Los Alamos National Laboratory budget, costing 2,000 or more jobs.

The bill would slash $60 million from Sandia National Laboratories' $953 million nuclear weapons budget, according to Domenici. Los Alamos received $1.4 billion for nuclear weapons work this year.

"I vehemently disagree with the tack the House has again taken to significantly cut the weapons programs at the national labs, particularly Los Alamos," Domenici said in a statement late Wednesday. "I believe the cuts outlined in this bill are shortsighted and problematic to our national security and nonproliferation goals."

UDALL: Says bill would cut promised funding

DOMENICI: Says bill is "problematic to security"

Rep. Pete Visclosky, an Indiana Democrat who heads the House subcommittee that holds the labs' purse strings, did not comment directly Wednesday on funding for New Mexico's labs. But he said the Department of Energy, which has jurisdiction over the labs, has "very abysmal project management."

"It is the committee's No. 1 organizational concern at the department," Visclosky said.

Democrats, who control the House and Senate, have signaled they want to spend less on developing nuclear weapons and more on cleaning up nuclear waste and preventing the spread of existing weapons around the globe.

Nuclear weapons opponents cheered the House committee's decision and criticized Udall for voting against it.

"If Mr. Udall really wants LANL to change, he has to vote for it when he has the chance, not just express a vague hope that such-and-such will happen in the future," said Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group. "Udall's lack of support for today's bill signals a disconnect between his actions in Congress and the impression he has left with many constituents."

Domenici has said he will try to restore money.

"This bill is worse than the status quo," Domenici said Wednesday.

"Pit production is necessary, and I do not know of a single acceptable argument for the United States abandoning its production capacity.

"No other nation in the world with nuclear capabilities is standing still, which is exactly what this bill would accomplish for us."

The W88, according to the committee's report, is a Cold War warhead designed to have the maximum explosive power in the smallest possible package.

Designed in the 1980s at Los Alamos, the W88 is believed to have about 30 times the destructive power of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in World War II.

Los Alamos took on the job in the late 1990s to make replacements for W88 pits that are routinely removed from the nuclear arsenal to be tested for defects. After years of preparation, the work culminated with the production of the first stockpile-quality pits last year.

Critics question why more W88s are needed.

The spending proposal being considered today also cuts funding for the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building Replacement (CMRR), a billion-dollar lab for analysis of plutonium samples.

The lab is a centerpiece of the National Nuclear Security Administration's future plans to expand plutonium manufacturing at Los Alamos.

Simon, Udall's spokesman, said the congressman does not support nixing the CMRR initiative.

"The lab cannot be left with inadequate facilities," Simon said in an e-mail. "There are serious cost overruns and concerns about the CMRR project, but simply zeroing out its funding at the lab is not a strategy."

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

June 26, 2008 Thursday
Correction Appended

UDALL CASTS ONLY VOTE AGAINST CUTS

BYLINE: SUE VORENBERG

SECTION: LOCAL NEWS; Pg. C-1

LENGTH: 822 words

LANL

Congressman vying for U.S. Senate seat says bill has 'no path to the future' for lab

Udall: Pearce accuses Democrat of 'flip-flop'

The House Appropriations Subcommittee passed, almost unanimously, a budget proposal that would cut funding for some nuclear weapons-related activities at Los Alamos National Laboratory in its fiscal 2009 budget.

Only U.S. Rep. Tom Udall, a Northern New Mexico Democrat running for a seat in the U.S. Senate, voted against it Wednesday.

The proposal, which still hasn't reached the floor of the House and Senate, contains several cuts, including a loss of about $100 million for construction projects at LANL.

That cut mostly would affect the lab's Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement project, estimated to cost between $745 million and $975 million by the time it's completed between 2013 and 2017, said Sam Simon, a Udall spokesman.

Construction has already started on the facility, which will replace several aging facilities at Los Alamos focused on nuclear materials research.

The subcommittee proposal would also cut $145.3 million from pit manufacturing efforts at the lab. Pits are the explosive cores of nuclear weapons.

Greg Mello, president of the Los Alamos Study Group, which opposes nuclear weapons, thinks those cuts are a good idea, even if they means lost jobs in Los Alamos.

About 1,000 to 1,500 people would "have to find other work," Mello said. "Some of these cuts would, in the House bill, be partially compensated by increases in other areas. But staff and especially contractor shrinkage at LANL is a very good thing. It's too big."

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., however, said cutting pit production would be a mistake. "This bill is worse than the status quo," Domenici said. "Pit production is necessary, and I do not know of a single acceptable argument for the United States

abandoning its production capacity. No other nation in the world with nuclear capabilities is standing still, which is exactly what this bill would accomplish for us."

The proposal also would ax $150 million across the Department of Energy complex for nuclear non-proliferation related activities, Simon said. "I don't know how much of a cut that would mean for Los Alamos, but obviously it would impact the lab," he said.

In addition, the proposal would cut $79 million across for computer-related activities, including $26 million at Los Alamos at a time when the Roadrunner supercomputer has just arrived at the lab and has broken massive speed barriers, Simon said.

Overall, Udall said the cuts are too deep and hit too many important areas, which, he added, is why he couldn't support the proposal. "Although this legislation contains many good provisions," he said, "it does not provide a path to the future for our national laboratories, and I could not support it."

Rep. Steve Pearce, a New Mexico Republican running against Udall for the Senate seat that Domenici is retiring from, characterized Udall's vote as a political move, especially considering

Udall has voted for legislation in the past that would have meant cuts at the lab.

Udall was heavily criticized last July after he voted for a budget bill that included a

$400 million hit to Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories. Udall defended his vote at that time because he said he wanted the labs to move more toward energy research and science programs.

"Apparently Tom Udall is now willing to walk away from his history of opposing many of the policies he said he believed in the past," Pearce said. "Today's flip-flop on funding cuts to Los Alamos National Labs is just another example of that election year transformation. It is, of course, good to know that he has changed his position and now supports what I have been supporting for many years. But it is shocking to recognize that he voted for the same exact cuts just last year."

Mello also criticized the vote, saying it contradicts Udall's statements that he wants change at the lab.

"I am disappointed in Representative Udall's vote today, against a bill that would halt plutonium warhead core production and stop the expansion of LANL's plutonium factory complex," Mello said. "Thankfully, his vote made no difference."

The proposed budget also slashes all funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead program at Los Alamos. That program is aimed at building a new generation of what lab scientists have said is a more reliable, lower-yield alternative to weapons in the current stockpile.

In a June 17 statement, Energy and Water Chairman Rep. Peter Visclosky, an Indiana Democrat, said the program was "offered in a vacuum and there was no strategy behind it."

The next step in the process is for the Senate to come up with a parallel budget proposal, after which both bills will go to the floor for a vote.

Last year, some similar cuts were proposed in the House for the lab's budget, but many were removed by the time the House and Senate bills reached the floor, Simon said.

LOAD-DATE: September 19, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

CORRECTION-DATE: June 27, 2008

CORRECTION: U.S. Rep. Tom Udall's vote against funding cuts for some nuclear weapons-related activity at Los Alamos National Laboratory was in the House Appropriations Committee. A story on page C-1 of Thursday's edition stated it was in a subcommittee.

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2008 The New Mexican

theguardian
The Guardian (London) - Final Edition

June 26, 2008 Thursday

US removes its nuclear arms from Britain: Exit of 110 gravity bombs ends 54-year presence: Change happened secretly over years, say scientists

BYLINE: Julian Borger, Diplomatic editor

SECTION: GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 12

LENGTH: 715 words

Accurate multiple warhead ballistic missiles have made 'gravity', or freefall, bombs carried in aircraft an anachronism, analysts said Photograph: Clive Poslethwaite

The US has removed its nuclear weapons from Britain, ending a contentious presence spanning more than half a century, a report will say today. According to the study by the Federation of American Scientists, the last 110 American nuclear weapons on UK soil were withdrawn from RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk on the orders of President George Bush.

The report's author, Hans Kristensen, one of the leading experts on Washington's nuclear arsenal, said the move had happened in the past few years, but had only come to light yesterday.

He described the withdrawal of the B-61 "freefall", or "gravity", bombs as part of a general strategic shift since the end of the cold war.

"The northern front is not very relevant any more for these deployments. The US nuclear posture is almost entirely focused on the southern region, in Incirlik (in Turkey) and Aviano (in Italy)."

Movements of the US arsenal are shrouded in secrecy. Kristensen said the first signs the bombs had left Lakenheath emerged in a US airforce document dated January 2007 on nuclear inspections.

The document lists inspections of US nuclear sites, but above an annexe listing emergency drills carried out at the sites, it notes "not applicable to Lakenheath".

Kristensen's report is posted today on tat http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/.

He says the removal of bombs from Lakenheath follows the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Greece in 2001, and that removal of such weapons from two Nato countries in less than a decade undercuts the argument for continuing deployment in other European countries.The removal from Britain would reduce the US arsenal in Europe to about 250.

Once officially declared, it could defuse current tensions with Moscow and possibly trigger matching cuts in the Russian stockpile.

Kristensen said last night: "It's so puzzling why Nato goes about the reduction in total secrecy. Keeping this secret completely undercuts our foreign policy interests."

The FAS was founded in 1945 by former scientists on the Manhattan Project, which produced the first atomic bomb, as a means of spreading information about the dangers posed by the new weapons.

Paul Ingram, the executive director of the British American Security Information Council, said last night: "This is a win-win situation for Nato and disarmament, and for rapprochement with Russia. Nato's future and the transatlantic alliance is tied up with operations in Afghanistan far more than with ageing freefall bombs that have no military relevance."

Greg Mello, the head of a nuclear watchdog the **Los Alamos Study Group** said: "The nuclear weapons themselves don't serve any military purpose. They are mostly about cementing a political bond that ties Europe interests to US interests."

The FAS study is being published a few days after Kristensen published a leaked US air force internal report saying that most European bases where US nuclear weapons were stored had inadequate security. The report, which was ordered after the US air force lost track of six nuclear cruise missiles last August, found that "support buildings, fencing, lighting and security systems" were in need of repair.

In some cases, conscripts with less than nine months' experience were being used to guard the nuclear weapons. Elsewhere private security guards were used.

The report recommends that the US nuclear arsenal in Europe be consolidated to "reduce vulnerabilities". That would involve the withdrawal of significant numbers of US nuclear weapons.

Timeline

Jan 1954 First US nuclear bombs arrive at RAF Greenham Common

Feb 1958 CND formed

Feb 1958 US supplies atomic missiles

Easter 1958 First Aldermaston march

March 1961 First US Polaris nuclear sub arrives at Holy Loch

Easter 1962 100,000 at rally at end of Aldermaston march

Dec 1962 Government announces purchase of Polaris missile from US

Dec 1979 Nato to base 572 Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe

Sept 1981 Women's Peace Camp set up at Greenham Common. Huge anti-nuclear protests in Europe

June 1982 30,000 women at Greenham

Dec 1983 First Cruise missiles arrive at Greenham Common

1989 Berlin Wall comes down. End of the cold war

March 1991 Last Cruise missiles leave

172 of 1000 DOCUMENTS

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

July 23, 2008 Wednesday

LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY; WITH NUDGING, SANTA FEANS EXPRESS FEARS ABOUT LAB

BYLINE: SUE VORENBERG

SECTION: LOCAL NEWS; Pg. C-4

LENGTH: 663 words

State environment officials meet with foundation to gather comments about cleanup

By Sue Vorenberg

The New Mexican

Ask a group of Santa Feans what they think about Los Alamos National Laboratory, and you're almost certain to get a room full of controversy and heated opinions.

Almost certain.

At a so-called "listening session" with the New Mexico Environment Department and the New Mexico Community Foundation on Tuesday night, the crowd of about 50 seemed anything but rowdy and only slowly came forward after continued nudging by James Bearzi, the chief of the Environment Department's Hazardous Waste Bureau. "We're really trying to understand what's happening with Los Alamos and what's on people's minds," Bearzi said of the somewhat directionless meeting.

The comments gathered over the 90-minute session were aimed at collecting information, but "that doesn't necessarily mean we can address all the concerns," he said.

The meeting, the first of its kind for the two groups, will likely lead to future meetings throughout Northern New Mexico, including probably another one in Santa Fe, he said. Comments could be used to create an interactive Web site, a series of more focused meetings on topics like water issues or as direction for some strategy sessions with activist groups, Bearzi said.

Before Bearzi passed the microphone around to the reluctant crowd, Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry said the department's goal was to be "as aggressive as possible" when it comes to dealing with the lab and problems with environmental contamination.

His predecessors, he noted, had called the Environment Department's relationship with the lab "a partnership," he said. "Partnerships when you're a regulatory agency do not work," Curry said. "We're not a partner to trying to make things happen for the benefit of Los Alamos; we are a regulator for the people of New Mexico."

He added he plans to stick hard and fast to the Consent Order that NMED has signed with the lab for future environmental cleanup.

Greg Mello, director of the **Los Alamos Study Group**, said he agreed with Curry's comments about partnerships, but added he was opposed to NMED partnering with the Community Foundation in the data-gathering sessions, which he called a "conflict of interest" because the two groups are supposed to each, independently, watchdog contamination at the lab.

Comments from other participants ranged widely.

Bob Anderson of Stop the War Machine, who came to the meeting from Albuquerque, said he thinks NMED should monitor any nuclear radiation coming from weapons stored at Kirtland Air Force Base to protect public health. He added he thinks operating **Los Alamos** National Laboratory and ramping up work on nuclear bomb cores at the lab will lead to more, or at least continued, nuclear weapons activity at Kirtland. "The best thing to do politically is to shut **Los Alamos** down," Anderson said.

Still, he admitted that economically a decision to close the lab could be a death blow for Northern New Mexico.

Joni Arends, of Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, said she was concerned about increasing levels of cesium and neptunium in wells making it to Santa Fe's drinking water. "We think these increasing levels mean that more needs to be done to protect Santa Fe drinking water," she said.

Another concern mentioned were that experiments at the lab with depleted uranium could cause air contamination in Northern New Mexico that could affect crops, water and the environment.

And a woman from Santa Clara Pueblo complained that tribal members were having an increasingly difficult time accessing sacred sites that are part of lab property.

No one at the meeting said anything positive about the lab or its cleanup efforts. Overall, though, the session was a good start, Bearzi said. "Some of the things I've heard tonight I've heard at other public meetings, and there are some brand-new things that have come up," he said.

Contact Sue Vorenberg at 986-3072

or svorenberg@sfnewmexican.com

LOAD-DATE: July 29, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: See pdf's for caption and photographer info.

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2008 The New Mexican

Los Alamos
NATIONAL LABORATORY

NNSA: No new pits (for now)

ROGER SNODGRASS 9/28/08
roger@lamonitor.com
Monitor Editor

In a formal Record of Decision (ROD) authorizing continuing operations at Los Alamos National Laboratory, federal managers have proposed only limited changes in the level of a few activities and a modest handful of new facilities projects.

The ROD, published in Friday's Federal Register, is based on the Final Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement that was issued in May, which described a "preferred alternative," actively supported by the laboratory and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

But the first set of choices includes few of the activities that were proposed under the preferred, or "expanded operations alternative." Nor does it include any of the options discussed under a third scenario of reduced operations.

"NNSA has decided to continue to implement the No Action Alternative with the addition of some elements of the Expanded Operations Alternative," the document states. "For the most part, NNSA will continue the missions conducted at LANL at current levels at this time."

A press release from NNSA's Los Alamos Site Office Friday called the decision paper, "the first of a series of Records of Decision" that will be based on the environmental study and process."

The decision establishes a threshold framework for continuing operations at current levels with a few changes.

The LASO statement noted, "NNSA will not change pit production at LANL at this time; the 1999 ROD set pit

Up to 80 of these plutonium triggers for nuclear weapons were proposed under the expanded set of options, but that was based on assumptions that have not been politically sanctioned.

The last formal environmental impact study was issued in 1999. DOE's regulations require the department to evaluate operations under the National Environmental Protection Act every five years. An environmental analysis was begun in 2004, but scrapped shortly afterward in favor of a new more elaborate environmental impact statement that was issued in draft form and the subject of an extensive round of hearings and a 75-day comment period.

The laboratory issued a statement Friday acknowledging that the decision, "allows the Laboratory to continue performing service to the nation through our national security missions while enhancing our science capabilities."

Among the four changes in operational levels that were authorized, was a broadening of the types and quantities of radioactive sealed sources (used in power generation, medical research and treatment and industrial tools and instruments, among other things), support for the LANL high performance computer, the Roadrunner, expanded research on health and safety research related to beryllium and authorization for retrieval and disposition of transuranic wastes.

Among the facilities projects that may be pursued under the decision are the Waste Management Facilities Transition projects related to the Consent Order; repair and replacement of cooling system components at the Plutonium Facility; and final design for a new Liquid Waste Treatment Facility and design and construction of a Zero Liquid Discharge Facility component.

In a brief set of comments distributed by e-mail after the release of the decision on Friday, Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, observed that the ROD "postpones most decisions, including decisions about plutonium warhead core ('pit') production" until another major environmental study, having to do with transforming and consolidating the entire nuclear weapons complex are completed.

"This ROD can be seen as a temporizing effort, pending the results of spending decisions, nuclear policy decisions and the presidential election," Mello wrote.

In analyzing public comments, the ROD paid special attention to issues of environmental justice raised by Santa Clara pueblo, defended the appropriateness of the document's evaluations but also offered a plan to provide special consideration to tribal concerns and issues.

The document also responded to comments about inadequacies in the laboratory's groundwater monitoring network.

"NNSA acknowledges that past well installation practices have not produced the desired network, and will continue to install and refurbish wells until adequate information is obtained regarding groundwater conditions and contaminant transport within the aquifers in the LANL area."

With respect to future options, the document states, "These decisions do not limitor prejudice the decisions NNSA may make regarding the programmatic alternatives it is evaluating" on the larger question of consolidating and transforming the nuclear weapons complex.

The environmental statement on that subject is scheduled to be published next month.

back to story page Printed from ABQjournal.com, a service of the Albuquerque Journal

URL: http://www.abqjournal.com/north/101137107017north10-10-08.htm

Friday, October 10, 2008

LANL Would Be Plutonium Center

By Raam Wong
Journal Staff Writer

Federal officials Thursday unveiled a proposal to make Los Alamos a center for plutonium research as part of an overhaul of the nation's nuclear weapons complex — although a change of leadership in Washington could send them back to the drawing board.

"I recognize that these can be politically charged topics," said National Nuclear Security Administration chief Thomas D'Agostino, explaining that he would not rush to make a decision on the plan just because a new president takes office in January. A decision on whether to adopt the plan is expected as soon as next month.

The proposal calls for transforming the Cold War-era way of doing things to a modern system that the NNSA says is efficient, safe and responsive to 21st-century threats.

"We have to make sure that we don't get ourselves into a situation where we outrun our headlights," D'Agostino said in a conference call with reporters.

But that may already be the case at Los Alamos. The proposal would make the lab the center for cutting-edge nuclear weapons plutonium research, development and manufacturing, much of it crammed inside a 56-year-old laboratory that's showing its age.

D'Agostino stressed that it's vital to push forward with the construction of a replacement facility, even as lab managers lay plans to remain in the old Chemistry and Metallurgy Research building for as long as a decade.

The proposal also punts on the question of whether Los Alamos should ramp up the production of plutonium bomb cores known as pits. Pit production would continue to be limited to 20 per year, though D'Agostino said the plan would give Los Alamos the annual manufacturing capability for as many as 80 pits.

D'Agostino said, even without pit manufacturing, a new plutonium lab is necessary at Los Alamos for the study of nuclear forensics and nonproliferation, the maintenance of the nation's stockpile and other national security needs. "We still have to maintain our nuclear deterrent," he said.

Besides Los Alamos, the proposal would consolidate weapons-related work at NNSA sites known as "distributed centers of excellence." Tritium work would go to the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, for instance, while the Pantex plant outside

Amarillo, Texas, would continue assembling and taking apart weapons.

The unveiling of the proposal follows 20 public hearings and more than 100,000 public comments. Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group applauded the NNSA's efforts in producing the environmental analysis of the plan, but faulted its conclusions.

"Today's weapons complex plan includes the construction of large new production facilities at Los Alamos" and the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tenn., Mello said in a statement. "These projects would commit massive resources to largely obsolete, ineffective, 'sacred-cow' missions."

Republican Sen. Pete Domenici praised the plan for highlighting the need to move forward with what's known as the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement building at LANL.

"It is important to understand that the CMRR nuclear facility is not a pit production facility," he said in a statement. "Instead, it will support a broad range of national security missions, ranging from providing power for satellites to nuclear forensics."

But Domenici said the proposal failed to clearly outline strong science missions for Los Alamos and Sandia national labs. "In my view, it is a shortsighted decision that ignores the fact that strong science and engineering missions are important to attracting the best minds to work within the complex," he said.

D'Agostino signed off on the final environmental analysis of the plan Thursday, and notice of its availability will be posted in the Federal Register Oct. 24. At least 30 days after that, the NNSA can decide whether to adopt the plan, referred to in the environmental analysis as a "preferred alternative."

All content copyright © ABQJournal.com and Albuquerque Journal and may not be republished without permission. Requests for permission to republish, or to copy and distribute must be obtained at the the Albuquerque Publishing Co. Library, 505-823-3492.

Back to story page

14.11.2008 Hyperion: The Future of Energy? By Adil Morrrison

After Oil, who knows?

GlobaliaMagazine - Berin,Berlin,Germany

Over past few decades, it has become apparent to all that the current situation with regards to energy, is untenable, we simply cannot carry on this way. According BBC Broadcast Meteorologist, Helen Willets, our climate is changing at an unprecedented rate. As things stand, we in the West are overly dependent on foreign oil reserves. Oil production is in decline whilst consumption from emerging markets (namely, China and India) is accelerating and show signs of slowing down; experts predict that between 20 and 40 billion barrels could still be recovered in the next 40 years. After that, who knows? Even though most agree that nuclear power offers clean, emission-free, affordable energy, some environmentalists have found cause for concern, just as they have with almost every other conceivable alternative; just as they say nuclear power is the cause of environmental contamination, wind turbines are harmful to birdlife, solar power is too expensive, and the list goes on.

All that aside, until now, there is still the problem the impracticality of nuclear power: it is primarily available from large, expensive power stations that take decades to build. Because of their impracticable nature, it is often difficult to build them in the areas where they will be of most benefit, either due to a lack of available land, the population where they are needed being too small to warrant the expense of a massive power station, or some other reason. All that is about to change with the invention of Hyperion.

Developed at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, like a conventional power station, it provides clean, emission-free nuclear energy, at a fraction of the cost of fossil fuels. The main benefit of Hyperion is its size: at approximately 1.5 meters across, it is literally small enough to be transported by road or by sea. Unlike its much larger cousin, the Hyperion modules are completely unobtrusive, especially so, since they are buried beneath the ground. The technology behind Hyperion ensures that it is also extremely safe. The modules include no moving parts and are delivered sealed, so there is no need for them to ever be comprised. Even if one were to be opened, the material inside would not be suitable for proliferation purposes. There is also no risk of a 'melt down', as the small amount of fuel inside cools down instantly. And as if that wasn't enough, the amount of waste created is minimal (about the size of a football over a five year period). With a single Hyperion module, it is potentially possible to power 25,000 average-sized homes, or the industrial equivalent for half a decade.

Some still remain sceptical about the viability of the project. According to Los Alamos Study Group Executive Director Greg Mello, "This whole idea is loony and not worthy of too much attention. Of course, factoring in enough cronyism, corruption, official ignorance and boosterism, it's possible the principals could make some money during the initial stages, before the crows come home to roost." So, could Hyperion hold the key to the world's energy problems? Let's just say that not everyone thinks so.