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NATIONAL CATHOLIC

REPORTER

THE INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

www.NCRonline.org

JANUARY 22, 2010

Vol. 46, No. 7 | \$2.95

Contrary directions for nukes

Weapons projects undermine Obama's disarmament vision, critics say



—Photo courtesy of Jane Stoever

On Sept. 16, nuclear arms policy critics demonstrate outside the Kansas City Plant in Missouri. They were protesting plans for construction of a new nuclear weapons plant to replace that facility. As NCR went to press, the City Council was set to approve the construction, including a controversial \$65 million tax abatement.

By JOSHUA J. McELWEE

The Obama administration is moving ahead with the development of new nuclear weapons components at three key weapons facilities at the same time it is conducting a sweeping review of U.S. nuclear weapons policies that could lead to further slashing the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

For the moment, U.S. nuclear weapons policies appear to be running in contrary directions, and while some critics of U.S. nuclear policy are cautiously opti-

mistic, they are also worried President Obama's nuclear disarmament vision is not yet being supported by concrete policy actions.

New nuclear weapons projects are planned at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee and the Kansas City Plant in Missouri. In fact, the pace of nuclear component development at these sites appears to be increasing.

For example, a major new nuclear component plant

Continued on Page 8

Influential feminist theologian Mary Daly dies at 81

By THOMAS C. FOX

A mother of modern feminist theology, Mary Daly, is dead at the age of 81. She was one of the most influential voices of the radical feminist movement through the latter 20th century.

Mary E. Hunt, cofounder and codirector of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER), announced Daly's death in an online bulletin from the Feminist Studies in Religion Web site.

"With a heavy heart, yet grateful beyond words for her life and work, I report that Mary Daly died this morning, Jan. 3, 2010, in Massachusetts. She had been in poor health for the last two years.

"Her contributions to feminist theology, philosophy and theory were many, unique and, if I may say so, world-changing. She created intellectual space; she set the bar high. Even those who disagreed with her are in her debt for the challenges she offered. ... She always advised women to throw our lives as far as they would go. I can say without fear of exaggeration that she lived that way herself."

As if to confirm the point, Daly once wrote: "There are and will be those who think I have gone overboard. Let them rest assured that

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'The Simpsons' and the Vatican press

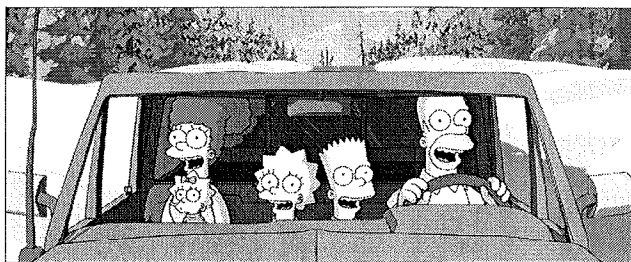
ANALYSIS

By JOHN L. ALLEN JR.

Oddball combinations never fail to amuse. On their own, neither poodles nor break dancing constitute a novelty, but find a break-dancing poodle and YouTube awaits. In the same spirit, a recent paean to "The Simpsons" in L'Osservatore Romano, the official Vatican newspaper, sparked chuckles around the world.

After all, Homer Simpson is the postmodern everyman who once mused, "What's that religion with all the well-meaning rules that don't work out in real life? ... You know, Christianity." For the Vatican's in-house organ to pay tribute on the show's 20th anniversary is, therefore, noteworthy.

In truth, the Dec. 23 piece by Italian



—CNS/FOX

The Simpson family is pictured in "The Simpsons Movie."

essayist Luca M. Possati probably says more about L'Osservatore Romano than it does about television's longest-running animated program.

Pope Paul VI once said that nothing human is alien to the church, so the

Vatican's interest in "The Simpsons" should be no surprise. As Possati noted, it's a global phenomenon "from the United States to Europe, from Russia to China, all the way to the Middle East."

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This issue was mailed on Jan. 15.

# Proposed expansion worries nuclear policy critics

Continued from Page 1

is well into the planning stage in Kansas City and it is to replace the aging current plant.

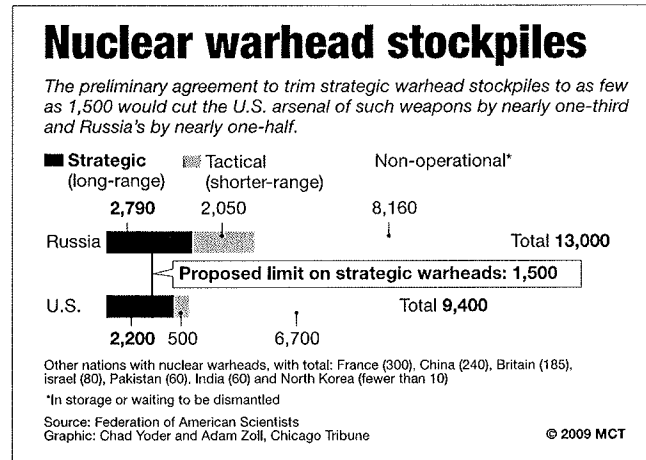
Each city's weapons facility creates parts for U.S. nuclear weapons.

Nickolas Roth, director of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, said the work at these plants involves "substantial new nuclear weapons projects." Founded in 1987 under the name Military Production Network, the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability is a national network of organizations that represent the concerns of communities dealing with nuclear weapons sites and radioactive waste dumps.

Roth said the alliance supports the vision of a nuclear-weapons-free world set forth by Obama, adding, "There needs to be meat on the bones for that type of statement."

Shrouded in secrecy, precise costs for the maintenance of the U.S. nuclear weapons plants are not readily available. However, the National Nuclear Security Administration, a division of the U.S. Department of Energy, has said the new facility being proposed for Kansas City will carry an estimated price tag of \$673 million for construction and \$1.2 billion over the next 20 years.

The replacement Kansas City facility will manufacture electrical and mechanical non-nuclear parts. The facility at Oak Ridge, meanwhile, plans



to reinvest in its capability to produce uranium components for nuclear weapons and the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Project at Los Alamos plans to increase U.S. capability to produce plutonium pits, the core of a nuclear weapon, from 20 pits to 125 pits annually, according to Roth. The U.S. Senate has yet to approve this increase.

It's this proposed expansion that has critics of U.S. nuclear policy worried

even as Obama talks of reducing the size of the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal.

Meanwhile, Obama has already reached a tentative agreement with Russia to reduce the number of strategic nuclear warheads on both sides from about 2,200 to between 1,500 and 1,875 in the next several years, while also slashing number of missiles designed to carry them to between 500 and 1,000.

Nuclear arms critics want substan-

tially larger cuts, backed by policy changes.

The administration is in the final stages of a major nuclear weapons policy review. Officially called the Nuclear Posture Review, it is expected to be completed as early as March, involving a thorough look at the size, structure and mission of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Nearly two decades after the Cold War ended, the review is the third post-Cold War assessment of the roles and missions for U.S. nuclear forces. The administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush completed their nuclear posture reviews in 1994 and 2001, respectively.

In an address last April in Prague, Czech Republic, Obama set forth three guiding goals for his nuclear weapons national security strategy:

- Negotiation of a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with the Russians. The current treaty expired Dec. 5, but is still in force pending the adoption of a new agreement.
- U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

- Strengthening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is up for review this year.

Disarmament progress on each of these treaties will require U.S. Senate approval. The most politically contentious of these treaties, arms observers say, is likely to be the securing of ratification of the test ban treaty.

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ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

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Signed by Clinton in 1996 after negotiations at the United Nations, it was voted down 51-48 in the Senate in 1999. Treaty ratifications require a two-thirds majority.

Nuclear arms observers say Obama's vision of reduced reliance on nuclear weapons is being challenged by a lack of consensus in the policymaking community, the federal bureaucracy, and vested interests in Congress.

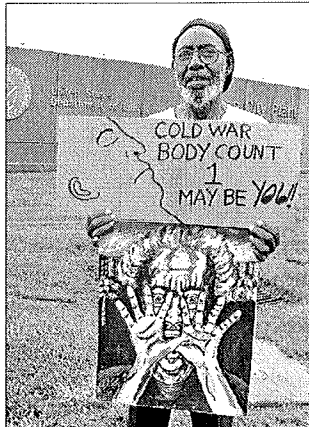
**'Do we really need to be building and adding to our nuclear weapons capability?'**

Meanwhile, critics of nuclear weapons say the increased activity at the three U.S. plants puts into question the likelihood of substantial progress in achieving Obama's stated vision.

"Do we really need to be building and adding to our nuclear weapons capability at this time?" asked Leonor Tomero, director of Nuclear Non-Proliferation at the Washington-based Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, a non-profit nuclear watchdog group. "What kind of message does that send?"

Tomero, who is also a senior fellow at the Institute of International Law and Politics at Georgetown University, says that the new projects could jeopardize U.S. efforts to negotiate new international arms treaties.

"If other countries perceive that the U.S. is modernizing or increasing its



—Jane Stoeber  
Maurice Copeland, who worked at the Kansas City Plant for 32 years, protests outside the facility Sept. 16.

capability to produce nuclear weapons it undermines our nonproliferation efforts and the president's promises that we're taking disarmament seriously," she said.

Taking another slant, Gregory Mello, secretary and executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, said the developing projects at the plants might be collateral in return for a chance at U.S. adoption of the treaty.

"The biggest problem in the Obama administration is the primacy of hopes to ratify the CTBT [test ban treaty],"

said Mello, who has been working in the field of nuclear weapons policy since 1992. "In terms of collateral those hopes are very costly. And the first cost," he said, will be the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Project at Los Alamos.

The test ban treaty mandates that signatory nations cease from carrying out any nuclear weapons tests or explosions. The United States voluntarily suspended full-scale testing of nuclear weapons in 1993, though it continues to conduct what are called "subcritical" tests.

"What we really should be talking about is the actual disinvestment in nuclear weapons," said Mello. "Things like decreasing the number and types of weapons in the arsenal, decreasing the dollar expenditure that we make in the nuclear weapons field, rationally and prudently downsizing the nuclear weapons complex in a glide path consistent with achieving nuclear disarmament over a long period of time."

Tomero agrees. In place of the ongoing projects at the nuclear weapons facilities she said she wants the National Nuclear Security Administration — which oversees the facilities — to be more active in supporting the Obama's goal of nuclear disarmament.

"We think that not only should the NNSA not be coming up with efforts to build new nuclear weapons, but that they should be contributing to things that will support the president's vision for a world free of nuclear weapons. For example, we could be doing much better in terms of getting dismantled the nuclear weapons we're already planning on dismantling."

Lt. Gen. Robert G. Gard Jr., chairman of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, warned that Washington needs to be very careful in the signals it sends to other nations.

"If we send a signal that nuclear weapons are essential for use in our national security strategy for other than deterrence, it obviously tells other nations that if the most powerful nation sees the need for them, then they ought to develop them too."

[Joshua J. McElwee is NCR editorial intern. His e-mail address is jmcElwee@ncronline.org.]

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**BISHOPS STILL HOLD TO VIEW OF 1983 PASTORAL**

Since the burgeoning of the U.S. nuclear force during the Cold War, Catholic ethicists and experts have offered all kinds of analysis of U.S. nuclear weapons policy — from outright acceptance to outright condemnation, and everywhere in between.

Official Catholic response to President Obama's nuclear weapons policy, however, is largely the same as it was when the U.S. bishops released their pastoral letter "The Challenge of Peace" 26 years ago, said one prominent expert.

"The position articulated by the bishops in that letter is the same as now," said David Cortright, director of policy studies at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. "Deterrence is acceptable only as a transitional condition leading to progressive nuclear disarmament."

Released in 1983 after a consensus-based drafting process led by a committee that included Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the late archbishop of Chicago, the pastoral letter urged the United States to take nuclear disarmament seriously.

"Each proposed addition to our strategic system or change in strategic doctrine must be assessed precisely in light of whether it will render steps toward 'progressive disarmament' more or less likely," wrote the bishops. "Progress toward a world freed of dependence on nuclear deterrence must be carefully carried out. But it must not be delayed."

Cortright said that the bishops' argument in the letter outlined a basic view of all future U.S. nuclear weapons production.

"Their position would then imply that there's no need for producing any additional weapons of any kind," he said. "You don't need designs, or the preparatory work that is under way now, because the goal is to get rid of these weapons."

Archbishop Edwin O'Brien of Baltimore echoed these thoughts when he called for the United States to lead the way in abandoning the use of nuclear weapons last July (NCR, Aug. 7, 2009).

Speaking to an audience of U.S. military and diplomatic officials in Omaha, Neb., the former head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services issued the following challenge: "The path to zero will be long and treacherous. But humanity must walk this path with both care and courage in order to build a future free of the nuclear threat."

"Nuclear war-fighting is rejected in church teaching," he said, "because it cannot ensure noncombatant immunity and the likely destruction and lingering radiation would violate the principle of proportionality. And there is the danger of escalation to nuclear exchanges of cataclysmic proportions."

O'Brien was a keynote speaker at a two-day symposium on deterrence sponsored and organized by the United States Strategic Command and titled "Waging Deterrence in the 21st Century."

—Joshua J. McElwee

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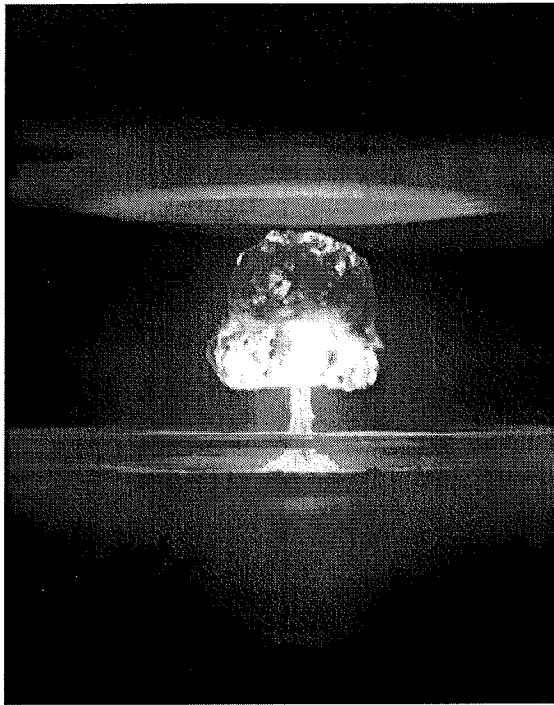
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## Breaking: LANL Set for Big Budget Increase in 2011

By Alexa on February 1st, 2010



It's not that they aren't pretty...

Defense, Medicaid/Medicare, Social Security and education are held harmless from such belt-tightening, though, and **the US nuclear weapons program stands out** among those agencies slated to get increases—here, to the tune of **\$5 billion** more over the next five years. Los Alamos National Laboratory alone gets a **21.6 percent (from \$1.8 to \$2.2 billion)** budget increase for 2011.

Read about **what this means for New Mexico** after the jump.

Even though some of LANL's budget increases are for things like hydrogen and fuel cell technologies—\$13.1 million, to be precise—the roughly \$336 million increase in “total weapons activities” (not all of which is strictly about weapons-building; ) seems to contradict Obama's State of the Union address, in which he called nuclear weapons “perhaps **the greatest danger to the American people.**”

**“There hasn't been an increase like this since the Manhattan Project,** and it never translates into jobs,” Greg Mello, director of the nonprofit nuclear disarmament group Los Alamos Study Group, tells SFR. “The procurement of specialized materials and the hiring of staff [are] substantially from out of

President Obama's 2011 budget eliminates funding for manned lunar expeditions and rolls back tax breaks for fossil-fuel companies and families bringing in more than \$250,000 a year—all of which lends credence to what he told the *New York Times* this morning:

**“We simply cannot continue to spend** as if deficits don't have consequences, as if waste doesn't matter, as if the hard-earned tax money of the American people can be treated like Monopoly money.”

disarmament group Los Alamos Study Group, tells SFR. “The procurement of specialized materials and the hiring of staff [are] substantially from out of state,” Mello adds. “Los Alamos is not well-connected to the New Mexico economy.”

The lab declined to comment on its windfall, which Mello maintains will do little to help regular New Mexicans. Here’s Mello again:

“If the DOE were to invest in energy rather than bombs in New Mexico, **we could make literally tens of thousands of jobs** in the short run. It’s a choice the Obama administration has made to fund wealthy contractors and high-paid scientists and engineers—a few of them—at the expense of hiring and building careers for the blue-collar craftsmen, technicians and engineers we need to build a sustainable infrastructure.”

Mello apologized for his wordiness; “I’m just really mad,” he said. “This represents a complete capitulation to Senate Republicans and hawks. This is a politically motivated increase.”

That VP Joe Biden’s op-ed on the administration’s nuclear weapons policy ran in the *Wall Street Journal* last Friday could be seen as a confirmation of Mello’s suspicions.

“For almost a decade, our laboratories and facilities have been underfunded and undervalued,” Biden writes. More:

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“The budget we will submit to Congress on Monday both reverses this decline and enables us to implement the president’s nuclear-security agenda. ...State-of-the art facilities, and highly trained and motivated people, allow us to maintain our arsenal without testing. ...To achieve these goals, our budget devotes **\$7 billion for maintaining our nuclear-weapons stockpile and complex**, and for related efforts. This commitment is **\$600 million more** than Congress approved last year.”

But Biden’s op-ed itself comes on the heels of a Dec. 15 letter sent by Senate Republicans to the President, urging that “funding for a [weapons] modernization program...begin...in earnest in your 2011 budget.”

Obama’s official nuclear policy is scheduled to be released this March, and a treaty to replace START (the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the US and Russia) is said to be in the works. But if the Obama 2011 budget passes, at least some of LANL’s rocket scientists will be sitting pretty.

**The New York Times**

February 1, 2010

## Obama Seeks Money for Nuclear Weapons Work

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 7:24 p.m. ET

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) -- President Barack Obama is seeking increased funding for nuclear weapons research and security programs next year, even as his administration promotes nonproliferation and has pledged to reduce the world's stockpile of nuclear arms.

The administration on Monday asked Congress for more than \$7 billion for activities related to nuclear weapons in the budget of the National Nuclear Security Administration, an increase of \$624 million from the 2010 fiscal year.

NNSA Administrator Thomas D'Agostino defended putting more money into the programs, saying the U.S. needs the best nuclear weapons facilities, scientists, technicians and engineers as it moves toward eventual disarmament.

"This budget is implementing the president's nuclear vision," he said.

The total Department of Energy request for New Mexico's Los Alamos National Laboratory totals \$2.21 billion, up from \$1.82 billion in 2010. The request for weapons-related activities is \$1.6 billion, up from \$1.3 billion, while nonproliferation activities would get \$233 million, up from \$188 million.

The total request for Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque is \$1.49 billion, an increase from \$1.3 billion. Weapons activities would get \$1.14 billion, compared with the 2010 total of \$953 million, while nonproliferation would increase to \$187 million from the current \$171 million.

The investment would ensure a smaller stockpile will take care of the nation's needs; the stockpile is safe and secure; and other nations aren't cheating as the U.S. moves "from a Cold War nuclear weapons complex ... into a 21st century, nuclear security enterprise," D'Agostino said.

Greg Mello, director of the nuclear watchdog Los Alamos Study Group, said budgets for NNSA and DOE have increased in recent years, but the nation "hasn't seen any increase in weapons activities like this since the early years of Ronald Reagan."

He called the budget "a complete surrender to Senate Republicans," who have argued that stockpile reductions must be accompanied by a modernized nuclear weapons complex.

NNSA wants a 4.7 percent overall increase for infrastructure to more than \$2.3 billion, including money for major long-term projects to replace aging buildings for plutonium work at Los Alamos and uranium work at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee.

Los Alamos' budget includes about \$225 million for design work for a chemical and metallurgy research

replacement building, known as CMRR, to replace a 58-year-old lab where scientists analyze samples of plutonium and other radioactive materials.

Watchdog groups contend CMRR positions the U.S. to build more nuclear weapons by giving Los Alamos the capacity to make large numbers of new plutonium pit designs -- the triggers of nuclear weapons.

Los Alamos lab officials have said the facility would replace existing capabilities and would be needed for other science, even if Los Alamos didn't do pit production.

There's no exact cost figure for CMRR, but a 2008 Senate report estimated it at \$2.6 billion -- more than five times the initial estimate. The price tag awaits a final design for the facility, which cannot be done until a national nuclear posture review is completed this year.

NNSA's budget request includes more than \$2 billion for stockpile support activities, a 25 percent increase, and \$1.6 billion for science, technology and engineering, an increase of more than 10 percent.

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2-2-2010

## Nuclear security given high priority

By Roger Snodgrass

The first round of budget proposals looks unusually favorable for Los Alamos National Laboratory next year. The FY2011 Department of Energy budget announced Monday called for an extra \$393 million for the nuclear weapons laboratory.

The prospective raise comes after a leveling period and at a time when other discretionary parts of the budget are expected to be flat or worse.

Altogether the Obama administration proposed a \$3.83 trillion budget for the nation that comes with a \$1.27 trillion deficit.

A rationale for increases in the nuclear weapons area was spelled out by Vice President Joe Biden in an op-ed piece Friday in the Wall Street Journal, where he declared that the budget would reverse a decade-long decline in which "our laboratories and facilities have been under-funded and undervalued."

The subhead made the point even more explicit: "We will spend what is necessary to maintain the safety, security and effectiveness of our weapons," Biden wrote, spelling out a commitment for supporting the work of maintaining the nuclear stockpile and containing potentially dangerous nuclear material around the world.

LANL's share of the Department of Energy's \$28.4 billion budget would go up 22 percent next year, from \$1.823 billion to \$2.216 billion. If the Obama administration has its way, the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 would see significant raises for weapons, infrastructure and nuclear non-proliferation.

Included in the National Nuclear Security Administration's budget for LANL is a \$225 million down payment for design work on the multi-billion nuclear facility at the heart of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement complex. The CMRR will consolidate the nation's plutonium work at Los Alamos, including manufacturing capability for nuclear triggers known as "pits."

"You don't need two plutonium capabilities, only one," NNSA Administrator Thomas D'Agostino said, introducing the nuclear security spending blueprint during a Washington teleconference. "But if we're only going to have one it can't be the 60-year-old facility that we have right now."

In a teleconference a few minutes later, Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M. said, "The Department of Energy funding, I think, is very favorable to our state. Overall it's in the range of 12.7 percent of increased DOE funding that would be coming to New Mexico, much of it to our national labs, both LANL and Sandia."

Counting Sandia National Laboratory, DOE spending in New Mexico would go up nearly a half-billion dollars.

Nuclear watchdogs grumbled at the boost in spending at the national laboratories at a time when reducing the world's nuclear threats was supposed to be the national priority.

"It really looks like there is a shift in the relative importance of defense and non-defense spending when there is a cap on non-discretionary spending, but not on defense spending" Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, said. He said it was the largest annual increase in spending at Los Alamos in constant dollars since 1944. "A lot of money could be saved with more focused management and a more careful vetting of missions."

Jack Jakowski, a nuclear security policy consultant with Innovative Technology Partnerships in



Albuquerque, said it was still very early in the process.

"I usually don't get excited until a couple of days after the budget proposal comes out," he said. "Speculating immediately is not always accurate."

In a recent report to his clients he correctly predicted a significant increase in the NNSA budget and infrastructure. He interpreted the proposal as having been aimed at gaining support in the Senate for ratifying upcoming arms control negotiations, renewing and expanding the START treaty with Russia and finishing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, left over from the Clinton administration.

"The quid pro quo, of course, will be that the Administration will be looking for support from the Right for the new START concessions, the CTBT and perhaps other commitments to the world community to forward the Administration's march toward the elimination of nuclear weapons at the planned April 12-13 Nuclear Security Summit and the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) Review Conference that will follow in May." Jakowski wrote, "This should at least provide some temporary respite for the (nuclear weapons) complex as the dynamic political environment might make significant readjustments this year, as indicated by the stunning victory for the Republicans in Massachusetts."

Bingaman said the investment in nuclear security while working to reduce the numbers of nuclear warheads was not a contradiction.

"Insuring the long-term reliability of the weapons we do have is not inconsistent with wanting to reduce the size of the arsenal," he said.

One downside in the budget spotted by Bingaman in Monday's flurry of numbers was that the administration once again zeroed out funding for upgrades at the Los Alamos Neutron Science Center. Last year, Bingaman and his colleague, Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M, succeeded in restoring the cuts.

In an announcement, he said, "I plan to make a strong argument to the administration that the upgrade is needed."

As chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, he has asked Energy Secretary Steven Chu to testify about the budget on Thursday.

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Tuesday, February 02, 2010

## Obama Wants To Boost Nuclear Weapons Funds

### FOR THE RECORD:

In this story, the Journal provided an incorrect name for a nuclear weapons analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists. The analyst is Stephen Young.

By **John Fleck And Michael Coleman**

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The Obama administration Monday proposed major increases in the U.S. nuclear weapons budget, including money for a new plutonium research complex at Los Alamos National Laboratory that could cost more than \$4 billion.

Los Alamos would see a 22 percent budget increase next year if Congress approves the spending plan, while Sandia National Laboratories would see its budget rise 14 percent. Overall, the budget for the National Nuclear Security Administration rose to \$11.2 billion, a 13 percent increase over this year.

The labs would see small increases in energy research, but the bulk of the money would expand their work designing and maintaining U.S. nuclear bombs and warheads.

The spending is critical in a state where the U.S. nuclear weapons program is one of the largest employers and a major economic engine in the Albuquerque and Santa Fe-Los Alamos areas. Los Alamos and Sandia together employ some 20,000 people.

The National Nuclear Security Administration budget increase makes good on an implied promise President Barack Obama made in a speech last April in Prague: To pursue a world with zero nuclear weapons, but in the meantime to maintain a strong, if smaller, arsenal.

“Make no mistake,” he said in the Prague speech. “As long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal to deter any adversary, and guarantee that defense to our allies.”

To keep that promise, Energy Secretary Steven Chu told reporters Monday, more money must be spent on the people responsible for maintaining U.S. nuclear weapons and on the facilities they use.

“The NNSA budget is increasing, and it's absolutely necessary if we are going to bring down our stockpile and still make sure it is safe, secure and reliable,” Chu said. “We have a responsibility to the Department of Defense to maintain the safety, security and effectiveness of our arsenal without underground testing. If we are going to decrease the number of weapons — as we will — then we still have to guarantee the safety, security and reliability of weapons.”

Chu said the budget reflects the fact that the NNSA has an “aging work force” that must gradually be replaced with younger, capable scientists who can perform the exacting science required of effective stockpile stewardship.

“We have to re-engage and start to recruit the scientific talent for this job,” Chu said. “We have to, unfortunately, rebuild a scientific infrastructure that has been decaying for the last decade or even more.”

Early leaks of the basic spending package preceded Monday's formal budget release. But the administration also signaled the importance of the issue by rolling out its proposed nuclear weapons spending increase ahead of time with a high-visibility gesture in the form of an op-ed column last week in the Wall Street Journal signed by Vice President Joe Biden. It is unusual for the nuclear weapons budget to receive such high-level public attention from an administration.

Critics charged the spending was political, a move by an administration afraid to look weak on an issue important to Republicans.

“They don't want to leave any possibility that they can be accused of being soft on defense,” said Greg Mello, director of the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group, an anti-nuclear weapons organization. “They're covering their rears with plutonium.”

Stephen Young, a nuclear weapons analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists, questioned whether the proposed budget contributes enough to the first part of the goal outlined by Obama in Prague: the elimination of nuclear weapons.

“In Prague, recognizing that nuclear weapons are now a liability rather than an asset for U.S. security, the president set the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, but was clear that until that goal was reached, the United States would maintain its nuclear deterrent,” Young said in a statement. “This budget invests substantially in the deterrent, but does little to move us toward the first goal.”

Key to the administration's approach is the decision to push simultaneously for two large new projects, a uranium building at the Y12 weapons plant in Tennessee and a replacement for Los Alamos's Chemistry and Metallurgy Research building complex.

Both buildings date to the early years of the Cold War and need to be replaced, National Nuclear Security Administration chief Tom D'Agostino told reporters during a briefing Monday afternoon.

Preliminary estimates put the cost of the Tennessee uranium building at between \$1.4 billion and \$3.5 billion and the Los Alamos plutonium building at as much as \$4 billion. Some observers had expected the projects to be done one at a time because of the high cost, but the budget request calls for beginning both simultaneously.

The budget also launches a major refurbishment of the B61, a nuclear bomb designed by Los Alamos National Laboratory that first entered the U.S. stockpile in 1968.

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Carleton Place

February 2, 2010 Tuesday  
Final Edition

## **U.S. seeks cash stockpile for nuclear arms research**

**SECTION:** Pg. 01

**LENGTH:** 181 words

**DATELINE:** ARTICLE

(Feb 2, 2010)

U.S. President Barack Obama is seeking increased funding for nuclear weapons research and security next year, even as his administration has pledged to reduce the world's stockpile of nuclear arms.

The administration yesterday asked Congress for more than \$7 billion for activities related to nuclear weapons in the budget of the National Nuclear Security Administration, an increase of \$624 million from the 2010 fiscal year.

NNSA Administrator Thomas D'Agostino said more money is needed because the U.S. needs the best nuclear weapons facilities, scientists and engineers, even as it moves toward eventual disarmament.

"This budget is implementing the president's nuclear vision," he said.

**Greg Mello**, director of the nuclear watchdog Los Alamos Study Group, said budgets have increased in recent years, but the nation "hasn't seen any increase in weapons activities like this since the early years of Ronald Reagan."

He called the budget "a complete surrender to Senate Republicans," who have argued that stockpile reductions must be accompanied by modernized nuclear weapons.

**LOAD-DATE:** February 3, 2010

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**DOCUMENT-TYPE:** News

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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# Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

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## The Obama disarmament paradox

BY GREG MELLO | 4 FEBRUARY 2010

Last April in Prague, President Barack Obama gave a speech that many have interpreted as a commitment to significant nuclear disarmament.

Now, however, the White House is requesting one of the larger increases in warhead spending history. If its request is fully funded, warhead spending would rise 10 percent in a single year, with further increases promised for the future. Los Alamos National Laboratory, the biggest target of the Obama largesse, would see a 22 percent budget increase, its largest since 1944. In particular, funding for a new plutonium "pit" factory complex there would more than double, signaling a commitment to produce new nuclear weapons a decade hence.

So how is the president's budget compatible with his disarmament vision?

The answer is simple: There is no evidence that Obama has, or ever had, any such vision. He said nothing to that effect in Prague. There, he merely spoke of his commitment "to seek . . . a world without nuclear weapons," a vague aspiration and hardly a novel one at that level of abstraction. He said that in the meantime the United States "will maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal to deter any adversary, and guarantee that defense to our allies."

Since nuclear weapons don't, and won't ever, "deter any adversary," this too was highly aspirational, if not futile. The vain search for an "effective" arsenal that can deter "any" adversary requires unending innovation and continuous real investment, including investment in the extended deterrent to which Obama referred. The promise of such investments, and not disarmament, was the operative message in Prague as far as the U.S. stockpile was concerned. In fact, proposed new investments in extended deterrence were already being packaged for Congress when Obama spoke.

To fulfill his supposed "disarmament vision," Obama offered just two approaches in Prague, both indefinite. First, he spoke vaguely of reducing "the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy." It's far from clear what that might

actually mean, or even what it *could* mean. Most likely it refers to official discourse--what officials *say* about nuclear doctrine--as opposed to actual facts on the ground. Second, Obama promised to negotiate "a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty [START] with the Russians." As far as nuclear disarmament went in the speech, that was it.

Of course, Obama also said his administration would promptly pursue ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, an action not yet taken and one entirely unrelated to U.S. disarmament. The rest of the speech was devoted to various nonproliferation initiatives that his administration planned to seek.

On July 8, Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announced their Joint Understanding, committing their respective countries to somewhere between 500 to 1,100 strategic delivery vehicles and 1,500 to 1,675 deployed strategic warheads, very modest goals to be achieved a full seven years after the treaty entered into force. Total arsenal numbers wouldn't change, so strategic warheads could be taken from deployment and placed in a reserve--de-alerted, in effect. The treaty wouldn't affect nonstrategic warheads. It wouldn't require dismantlement. As Hans Kristensen at the Federation of American Scientists has explained, the delivery vehicle limits require little, if any, change from U.S. and Russian expected deployments.

Ironically, it's possible that the retirement of 4,000 or more U.S. warheads under the Moscow Treaty and other retirements ordered by George W. Bush may exceed anything Obama does in terms of disarmament. As for the stockpile and weapons complex, Bush's aspirations were far more hawkish than Congress ultimately allowed. Real budgets for warheads fell during his last three years in office. Now, with the Democrats controlling the executive branch *and* both houses of Congress, congressional restraint is notable by its absence. What Obama mainly seems to be "disarming" is congressional resistance to variations of some of the same proposals Bush found it difficult to authorize and fund.

Last May Obama sent his first budget to Congress, calling for flat warhead spending. At that time, the administration was still displaying a measured approach toward replacement and expansion of warhead capabilities.

That said, in last year's budget the White House did acquiesce to a Pentagon demand to request funding for a major upgrade to four B61 nuclear bomb variants--one of which had just completed a 20-year-plus life-extension program. Just one day before that budget was released a grand nuclear strategy review previously requested by the armed services committees was unveiled. It was chaired by William Perry, a member of the governing board of the corporation that manages Los Alamos, and recurrent Cold War fixture James Schlesinger. [Full disclosure: Perry is also a member of the Bulletin's Board of Sponsors.]

The report's recommendations for increased spending and weapons development quickly began to serve as a rallying point for defense hawks--surely the point of the exercise. Overall, it was largely a conclusory pastiche of recycled Cold War notions, entirely lacking in analysis and often factually wrong. But neither the White House nor leading congressional Democrats offered any public resistance or rebuttal to its conclusions.

More largely, opposition to nuclear restraint within the administration quickly emerged from its usual redoubts at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the Pentagon, STRATCOM, and interested players in both parties in Congress. Plus, Obama left key Bush appointees in place at NNSA while the Pentagon added some familiar faces from the Clinton administration, leaving serious questions about the ability of the White House to develop an independent understanding of the issues, let alone present one to Congress.

Either way, potential treaty ratification is surely a major factor in White House thinking. Senate Republicans, as expected, are demanding significant nuclear investments prior to considering ratification of any START follow-on treaty. Democratic hawks, especially powerful ones with pork-barrel interests at stake such as New Mexico Sen. Jeff Bingaman, also must be satisfied in the ratification process. All in all this makes the latest Obama budget request a kind of "preemptive surrender" to nuclear hawks. So whether or not the president has a disarmament "vision" is irrelevant. What is important are the policy commitments embodied in the budget request and whether Congress will endorse them.

Investments on the scale requested should be flatly unacceptable to all of us. The country and the world face truly apocalyptic security challenges from climate change and looming shortages of transportation fuels. Our economy is very weak and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The proposed increases in nuclear weapons spending, embedded as they are in an overall military budget bigger than any since the 1940s, should be a clarion call for renewed political commitment in service of the fundamental values that uphold this, or any, society.

Those values are now gravely threatened--not least by a White House uncertain about, or unwilling or unable to fight for, what is right.

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**Obama Boosts Nukes**

By Greg Mello, February 11, 2010

On February 1, the Obama administration delivered a budget request calling for a full 10 percent increase in nuclear weapons spending next year, to be followed by further increases in subsequent years.

These increases, if enacted, would bring the recent six-year period of flat and declining nuclear weapons budgets to an abrupt end. Not since 2005 has Congress approved such a large nuclear weapons budget. Seeing Obama's request Linton Brooks, who ran the National Nuclear Security Administration for President Bush from 2003 to 2007, remarked to *Nuclear Weapons and Materials Monitor*, "I would've killed for this kind of budget."

**Largest Since Manhattan Project**

Obama's request includes more than twice last year's funding for a \$5 billion upgrade to plutonium warhead core ("pit") production facilities at Los Alamos. If the budget request passes intact, Los Alamos would see a 22 percent budget increase in a single year, its biggest since the Manhattan Project.

The request proposes major upgrades to certain bombs as well as the design, and ultimately production, of a new ballistic missile warhead. Warhead programs are increased almost across the board, with the notable exception of dismantlement, which is set to decline dramatically. A continued scientific push to develop simulations and experiments to partially replace nuclear testing is evident.

All these initiatives and others are embedded in an overall military budget bigger than any since the 1940s that includes renewed funding for the development of advanced delivery vehicles, cruise missiles, and plenty of money for nuclear deployments.

**Linked to START**

This proposed "surge" responds to a December 2009 request from Senate Republicans (plus Lieberman) for significant increases in nuclear weapons spending. Such increases, these senators said, were *necessary* (but not necessarily *sufficient*) to obtain their ratification votes for a follow-on to the START treaty (which expired in December).

As of this writing the new treaty remains under negotiation. Ratification of any treaty requires 67 votes, a much higher hurdle than the 60 needed to break a filibuster. As the 2010 campaign season begins in earnest, it remains to be seen if this expansive nuclear spending package is anywhere near hawkish

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enough to buy the necessary votes.

Also, key politicians of both parties have pork-barrel interests in the nuclear weapons complex, interests not confined by the boundaries of their districts and states. In today's Congress, money and influence flow freely across these lines. The contracts at stake are big by any standard. Nuclear weapons complex contractors are among the nation's largest recipients of contract dollars. So far in FY 2010, seven of the top 10 U.S. contractors are nuclear weapons site management contractors or partners.

For their part, most Democrats assume — despite a small mountain of evidence otherwise — that a nuclear weapons spending surge is genuinely needed. Some of the administration officials behind this surge have been retained from the Bush administration. Others, like Undersecretary of State Ellen Tauscher, are Democratic hawks. There are no doves.

### Squared with Prague?

This increase in spending on the nuclear complex does not contradict Obama's public statements, for example in Prague in April 2009, that he would "seek" nuclear disarmament. In contrast to Picasso's famous dictum ("Others seek, I find"), Obama has said only that he would "seek" disarmament. Despite the powers theoretically available to him as commander-in-chief, which encompass every aspect of nuclear deployment and procurement, Obama has said nothing about *finding* disarmament.

In many ways the President is building on the rhetorical foundation laid in January 2007 by the so-called "Four Horsemen" — George Schultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry, and Sam Nunn — who with 16 others laid out their rationale for a "world free of nuclear weapons." These men did not, either in their original op-ed or in their subsequent ones, actually advocate any but the vaguest steps toward actual disarmament.

What they offered instead was aspirational rhetoric that was all-too-uncritically received in most circles. Subsequently, three of the four supported the Bush administration's Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) or its equivalent, and Perry co-convened an influential nuclear policy report that called for funding increases, new construction, and replacement warheads. Their op-ed last month calling for a big increase in nuclear weapons spending brought these rhetorical contradictions sharply into view. Nuclear disarmament, even as an aspiration, was missing.

### No New Nukes?

Administration spokespersons have been quick to say there are no "new" warheads under consideration. That is because the word "new" can simply never be used in connection with warheads, no matter how many changes are involved. Last year's Defense Authorization Act, authored by then-congresswoman Ellen Tauscher (D-Livermore), builds a spectrum of potential innovation into the structure of the "Stockpile Management" program.

Last year, the administration requested and received a great deal of money for what amounts to a new bomb, mostly for European deployment, without the embarrassment of talking about a "new" bomb like George Bush did. George Orwell would be proud.

These linguistic innovations go back to 1996, when weapons administrators and contractors sought a politically palatable path to warhead innovation. At that time, Clinton administration bureaucrats consciously chose to emphasize themes of "replacement" and "stewardship" in describing programs they knew

(and privately said at the time) would result in new warheads. As attendees at one 1996 meeting said, even "the use of the word 'warhead' may not be acceptable." Linguistic cleansing paved the way for this month's proposed spending surge.

#### **Next Step: Congress**

Will Congress, especially the Democratic members of Congress, fund these increases? In part the answer depends on how seriously they take the several converging crises facing the country and the planet, and how seriously they address populist anger about the economy, especially in relation to their own reelection prospects.

In many ways the proposed nuclear weapons budget, and the defense budget overall, can be seen as bold raids on a diminishing pool of resources, as well as very real commitments to fading imperial pretensions. Nuclear weapons compete directly with the renewable energy and conservation jobs funded in the Energy and Water funding bills.

Congress therefore has to decide, and citizens have to help them decide, between a new generation of nuclear weapons and the factories to make them or the greener alternative of energy and climate security and the better economic prospects that would ensue.

Nuclear weapons are an especially dangerous investment for a declining hegemon. The sooner we choose a nuclear weapons path involving less and less money, not more and more, the sooner we will be able to wake from the hubris and pervasive violence currently destroying us.

Greg Mello is the executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group and a contributor to Foreign Policy In Focus.

#### **RECOMMENDED CITATION:**

Greg Mello, "Obama Boosts Nukes" (Washington, DC: Foreign Policy In Focus, February 11, 2010)

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## Nuclear safety board questions Energy Department (2:21 p.m.)

By Sue Major Holmes / The Associated Press

Posted: 03/18/2010 02:16:24 PM MDT

ALBUQUERQUE - The board that oversees nuclear safety in the U.S. Department of Energy's weapons complex has warned that the DOE's interpretation of nuclear safety management regulations could mean higher radiation exposure to the public if an accident occurs.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, in a letter Monday to Deputy Energy Secretary Daniel B. Poneman, questioned the National Nuclear Security Administration's approval of safety analyses in which radiation doses to the public are above the guidelines. NNSA is the DOE agency in charge of the nuclear weapons complex.

"Such approval implies that exceeding the evaluation guideline is an acceptable outcome," board vice chairman John E. Mansfield wrote.

The DOE conducts safety analyses of facilities to identify hazards and ways to control any that could result in more than 25 rems, a measurement of radiation exposure. By contrast, Americans get an annual dose of about 360 millirems from everything from an X-ray at the dentist's to naturally occurring background radiation. A millirem is a thousandth of a rem.

The letter said the 25-rem level "is not considered an acceptable public exposure; rather, its use sets a clear guideline for establishing when to invoke an effective set of safety class controls that reduce the

potential dose consequences to the public to acceptably low values."

Nuclear facilities analyze accident scenarios, and those that might result in radiation exposure above the guidelines require "safety class" controls - fail-safe mechanisms to protect the public, workers and the environment.

The board believes controls - such as a ventilation system or fire suppression - should reduce exposure to a "small fraction" of the 25 rems, said Peter Winokur, a member of the independent safety board that examines worst-case scenarios at the nuclear facilities and makes recommendations to lower risks.

"Once they apply controls, those controls can reduce the dose significantly," he said.

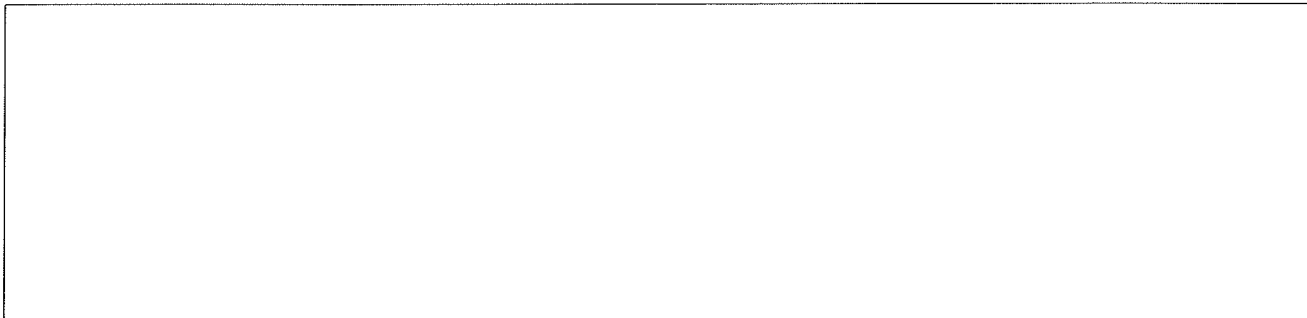
In the process of making recommendations for the plutonium facility at northern New Mexico's Los Alamos National Laboratory, the board discovered NNSA had a different interpretation of the reduction, Winokur said.

"We don't understand whether this is a new DOE-wide interpretation, or is this NNSA or other parts of DOE," he said.

The board's letter said the DOE "is essentially nullifying" standards used for years by accepting safety analyses that allow consequences greater than the guidelines'.

The board has given the NNSA 60 days to list which defense nuclear facilities do not have controls to reduce potential radiation doses below the guidelines and what might keep those facilities from meeting guidelines.

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NNSA spokesman Damien LaVera said Wednesday the agency will respond once it reviews the letter.

"We recognize that the safety of the public, our workers and the environment is critical to the accomplishment of our national security mission, and that appropriate use of our safety guidelines is key to our safety strategy," he said.

Greg Mello of the watchdog Los Alamos Study Group said the question is fundamental: "Do you have mandatory or optional safety standards?"

He worries about not just accidents, but also sabotage.

"It's all well and good to say that these bad things will never happen, but if safety class equipment isn't there ... then the consequences for things no one talks about get a lot worse," Mello said.

The board's letter cited NNSA's approval of a safety analysis for Los Alamos lab's Technical Area 55 as an example of a questioned analysis.

Last October, the board said a major earthquake could cause a catastrophic fire triggering a massive radiation leak at the lab's main plutonium facility, releasing up to 100 times more radiation than permitted by DOE standards.

Winokur said, however, board members who visited Los Alamos two weeks ago "got a firm commitment to reduce the offsite dose."

"There's no disagreement between the board" and Los Alamos National Security LLC, which runs the lab for the DOE, he said. "We asked them point-blank, and they said they will do that."

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# Los Alamos Monitor

March 19, 2010

## Board presses plutonium safety issue

By Roger Snodgrass

An independent federal safety board that monitors nuclear facilities has concerns that the Department of Energy is no longer interpreting a key safety standard as they have agreed to do in the past.

The issue is related to a safety analysis, known as “the safe harbor methodology” and its application at Los Alamos National Laboratory’s Plutonium Facility.

On Monday, the Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board wrote a letter to Deputy Energy Secretary Daniel Poneman. The letter expresses reservations about a disagreement having to do with how to handle conditions under this rule, DOE Standard 3009, which the letter indicated has been the subject of recent discussions with the department.

The outcome of those meetings expressed in a white paper developed by the National Nuclear Security Administration nuclear safety chief “are fundamentally in conflict with the board’s understanding of DOE’s past practices during the 15 years since Standard 3009 was established as well as the board’s explicit position as outlined in past correspondence,” DNFSB Vice Chairman John E. Mansfield wrote to Poneman.

“The strength of the nuclear safety rule is that you do an analysis of all the hazards and then identify those safety controls that will reduce the risks to meet the evaluation guidelines,” said Peter S. Winokur, a safety board member.

The Los Alamos National Laboratory Communications Office referred calls to NNSA headquarters in Washington. A spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration said the department had received the letter and was evaluating the concerns raised.

“We recognize that the safety of the public, our workers and the environment is critical to the accomplishment of our national security mission and that appropriate use of our safety guidelines is key to our safety strategy,” said NNSA spokesman Damien LaVera. “After our review is complete, we will provide the answers that the board has requested.”

Last year, laboratory officials identified a set of circumstances at the plutonium facility that could potentially endanger the public outside LANL’s perimeter. A worst-case scenario, involving an earthquake and a subsequent fire at TA-55 was believed to pose an unacceptable threat to human health and safety. Large amounts of plutonium are stored at the facility, which is also the highly secured center for manufacturing nuclear triggers at the laboratory.

According to previous correspondence with the safety board, that risk was calculated at two orders of magnitude, or 100 times the current acceptable exposure to the public, which is 25 rem of radiation.

Rem is a standard unit radiation used in assessing biological affects.

“The way the rule works is that when you do your hazard analysis, if the measured risk to the public is greater than 25 rem, you need to use safety class controls,” Winokur said. “You need not only to get down to 25 rem, but to a small fraction of 25 rem.”

The rule is considered fundamental because the board believes it is the best means to assure adequate public health and safety.

“We were surprised that headquarters was not committed for that to be a requirement with them,” he said. “That was our historical understanding and we no longer had the commitment from them that they considered that a requirement.”

On Feb. 23, Secretary Steven Chu responded to the board’s previous concerns acknowledging the safety problem, “from a first-floor fire following a seismic event,” as “approximately two orders of magnitude higher than our evaluation guideline for selecting safety class controls.”

Chu’s letter said the measures that were being taken would include “about a factor of 15 reduction” from the previous Documented Safety Analysis, which would mean the risk as measured in rem would still be 167 rem, more than six times the “safe harbor” limit.

“The people at LANS and Los Alamos are taking action to get it to guideline and below,” Winokur said. “They are reducing risk in the short run by containerizing the nuclear materials better and getting some of it off the site.”

In the midterm, Chu’s letter promised to strengthen the glove boxes used to work with the nuclear materials. In the long term, they are upgrading the fire suppression systems and installing active ventilation systems that will function reliably during and after an earthquake.

Greg Mello of the nuclear watchdog Los Alamos Study Group wrote in an e-mail Wednesday that it was not clear to him how the nuclear facility “can meet seismic requirements with safety class equipment and maintain an active pit production program with a lot of material out of vaults and in processes in glove boxes.”

Recent announcements about plans to reinforce the new Nuclear Facility under design as part of the nearby Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Facility indicate that an extra 225,000 cubic yards of concrete will be needed to stabilize the contents of the building against earthquake risks.

Without reinforcement, Mello questioned how the older pit-manufacturing building at the Plutonium Facility can be made safe.

“Not having safety standards, i.e. making them voluntary, is certainly one way,” he wrote.

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March 26, 2010

# Nuclear Labs Raise Doubts Over Viability of Arsenals

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

In a challenge to the White House, the nation's nuclear weapons laboratories have warned Congress that federal programs to extend the life of the nation's aging nuclear arsenal are insufficient to guarantee the viability of the weapons for decades to come.

The warning, which implicitly endorsed the idea of creating an expensive new generation of more reliable nuclear warheads, has no direct bearing on the new arms control agreement reached this week by the United States and Russia.

Rather, it addresses a long-simmering debate on what steps the United States should take to ensure confidence in the destructive capacity of its shrinking nuclear arsenal.

President Obama came into office vowing to end a Bush administration initiative to build a new generation of nuclear arms. In a speech last month to the National Defense University, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. praised the labs for maintaining the arsenal and promised an additional \$5 billion over the next five years to support that work.

The new warning about the arsenal's reliability came in letters from the directors of the nation's three nuclear weapons labs to Representative Michael R. Turner, an Ohio Republican who is the ranking minority member of the Armed Services Committee's subcommittee on strategic forces. He had asked the directors for their opinions about a federal report, made public late last year, that suggested programs to extend the life of the nation's nuclear weapons were good enough to guarantee their potency for decades to come.

That finding, from an independent group of scientists that advises the federal government on issues of science and technology, could influence whether the Senate ratifies another nuclear treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty — a prime objective of the Obama administration — or whether the nation instead prepares for the design of new nuclear arms.

Republicans on Capitol Hill have argued that concerns over the reliability of the aging

stockpile and the possible need for new designs compel the nation to retain the right to conduct underground tests of new weapons.

The three laboratory directors all criticized the report from the group of independent scientists, which is known as the Jason panel. Michael R. Anastasio, director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, said he “did not agree” with the report’s conclusion about maintaining the nuclear arsenal for decades with existing methods.

“Some materials and components in the current stockpile cannot be replicated in a refurbishment,” he wrote, adding that available ways to mitigate aging were “reaching their limits.”

George H. Miller, director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, said the main findings of the panel’s report “understate, in my view, the challenges and risks encountered in ensuring a safe and reliable nuclear force.”

Although the three letters were all written in January, Mr. Turner’s office released them now amid reports of an agreement on the new arms reduction treaty.

Arms control advocates dismissed the letters from the nuclear laboratories, which employ many thousands of nuclear specialists, as blatant attempts to protect their turf, rather than to air objective assessments.

“They are calculating that the administration does not have the courage to do battle with them, and they may be right,” said Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a private organization that monitors the nuclear laboratories.

“Stepping back,” he added, “it appears the White House and liberals in Congress have been outmaneuvered — again — by the nuclear weapons establishment.”

In a statement on Thursday, Mr. Turner said that he was making the letters public “to further inform the public discussion on U.S. nuclear weapons policy and strategy” and that he planned to raise the reliability issue at a coming hearing with the director of the National Nuclear Security Administration, which runs the weapons laboratories.





## US nuclear labs warn about aging atomic arsenal

Sun, 28 Mar 2010 14:59:38 GMT

The United States nuclear weapon laboratories have warned that the country's aging atomic arsenal is unable to meet future challenges.

Directors of three American nuclear weapon labs warned Congress about the danger in letters to Ohio Republican Rep. Michael R. Turner, a ranking member of the strategic forces subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

Turner had asked the directors for their opinions on the Jason Panel Report, released by a group of independent scientists last year, which suggests US nuclear arsenal could be maintained for decades with existing methods.

○All laboratory directors criticized the report, arguing that the existing arsenal is too old to face future challenges, The New York Times reported.

"Some materials and components in the current stockpile cannot be replicated in a refurbishment," director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory Michael R. Anastasio wrote, adding that the existing methods to mitigate aging were "reaching their limits."

Director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory George H. Miller said the main findings of the report "understate, in my view, the challenges and risks encountered in ensuring a safe and reliable nuclear force."

In a statement last Thursday, Turner said that he planned to raise the reliability issue at a coming hearing with the director of the National Nuclear Security Administration, which runs the nuclear weapon laboratories.

The Jason Panel Report could be a decisive factor in whether the Senate will ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty - a prime objective of the Obama administration.

President Obama pledged to put an end to the initiative launched by the Bush Administration to build a new generation of nuclear arms and promised an additional \$5 billion to the labs to maintain the arsenal over the next five years.

The new warning, however, implies that the influential US military industry is pushing through the idea of developing a whole new generation of more reliable nuclear warheads.

Arms control advocates have dismissed the letters by the nuclear labs as an attempt to protect their turf, rather than to air objective assessments.

US Republicans are widely known to be the main advocates of the American military and powerful arms industry.

"They are calculating that the administration does not have the courage to do battle with

them, and they may be right," said Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a private organization that monitors nuclear labs.

"Stepping back," he said, "it appears the White House and liberals in Congress have been outmaneuvered - again - by the nuclear weapons establishment."

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The International Herald Tribune

March 29, 2010 Monday

## **Nuclear labs sound warning on aging arsenal; Scientists tell lawmakers that programs aimed at maintenance fall short**

**BYLINE:** WILLIAM J. BROAD

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 4

**LENGTH:** 608 words

**DATELINE:** NEW YORK

### **ABSTRACT**

American nuclear weapons laboratories have warned Congress that programs to extend the life of the country's aging nuclear arsenal are insufficient to guarantee the reliability of the weapons for decades to come.

### **FULL TEXT**

In a challenge to the White House, American nuclear weapons laboratories have warned Congress that federal programs to extend the life of the country's aging nuclear arsenal are insufficient to guarantee the reliability of the weapons for decades to come.

The warning, which implicitly endorsed the idea of creating an expensive new generation of more reliable nuclear warheads, has no direct bearing on the new arms control agreement reached last week by the United States and Russia. It addresses a long-simmering debate on what steps the United States should take to ensure confidence in the destructive capacity of its shrinking nuclear arsenal.

President Barack Obama came into office vowing to end a Bush administration initiative to build a new generation of nuclear weapons.

In a speech last month to the National Defense University, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. praised the labs for maintaining the arsenal and promised an additional \$5 billion over the next five years to support that work.

The warning about the arsenal's reliability came in letters from the directors of the nation's three nuclear weapons labs to Representative Michael R. Turner of Ohio, the ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee's subpanel on strategic forces. He had asked the directors for their opinions about a federal report, made public late last year, that suggested programs to extend the life of the nation's nuclear weapons were good enough to guarantee their potency for decades to come.

That finding, from an independent group of scientists that advises the federal government on issues of science and technology, could influence whether the Senate ratifies another nuclear treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty - a prime objective of the Obama administration - or whether the nation instead prepares for the design of new nuclear arms.

Republicans on Capitol Hill have argued that concerns over the reliability of the aging stockpile and the possible need for new designs compel the nation to retain the right to conduct underground tests of new weapons.

The three laboratory directors criticized the report from the group of independent scientists, which is known as the Jason panel. Michael R. Anastasio, director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, said he "did not agree" with the report's

conclusion about maintaining the nuclear arsenal for decades with existing methods.

"Some materials and components in the current stockpile cannot be replicated in a refurbishment," he wrote, adding that available ways to mitigate aging were "reaching their limits."

George H. Miller, director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, said the main findings of the panel's report "understate, in my view, the challenges and risks encountered in ensuring a safe and reliable nuclear force."

Arms control advocates dismissed the letters from the nuclear laboratories, which employ many thousands of specialists, as blatant attempts to protect their turf, rather than to air objective assessments.

"They are calculating that the administration does not have the courage to do battle with them, and they may be right," said Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a private organization that monitors the nuclear laboratories.

"Stepping back," he added, "it appears the White House and liberals in Congress have been outmaneuvered - again - by the nuclear weapons establishment."

**LOAD-DATE:** March 28, 2010

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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Neither Thomas (pictured) nor Dhindsa could be reached for comment.

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## Bollywood Boom

### Is Bill Richardson brokering nuke deals with India?

By: [Corey Pein](#) 03/31/2010

Santa Fe had a distinguished visitor late last month: Susmita Gongulee Thomas, consul general of India in San Francisco. Before sampling the local cuisine and exchanging gifts with the 400th Anniversary Committee, Thomas met with Gov. Bill Richardson, a former US Energy Secretary and occasional hostage negotiator.

Officially, they talked about film production. But the full agenda may have been far more consequential.

The meeting “focused on cooperation in [the] nuclear field between New Mexico and India. The Consul General mentioned that India is seeking both enriched uranium as well as uranium ore,” Bhai Sahib Satpal Singh Khalsa, ambassador for Sikh Dharma International and a local organizer of Thomas’ trip, tells SFR in an email. “This will be for the nuclear plants India will be building with indigenous technology.”

Khalsa writes that he was “in that meeting.” His account adds detail to a recent story on [rediff.com](#),

an Indian news site, which first reported that Thomas and Richardson “discussed the possibility of exporting nuclear fuel to India from New Mexico.”

Their Feb. 24 meeting came as diplomats in Washington, DC, and New Delhi made fast progress on controversial, potentially world-changing nuclear talks—arrangements that some fear add to the chances of nuclear war in South Asia. Earlier, on Feb. 3, President Barack Obama sent Congress notice that India had met a key prerequisite of a nuclear pact enacted in 2008. Then, on March 29, the US announced the terms under which it will allow India to reprocess spent nuclear fuel.

Much remains unclear about the Santa Fe nuke talks, including whether Richardson was acting independently or with Obama’s blessing.

Consul General Thomas did not return messages. And Richardson “doesn’t recall the issue of uranium ever coming up,” spokeswoman Alarie Ray-Garcia says.

“The governor says they talked mostly about bringing Bollywood productions to New Mexico,” she tells SFR in a phone message. “They also discussed some other business opportunities.”

George Joseph, the New York-based reporter and editor who wrote the Rediff article, tells SFR he had multiple sources regarding the nuclear discussions, including the consul.

According to [sikhnet.com](http://sikhnet.com), an Española-based site, Khalsa organized Thomas’ trip with Pawan Singh Dhindsa, New Mexico’s honorary consul to India and manager of India House on Cerrillos Road.

SFR was unable to reach Dhindsa by press time. Dhindsa accompanied New Mexico Secretary of State Mary Herrera to India in a trip announced Dec. 28. They were scheduled to meet with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Foreign Minister SM Krishna. Topics of discussion included “renewable energy opportunities between New Mexico and India.”

Herrera’s office did not return SFR’s call.

Without more details, experts on the nuclear trade and arms control can only speculate about what India might want with nuclear fuel from New Mexico.

“The end use would be for some reactor that is under [international inspection] safeguards,” MV Ramana, a visiting scholar at Princeton University and expert on the nuclearization of South Asia, tells SFR.

The exports would have no direct weapons implications. However, “India has fairly limited stocks of uranium, so to the extent that they can import uranium, they can free it up for the purposes of manufacturing weapons,” Ramana says.

India already has uranium supply deals with France and Russia, among others. “Right now, they can play one supplier off of another,” Ramana says. “That’ll be the argument Bill Richardson is hearing from them...They would actually be saying, ‘We want it cheap.’”

Los Alamos Study Group Executive Director Greg Mello speculates that India could be a market for the new Louisiana Energy Services uranium enrichment facility in southern New Mexico.

“It could be they want an inside track on negotiations for the output of the LES plant, once it’s running,” Mello says.

According to a Feb. 4 report by the Congressional Research Service, US uranium shipments to India could have dangerous consequences. For instance, China might decide to supply nuclear materials to India’s military rival, Pakistan. Leaders of those two countries share a fondness for boasting about their nuclear arsenals.

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THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

# Alarm over shortage of nuclear experts

The Boston Globe

## US races to draw interest in field

By Bryan Bender, Globe Staff | April 3, 2010

WASHINGTON — The United States is facing a critical shortage of nuclear scientists and engineers, even as demand rises for their expertise in managing an aging US arsenal, monitoring dangerous weapons stockpiles around the world, and operating new nuclear power plants, according to the latest government figures and independent studies.

The decades-long loss of nuclear know-how, the result of the attraction of other disciplines perceived as more relevant or challenging, is most acute at the Department of Energy agency that maintains America's nuclear warheads and combats nuclear proliferation, according to internal agency documents.

The average age of the more than 3,000 employees at the National Nuclear Security Administration is 47, and a full quarter will reach retirement by the end of 2012, the documents show. The agency expects to lose more than 8 percent of its workforce each year for the foreseeable future, outpacing the recruitment of university graduates with advanced degrees, with the steepest drop projected in nuclear engineers.

"We have lost a generation of nuclear expertise because we gave up on it after the Cold War," said Paul Hughes, executive director of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, which recently reviewed the US nuclear weapons complex. "It's all about human capital. We didn't invest in it and now we are going to pay the price."

To narrow the gap, the Obama administration is proposing to boost a series of programs — including cash bonuses and tuition reimbursement — to persuade a new generation of students to earn degrees in nuclear physics, engineering, and other related disciplines and choose a career in weapons work, according to budget documents. The nuclear security agency has also established guidelines requiring contractors that run its weapons laboratories — currently on the order of 30,000 — to recruit and train more workers.

Underscoring President Obama's commitment to the work, his budget request for the agency, unveiled last month, calls for a 13.4 percent increase in fiscal year 2011 to \$11.2 billion, the largest increase of any agency. Los Alamos National Laboratory, one of the primary facilities that designs and certifies nuclear weapons, would see a 22 percent increase, the largest since the Manhattan Project built the first atomic bomb in 1944.

"Senior people at Los Alamos tell us that the quality of science has dropped like a stone," said Greg Mello, who runs the Los Alamos Study Group, a think tank in Albuquerque that specializes in nuclear weapons policy. "People with options don't want to stay."

The phenomenon is part of what specialists say is a wider trend: Universities have scaled back some of their degree programs and are not turning out enough graduates in the nuclear sciences to meet national demand in the military and civilian sectors.

The National Energy Institute, a policy group supported by the nuclear industry, estimates that 35 percent of the workforce at the nation's more than 100 nuclear power plants will reach retirement by the end of 2012. And a recent study conducted with the help of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology concluded that even if the United States does not construct any reactors, the nation will need to graduate hundreds of additional nuclear scientists and engineers each year to fill the gap.

The Obama administration last month announced plans for at least two new reactors — the first in three decades — and has expressed support for building more as part of a renaissance in nuclear energy to help reduce reliance on fossil fuels that are damaging the environment.

For that to succeed, universities would need to beef up their programs. After the nuclear energy industry



stagnated for decades, many universities dropped degree programs in nuclear science and engineering, according to a study by the American Physical Society.

According to Sekazi Mtingwa, a professor of nuclear physics at MIT, the study found that the number of graduates with doctorate degrees in nuclear chemistry — a critical skill needed in military and civilian programs — had “dwindled down very close to zero.”

“It was so bad that the National Science Foundation dropped it as a category” in its annual tracking of scientific disciplines, Mtingwa said.

Still, it is the erosion of expertise in US nuclear weapons complex — which requires workers to be American citizens and eligible to hold some of the highest security clearances — that is most alarming, officials say.

It comes as the Obama administration is preparing to make deep cuts in the American arsenal, which many specialists say will place a higher premium on technical know-how. The average age of US weapons is 26 years and with no plans to design new ones, the weapons will need key modifications to ensure they will work, if they are ever deployed.

“There is a paradox,” said Thomas P. D’Agostino, undersecretary of energy for nuclear security. “As the number of weapons come down, what becomes even more important is having the people who understand how they work.”

Senior military officials responsible for operating the weapons agree. “Having reduced numbers means that every system is more important to keep up and operate,” said Air Force Colonel Michael Fortney, commander of the 341st Missile Wing at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana, which maintains 150 land-based nuclear missiles.

Even the staunchest supporters of arms control, who believe the size of the US arsenal far exceeds security needs and will even after Obama’s proposed cuts, agree the need for more trained nuclear specialists is critical.

“We need more of this expertise so we know how the bombs work,” said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association.

The lack of expertise could have global consequences. The same scientists and engineers who work on the US nuclear weapons are also responsible for tracking the progress of other nations developing nuclear weapons and for helping countries secure their bomb-making material from theft by terrorists.

One growing mission of the nuclear security agency is called “nuclear archeology,” using measurements and samples of fissile material and waste products to identify how much uranium or plutonium a particular facility is producing. This is expected to be critical in ensuring that nations such as Iran or North Korea live up to their commitments in arms control agreements.

“Many of these skills and facilities cannot be found in universities, other government laboratories, or in the US industry today,” the American Physical Society concluded last month.

A key element in recruiting a new generation of weapons scientists, officials said, will be debunking the perception that the career field is primarily about building bigger and better weapons of mass destruction.

“We spend most of our time making sure things don’t explode,” D’Agostino said.

*Bryan Bender can be reached at [bender@globe.com](mailto:bender@globe.com) ■*



PRINT THIS

## The Domsday Dilemma

**This Spring, Barack Obama will push toward his goal of a nuclear-free world. But the stiffest resistance may be at home.**

By John Barry and Evan Thomas | NEWSWEEK

Published Apr 3, 2010

From the magazine issue dated Apr 12, 2010

For many years, America's master plan for nuclear war with the Soviet Union was called the SIOP—the Single Integrated Operational Plan. Beginning in 1962, the U.S. president was given some options to mull in the few minutes he had to decide before Soviet missiles bore down on Washington. He could, for instance, choose to spare the Soviet satellites, the Warsaw Pact countries in Eastern Europe. Or he could opt for, say, the "urban-industrial" strike option—1,500 or so warheads dropped on 300 Russian cities. After a briefing on the SIOP on Sept. 14, 1962, President John F. Kennedy turned to his secretary of state, Dean Rusk, and remarked, "And they call us human beings."

Ever since the dawn of the atomic age at Hiroshima in August 1945, American presidents have been trying to figure out how to climb off the nuclear treadmill. The urgency may have faded in the post-Cold War era, but the weapons are still there. By 2002, President George W. Bush was signing off on a document containing his administration's Nuclear Posture Review, an analysis of how America's nuclear arms might be used. Bush scribbled on the cover, "But why do we still have to have so many?" According to a knowledgeable source who would not be identified discussing sensitive national-security matters, President Obama wasn't briefed on the U.S. nuclear-strike plan against Russia and China until some months after he had taken office. "He thought it was insane," says the source. (The reason for the delay is unclear; the White House did not respond to repeated inquiries.)

During his presidential campaign, Obama embraced a dream first articulated by President Reagan: the abolition of nuclear weapons. The idea is no longer all that radical. In January 2007, an op-ed piece calling for a nuclear-weapons-free world appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, signed by Reagan's secretary of state George Shultz; Nixon's and Ford's secretary of state, Henry Kissinger; Clinton's secretary of defense Bill Perry; and Sam Nunn, the former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and longtime wise man of the defense establishment. "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," as they were quickly dubbed, had gotten together to give cover to politicians. "We wanted the candidates of both parties to feel they could debate the issue freely," said Nunn.

So when Obama joined the cry for a world without nukes in his campaign, he wasn't taking a big political chance. His Republican opponent, Sen. John McCain, did not seem to disagree. And yet, accomplishing this goal—or even taking some meaningful steps toward it—makes health-care reform look easy. As president, Obama the idealist has had to become Obama the realist: working for a nuclear-free world tomorrow, but at the same time, and at great cost, keeping up America's nuclear forces today.

In a speech in Prague last spring, Obama noted that "in a strange turn of history, the threat of global war

has gone down, but the risk of a nuclear attack has gone up." He warned that with more nations acquiring nuclear weapons, or wishing to, the scary but oddly stable reign of "mutual assured destruction" was giving way to a new disorder. "As more people and nations break the rules, we could reach the point where the center cannot hold." Obama stated "clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." But, he added, "I'm not naive. This goal will not be reached quickly—perhaps not in my lifetime." And he threw in an important caveat: "Make no mistake. As long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal to deter any adversary, and guarantee that defense to our allies."

Nuclear policy will be front and center for Obama this spring, but in a way that may reveal more about limits than possibilities. On April 8, the president will sign an arms-control treaty with Russia that will set limits on numbers of warheads and launchers, lower than any previously agreed. Progress, to be sure. But it's not entirely clear that a polarized Congress will find the two-thirds majority to ratify the treaty. Its most impassioned opponent, Sen. Jon Kyl, Republican of Arizona, is already demanding to know whether the "New START" treaty represents "a new era in arms control or unilateral disarmament." For their part the Russians are still smarting from perceived humiliations at the end of the Cold War and are increasingly dependent on nuclear weapons as their conventional forces wither. They seem unlikely to go much further in cutting their arsenal.

The prospect of nuclear proliferation is anxiety-inducing for all presidents, especially as terrorists try to get their hands on loose nukes. Obama is convinced that nuclear terrorism now poses a greater threat than the remote possibility of a nuclear war. On April 12 and 13, he will host a Washington summit of more than 40 heads of government with the aim of getting tougher measures to secure the fissile material still lying unprotected around the world. He's set a deadline of four years for truly securing the most dangerous materials. His own advisers suspect he is being overambitious but see the summit as a "consciousness-raising exercise." Every five years, the signers of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty meet to review progress, and in May they will meet again. The Obama team hopes to use the conference to push his no-nukes agenda, but he will be resisted by countries, like Iran, that resent American power. At the same time, Obama can't cut America's arsenal as much as he might like. Countries long under U.S. nuclear protection, like Japan, may decide they need their own nuclear arms as American power declines in the world. Countries choosing to stay under the nuclear umbrella will want reassurances that they can depend on it.

Obama's dream of a nuke-free world will encounter the stiffest resistance at home—from the people who make and safeguard nuclear weapons. America's nuclear systems are aging, raising questions about the reliability of bombs, planes, and missiles. The U.S. Senate never ratified the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and though the White House has talked hopefully of getting a vote on the CTBT sometime in a first Obama term, congressional staff experts are skeptical. "The CTBT is going nowhere," says a staffer who declined to be named. "The Republicans are not going to go for it." The GOP rationale: the United States needs to at least preserve the option of testing the reliability of old weapons or developing new ones.

For the past 15 years, the United States has been pursuing what it calls "stockpile stewardship." Atomic labs have used elaborate computer simulations and chemical and physical testing to ascertain whether the aging bombs would still go off. But at some point, the older weapons may have to be seriously upgraded or replaced. The Obama administration is proposing to increase funding for nuclear-weapons

work by some \$5 billion over five years. The United States needs to train a new generation of nuclear-weapons scientists and build a new plant at Los Alamos to construct plutonium "pits," the fissile cores of U.S. warheads.

Some Obama supporters on the left are outraged. Last month in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, Greg Mello, director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a well-informed antinuke group, bitterly decried "one of the larger increases in warhead spending history." Even so, the sweeteners may not be enough. In January, the directors of America's three nuclear labs told Republicans in Congress that they couldn't be confident that stockpile stewardship would work indefinitely to guarantee America's arsenal.

Sometime this week, Obama is supposed to release a long-delayed Nuclear Posture Review. The hope is to lay out a "paradigm shift" in thinking—to move away from war planning and focus on steps toward a nuclear-free world. There will be ambitious plans to safeguard against proliferation, in part by strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency; by providing nuclear fuel to countries that need it (so they don't try to enrich their own uranium); and by better securing nuclear materials from reactors around the world used for research and medicine, ingredients that might be used to build a "dirty bomb."

These are all sensible steps. But on the question of what Obama will do with America's own nuclear weapons, the president is sure to fall shy of his ambitions. Obama has rejected calls to scrap one leg of the "triad" of U.S. nuclear forces: missiles, submarines, and bombers. He does want to get away from the alert status known as "prompt launch," so there is talk of "repositioning" U.S. forces so they could not be quickly taken out by surprise. (The old standards were "launch on warning" or "launch under attack." Obama wants to avoid any kind of hasty response.) But the United States is likely to keep some ICBMs on alert against a Russian or Chinese missile attack.

Obama will call for improved communications with the Russian leadership to avoid what are tactfully called "misperceptions." Obama is also unlikely to make a "no first use" pledge, though the wording will be fudged. The new members of NATO—former Soviet satellites like the Baltic states—would be aghast at any such promise. As for future reductions, the United States has already removed all battlefield nukes from Europe. The Russians have not. Obama's advisers are hoping to trade some of America's "reserve force" of intercontinental weapons for those Russian tactical weapons.

But Obama is still faced with the age-old question of targeting America's strategic weapons. Will American missiles be aimed at Moscow or Beijing—or Tehran? No, cities are off-limits. But even if the targets are military forces, millions would still die. Obama is still pondering the dilemma; the matter is said by administration officials to be under secret review.

Find this article at

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/235884>

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World

## Russia and US sign new nuclear treaty

Thursday 08 April 2010

by **Tom Mellen**

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his US counterpart Barack Obama have signed the successor to the expired 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Prague.

The New Start treaty commits Moscow and Washington to reduce the number of strategic nuclear warheads by one-third and more than halve the number of missiles, submarines and bombers carrying them, pending ratification by their legislatures.



Russian President Dmitry Medvedev

That still allows for mutual destruction several times over.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov emphasised that Moscow reserves the right to withdraw if the Obama administration's planned US missile defence system for Europe grows into a threat.

And US disarmament experts pointed out that Washington could still use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states and nuclear weapons will remain in Europe.

On Tuesday, the US Department of Defence released its first overarching look at US nuclear strategy since the end of the cold war - the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review report (NPR).

Despite Mr Obama's campaign trail pledges to take US nuclear weapons off alert status - saying: "We cannot and should not accept the threat of accidental or unauthorised nuclear launch" - the new NPR leaves the alert posture of all US nuclear forces intact.

And it stated that the US may still use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack.

Federation of American Scientists spokesman noted that the NPR "essentially retains current US nuclear policy."

And US disarmament organisation the Los Alamos Study Group

executive director Greg Mello described the Obama administration's nuclear posture as "a hawk dressed in dove's feathers."


Mr Mello warned that an assurance given by former US presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton that nuclear weapons would not be used against Non-Proliferation Treaty signatory states without nuclear weapons unless allied in aggression with a nuclear state - was to be "significantly weakened."

"Obama has added an important caveat, namely that this promised self-restraint does not apply to states the US deems 'not in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations,' a category which the NPR and President Obama himself said included Iran and North Korea, specifically," he explained.

"It is, in other words, a very hawkish nuclear posture - a hawk dressed in dove's feathers," Mr Mello went on.

CND chairwoman Kate Hudson said: "We had hoped the NPR would mark a sea-change in US nuclear policy, but the result is markedly disappointing."

"All countries must now redouble their efforts to bring to an end the threat that could extinguish humanity in a moment," Ms Hudson declared.

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Morning Star

April 9, 2010 Friday

## **World - Russia and US sign new nuclear treaty; Presidents commit to reducing warhead use by one-third**

**BYLINE:** Tom Mellen

**LENGTH:** 441 words

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his US counterpart Barack Obama signed the successor to the expired 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Prague yesterday.

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**LOAD-DATE:** April 9, 2010

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Toronto Star

April 12, 2010 Monday

## **Nuclear club meets to halt arms threat in age of terror; Canada set to perform key role as Harper joins world leaders at Washington summit**

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. A1

**LENGTH:** 849 words

**DATELINE:** WASHINGTON

Goodbye Cold War, hello Hot Scramble.

That is the message President Barack Obama will implant as a global priority Monday as dozens of world leaders converge on Washington to find common cause in locking down loose nuclear material in the age of terrorism.

In a break between huddles with early arrivals Sunday, Obama outlined the stakes for the two-day summit.

"Organizations like Al Qaeda are in the process of trying to secure a nuclear weapon - a weapon of mass destruction that they have no compunction at using," Obama warned.

"This is something that could change the security landscape of this country and around the world for years to come," said Obama.

"If there was ever a detonation in New York City, or London, or Johannesburg, the ramifications economically, politically and from a security perspective would be devastating."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper will be among nearly 40 leaders vying for the attention of their American host.

But analysts say the Canadian delegation ranks among a handful of "middle powers" whose adherence to the strictly peaceful application of nuclear technology presents the opportunity to punch above their weight during the meetings.

"Middle powers like Canada matter in a moment like this because what is needed most is mature restraint," said Greg Mello, director of the Los Alamos Study Group.

"Especially now, when Obama's conservative critics have him looking over his shoulder on nuclear issues, we're looking for other countries to seize the opportunity to show leadership."

The Washington summit is the third and most important in a week of White House initiatives to redraw U.S. nuclear policy, coming on the heels of the publication last Tuesday of a new Nuclear Posture Review.

The summit also follows Thursday's signing in Prague of a new arms reduction treaty with Russia calling for the Cold War-era rivals to shrink their weapons stockpiles by one third.

But the moves have met with a steady drumbeat of mockery from Obama's opponents, including former Alaska governor Sarah Palin, who likened the modest recalibration of the U.S. rules for nuclear engagement to a child in a playground saying, "Punch me in the face, I'm not going to retaliate."

Washingtonians long accustomed to heightened security have been forewarned to expect unprecedented traffic gridlock for the next two days, as a dizzying array of diplomatic comings and goings snarl all three international airports and everything in between. A multi-block security cordon, meanwhile, has been established around the Washington Convention Center while the summit takes place.

Senior Canadian officials working to prepare the ground in Washington say Harper will offer "full support" to Obama's initiative to secure the thousands of tonnes of vulnerable weapons-grade uranium and plutonium spread out at more than 2,000 locations in 40 different countries.

Canada is also promising to build on global momentum to forestall nuclear terrorism by giving the issue a place of prominence when it hosts back-to-back G8 and G20 meetings in June.

U.S. officials also are hoping for so-called "house gifts" from summit attendees - firm commitments following the example of Chile, which is poised to announce it has eliminated its last remaining stockpile of weapons-grade enriched uranium.

It is unclear whether Canada, which has several hundred kilograms of comparable material, will follow suit.

Canadian Nobel laureate John Polanyi said the issue came up Friday during a meeting with Harper, when the University of Toronto chemistry professor presented a petition signed by more than 500 Order of Canada recipients urging Ottawa to show leadership on nuclear reduction.

"The Prime Minister listened with interest. Clearly he recognizes that every year Canada imports about 20 kilograms of highly enriched uranium from the United States. But he didn't respond," said Polanyi.

Polanyi told the Star that the significance of so many world leaders gathering on "what seems a rather erudite subject shows the issue is anything but a fad.

"There is a gathering appreciation that we are on the cusp of history here. Either we muddle along the way we've been going - and move from nine to 19 to 29 nuclear powers until eventually it becomes unmanageable.

"Or, we devise a new world without this threat. Clearly, being able to destroy each other from umpteen directions is no longer the direction. It's momentum toward the second possibility that is building now."

Iran and North Korea are conspicuous in their absence in Washington.

And while an Israeli delegation will attend, it will not include Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who scrubbed his travel plans last week when it became apparent Turkey and Egypt, among others, plan to object loudly to the Israeli policy of nuclear ambiguity, neither confirming nor denying the existence of what many analysts believe to be an arsenal of 80 to 120 plutonium-based nuclear weapons.

U.S. officials, meanwhile, acknowledge that while the issue of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program is not on the summit itinerary, it is expected to loom large on the sidelines.

**LOAD-DATE:** April 12, 2010

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** MANDEL NGAN afp getty images U.S. President Barack Obama warned Sunday that terror groups are trying to secure nuclear weapons. He made the statement during a break between meetings with early arrival for the summit that begins Monday. RICHARD CLEMENT reuters A member of the U.S. Secret Service looks out Sunday from the roof of the White House. Security has been tightened all over Washington. RICHARD CLEMENT reuters A member of the U.S. Secret Service looks out Sunday from the roof of the White House. Security has been tightened all over Washington.

**DOCUMENT-TYPE:** COLUMN

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** NEWSPAPER

**SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN.com**

## **Los Alamos Lab's CMRR-NF project would send wrong message to world**

By Willem Malten |

4/17/2010

There is a new monument being built in New Mexico that was compared by Sen. Jeff Bingaman's spokeswoman to the Taj Mahal. It goes by the acronym CMRR-NF, the Chemistry Metallurgy Research Replacement-Nuclear Facility.

This project, gone largely unnoticed by the public and national media, would require 24,000 cement trucks to careen up "the Hill" to Los Alamos to dump their carbon-intensive cement-earth mixtures to erect a very specialized edifice, able to withstand a magnitude 7 earthquake right underneath its footings.

The initial costs were estimated to be about \$600 million, but that was just a start. After consultation between Washington and its corporate masters (Bechtel in particular) cost estimates have skyrocketed to about \$4.5 billion going on \$5 billion, outdating all previous National Environment Policy Act studies and environmental impact statements — and yet those costs may still just be a start. Completion date is projected somewhere deep into the future — opening not before 2022.

Once completed, the CMRR-NF will be a blunt-boxed monstrosity devoid of any imagination. It will be a basic bunker about 10 times the size of a large supermarket, or about 270,000 square feet. This largely underground space is mostly taken up by vaults, utilities (no less than 71,500 square feet of utilities) and walls, but there is a small inner sanctum: about 8 percent of the total footprint, or 22,500 square feet will be dedicated to highly secretive plutonium laboratories.

This stark isolation is meant to provide a conducive environment for a new generation of weaponeers, who are encouraged to visualize new strategic uses for new designer nuclear weapons: smaller, with multiple warheads and more accurate targeting; new delivery systems; deeper penetration, etc.

Obama's solemn declarations in Prague about a nuclear-free world are starting to sound hollow. This late spring, during a fresh round of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty hearings at the United Nations in New York, representatives from all over will start hearing about the newly planned CMRR-NF, the largest new investment in nuclear weapons worldwide.

Regardless of the possibility of scaling down the quantities of weapons in the arsenal, and regardless of the possible signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty, the message that America sends with the construction of the CMRR-NF is clear: The CMRR-NF allows the production of new types of nuclear weapons. That is a clear message. The go-ahead of the CMRR-NF building sends a strong signal about the depth of commitment the U.S. will have to a nuclear weapons future.

Building the CMRR-NF would not just damage the reputation of Obama, it would damage the credibility of the U.S. and its role in the world. Perhaps most importantly, it would damage a growing military chorus that wants to adopt a strategy of increased security through non-proliferation, and a de-emphasis of the role of nuclear weapons.

CMRR-NF is the opposite of that approach. The CMRR-NF is the incarnation of everything that is wrong with continued proliferation and the societal detriment and sacrifice that it brings.

*Willem Malten lives in Santa Fe, where is an activist in the areas of local food security (the Northern New Mexico Organic Wheat Project) and nuclear disarmament. He is the founder of Cloud Cliff Bakery.*



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# Los Alamos Monitor

Sunday, April 18, 2010

## Feds should stop "Taj Majal"

By Greg Mello, Paul Gessing

Huge investments intended for additional plutonium infrastructure at Los Alamos National Laboratory raise equally big questions. Specifically, will current plans make the best use of the growing billions of dollars now claimed necessary to do the job? Can these enormous costs really be justified?

Or is there already evidence that these projects are simply out of control?

The centerpiece in LANL's plutonium expansion is the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement (CMRR) project. This project would add two buildings to Technical Area 55, connected by tunnels to the existing main plutonium facility, Building PF-4.

The first of the CMRR buildings is the \$363 million Radiological Laboratory, Utility, and Office Building (RLUOB). RLUOB includes 19,500 net square feet of new lab space, limited to small quantities of radiological materials. An equipped RLUOB building is expected to be complete in the spring of 2013.

The second CMRR building, the far grander Nuclear Facility (CMRR-NF), would house something like a million times more plutonium than the RLUOB. The Administration's FY2011 budget request estimated the CMRR-NF's cost at \$4.21 billion, including a budgeted \$782 million for contingencies.

Total CMRR project costs are now roughly \$5.0 billion, including RLUOB, CMRR-NF, and the demolition and disposal (D&D) of the old Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) building, previously estimated at about \$400 million.

Eight years into the CMRR project, there is as yet no firm budget, schedule, or completed preliminary design for CMRR-NF. In apparent violation of Department of Energy's (DOE's) own project management regulations, no such baseline is planned for several more years. Advocates seem to want Congress to be firmly vested in this project before providing any overall commitments to which the agency or its contractors could be held accountable.

The history of cost increments [increases] in this project is hardly reassuring. Sen. Jeff Bingaman first announced the project in 1999. At that time his spokesperson said it "would not be a 'Taj Mahal' but a scaled-down, streamlined facility that would meet the needs of the lab at a lower cost than they are met now."

Just three years after that statement, in 2002 when the project was first submitted to Congress for funding, it was estimated to cost a whopping, if vague, "\$350-\$500" million.

A year later the sticker cost had gone up by \$100 million as internal overhead was added. The next year (2004) the cost remained the same but the nuclear lab space to be provided was cut almost in half. In 2005 projected costs rose to \$838 million and in 2005 they were reported as "\$745-975" million. By 2008 CMRR-NF alone was going to cost "above" \$2 billion, and the whole project, RLUOB and CMR D&D included, was to cost at least \$2.6 billion.

Since then total project cost, for a building half the original usable size, has doubled again to about \$5 billion. Thus in eight years projected CMRR costs have risen a full order of magnitude. The estimated final completion date has meanwhile slipped more than a decade, from 2011 to 2022.

CMRR has already become the largest public project in New Mexico history by roughly a factor of ten. The state's largest public works project to date is the MESA facility at Sandia National Laboratories, completed in 2008 at a cost of \$517 M. The CMRR project, should it proceed through Nuclear Facility construction, will cost roughly ten times that much.

Justifying these kinds of open-ended, astronomical costs should require a solid rationale that is plain to see and easy to grasp. But the numbers have been driven up by shifting national priorities, unfortunate and surprising circumstances and previous mistakes.

The most recent boost came from premiums associated with soaring seismic safety costs.

A high-risk nuclear building containing large amounts of plutonium can't just sit on a flimsy layer of soft tuff in an active earthquake zone, so current plans dictate replacing the soft tuff with some 225,000 cubic yards of lean concrete beneath the building, which itself will require some 130,000 cubic yards of concrete. Much, quite possibly all, of the sand and gravel for this concrete, along with the Portland cement, must be trucked up the Hill. If it is all brought in, that's about 24,000 heavy truck trips, just for the concrete.

That kind of traffic, not to mention the long term overhead and environmental risks of the plutonium mission itself, adds to the increasing questions about this heavy expense.

The answers never quite stack up.

By Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group and Paul Gessing of the Rio Grande Foundation. The Los Alamos Study Group is an Albuquerque-based think tank and advocacy organization primarily devoted to nuclear weapons and energy policy issues. Paul Gessing is the President of New Mexico's Rio Grande Foundation. The Rio Grande Foundation is an independent, non-partisan, tax-exempt research and educational organization dedicated to promoting prosperity for New Mexico based on principles of limited government, economic freedom and individual responsibility.

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Printed from ABQjournal.com, a service of the Albuquerque Journal

URL: <http://www.abqjournal.com/north/opinion/18221144northopinion04-18-10.htm>

Sunday, April 18, 2010

## Signs Show Nukes in Our Future

**By Willem Malten***Santa Fe Resident*

There is a new monument being built in New Mexico that was compared by a spokeswoman of Sen. Jeff Bingaman to the Taj Mahal. It goes by the acronym CMRR-NF, the Chemistry Metallurgy Research Replacement - Nuclear Facility.

This project, largely unnoticed by the public and national media, would require 24,000 cement trucks to careen up "The Hill" to dump their carbon-intensive cement-earth mixtures to erect a very specialized edifice, able to withstand a magnitude 7 earthquake right underneath its footings.

The initial costs were estimated to be about \$600 million, but that was just a start. After consultation between Washington and its corporate masters, Bechtel in particular, cost estimates have skyrocketed to about \$4.5 billion going on \$5 billion, outdating all previous NEPA studies and environmental impact statements.

And yet those costs may still just be a start. Completion date is projected somewhere deep into the future — opening not before 2022.

Once completed, the CMRR-NF will be a monstrosity devoid of any imagination. It will be a basic bunker about 10 times the size of a large supermarket, or 270,000 square feet. This largely underground space is mostly taken up by vaults and utilities and walls, but there remains a small inner sanctum: about 8 percent of the total footprint, or 22,500 square feet will be dedicated to highly secretive plutonium laboratories.

This stark isolation is meant to provide a conducive environment for a new generation of weaponeers, who are encouraged to visualize new strategic uses for new designer nuclear weapons — smaller, with multiple warheads and more accurate targeting, new delivery systems, deeper penetration.

Obama's solemn declarations about a nuclear-free world in Prague are starting to sound hollow. This late spring, during a fresh round of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty hearings at the U.N. in New York, representatives from all over will start hearing about the CMRR-NF, the largest new investment in nuclear weapons worldwide.

Regardless the possibility of scaling down the quantities of weapons in the arsenal and regardless of the possible signing of the CTBT, the message that America sends with the construction of the CMRR-NF is clear: the CMRR-NF allows the production of new types of nuclear weapons.

Building the CMRR would not just damage the reputation of Obama, it would damage the credibility of the U.S. and its role in the world. Perhaps most importantly, it would damage a growing military chorus that wants to adopt a strategy of increased security through non-proliferation and de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons.

CMRR-NF is the opposite of that approach. The CMRR-NF is the incarnation of everything that is wrong with continued proliferation and the societal detriment and sacrifice that it brings.

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# LOS ALAMOS STUDY GROUP

Mello - LANL Rebuild More Than U.S. Nuke System Needs

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## LANL Rebuild More Than U.S. Nuke System Needs

By Greg Mello Los Alamos Study Group

April 21, 2010

The National Nuclear Security Administration has begun a \$4.7 billion program of replacement and expansion of the Los Alamos plutonium facilities, involving at least five buildings.

It includes new labs, vaults, experimental capabilities, production support and waste facilities.

The biggest project is a \$3.4 billion semi-underground production and storage annex, a bunker with a small core of labs and vaults in the middle of a massive, hugely complicated building involving over 350,000 yards of concrete and tens of thousands of tons of steel.

It's called the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility — the Nuclear Facility for short. Construction could start next year. Its 2-acre foundation would be 125 feet deep. Sixty feet of solid concrete would go in below the lowest rooms. Most of the sand and gravel in all this concrete, maybe all, and the portland cement, would be trucked in from somewhere.

In constant dollars, the Nuclear Facility would cost at least eight times as much as any government project ever built or planned in New Mexico, except the interstate highways. And its cost might rise.

No final cost and schedule has been produced, despite eight years of work; none is expected for at least another two years. Estimates of past and future seismicity have risen dramatically. NNSA has been struggling to incorporate commercial nuclear safety standards, not always followed at Los Alamos.

In 2002 the projected cost was one-eighth what it is today. Then, completion was expected by 2011. Now, it's 2022.

This huge and far-reaching investment, if pursued to the bitter end, would inevitably change the identity of LANL and that of nearby communities. It would have profound implications for New Mexico as a whole.

It is already affecting U.S. nuclear policy and gaining attention internationally, where it will complicate U.S. objectives.

The press, the White House and Congress are being lulled into thinking this project is somehow necessary to maintain U.S. nuclear weapons and merely a replacement for what LANL has had all along.

Neither is true. The integrated capability of the planned plutonium complex would greatly exceed anything that has ever been present at LANL.

What is being replaced is something the United States hasn't seen in two decades and doesn't need: a production plant for plutonium warhead cores, or "pits." What Obama wants to build in New Mexico is — in scale, capacity, function and budget — exactly what George W. Bush also wanted to build, a modern pit facility.

The facilities are to be modern, but their primary purpose is outmoded.

LANL's own experts have been at the forefront of a scientific consensus saying that warhead pits will last until the waning decades of this century if not longer — essentially forever for planning purposes.

Unless novel pits for novel warheads are made, there is no reason to make any at all — except, perhaps, to remember how. For that, new facilities are not needed. LANL is making a few pits today, more than enough to remember how.

Manufacturing pits for the stockpile has great costs and risks and no national security benefit. It should be terminated.

Thousands of reusable pits are currently held in a rapidly growing reserve. These comprise just one aspect of the multifaceted redundancy and back-up plans maintained for each and every deployed warhead and bomb. These stored pits are from fully-tested designs. Novel pits, should they be made, could never be fully tested without triggering a worldwide cascade of nuclear proliferation.

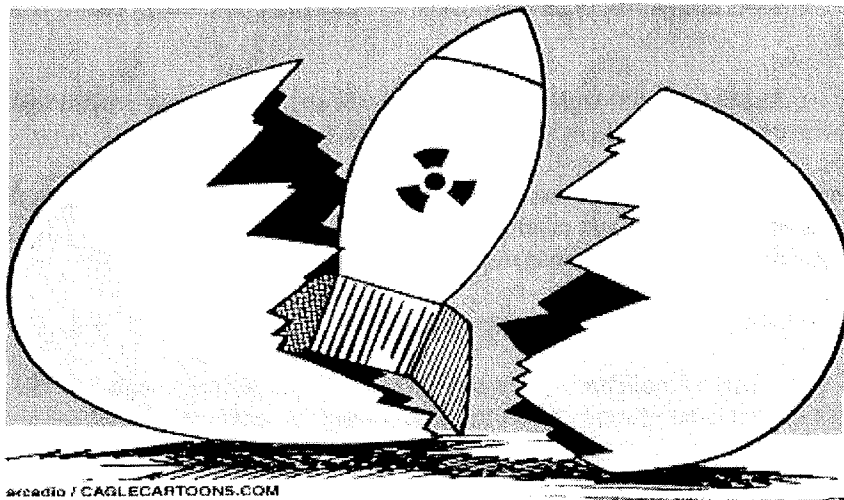
The Nuclear Facility is needed for large-scale production of what was once called the Reliable Replacement Warhead. And this is precisely the plan, again under other names.

Plans for different warheads are alive and well — as are plans for the new and upgraded delivery systems they are meant to inhabit. Obama's Nuclear Posture Review says the new infrastructure to be built in New Mexico, Tennessee and elsewhere is also meant for possible surge production of warheads, production in quantity.

Some reinvestment is needed to improve the safety of LANL's current plutonium operations. The Nuclear Facility, far too costly and conceptually discredited, is not needed for this.

We build this immense monument to folly at our great peril. If we build it, don't ask where the money went for the schools we need, or for the climate- and business-saving infrastructure, or for our health and elder care.

We will have buried our hopes for a better future in a pit on the mesa.



April 29, 2010

This is the print preview: [Back to normal view »](#)

**Robert Koehler**

Syndicated writer, editor at Tribune Media Services

Posted: April 29, 2010 12:56 PM

## Keeping Fear Alive

"The stark truth is that one single failure of nuclear deterrence could end human history."

These words, from a recent essay by Dr. Helen Caldicott, are, you might say, my devotional text for the day. I sit with them reluctantly, of course. They trouble the soul more than anything else I can imagine. But it occurs to me that, six and a half decades into the nuclear era, our premature "peace" with these weapons -- our cultural forgetting, our denial -- betokens a psychic helplessness that is enormously dark and dangerous in its own right. At some level we know that our shadow is growing. We watch it happen as spectators.

Does any force seem more impervious to the collective will than that which drives the nuclear weapons industry? Will it take, as Caldicott asks, a horrific accident, an insane act of aggression, to shatter the conspiracy? And by then, will it be too late?

The industry continues to thrive and grow, having far outlived its original premise of "mutually assured destruction"; the Cold War is over, but the money we poured into it didn't become available for non-military spending. Ultimate aggression continues to stalk the planet. We're in as much danger as we've ever been.

And the cost to us over these nuclear decades has not been merely financial -- lost money for schools, infrastructure, health care. The nuclear weapons industry has also been paid for in thousands of American lives, though this fact still remains known primarily within the circle of survivors. But legislation introduced into Congress this month to expand the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act has put the suffering born by so many Americans -- who lived downwind of the nuclear tests, worked in the industry or mined the uranium -- back into the news.

The original RECA legislation, passed in 1990, compensated a handful of downwinders in 22 rural counties in Arizona, Nevada and Utah. The new bill, introduced by Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico on April 19 to address the "gruesome legacy" of Cold War era weapons development, expands coverage to the entire states of Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana and Colorado, as well as those harmed by the original Trinity blast in 1945, in Alamogordo, N.M., and by the nuclear tests conducted upwind of Guam in the Pacific. It

also triples compensation for those who became ill from the fallout to \$150,000.

"Many families in the downwind states have stories like mine," Tona Henderson wrote recently in the Idaho Statesman. "Some of these stories are so sad because entire families have died of cancer. . . .

"Both sides of my family have been in the Treasure Valley since the 1870s. They lived very long lives -- until they started dying of cancer after the testing started.

"Since the 1950s, I have had 26 family members get cancer; 13 of those have died. One was my cousin, who died of Ewing's sarcoma at the age of 15."

As I sit with the terrible potential of the nuclear era, the possibility of accident or aggressive use of the double-edged sword, I sit also with its neglected, little known realities. Until the first RECA legislation was passed, nuclear tests were still officially safe, just as they remain, officially, necessary for our defense. As far as I'm concerned, such military-industrial propoganda is as toxic as the fallout. Maybe it's part of the fallout: the corrosion of truth and common sense, the rape of compassion.

Humanity's task is to evolve spiritually. Weapons technology, which we continue to fund at staggering levels, requires us *not* to develop in such a way, *not* to grow in loving connection to one another. This stagnation is the spiritual equivalent, perhaps, of cancer.

One of the provisions of Udall's bill would, according to the senator's press release, "authorize \$3 million for five years for epidemiological research on the impacts of uranium development on communities and families of uranium workers."

I can't help but notice the insignificance of the dollar amount being sought for this research -- or rather, I can't help but compare it to other sums of money, diverted, without serious comment or thought, elsewhere. For instance, the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico has already embarked on an expansion of its plutonium facilities for the construction of warhead cores, or pits. The projected cost of this project over a dozen years, according to Greg Mello of the watchdog Los Alamos Study Group, is at least \$5.5 billion.

"The facilities to be built are 'modern,' but their primary purpose is outmoded," Mello writes.

Their primary purpose is to keep America not so much "safe" as powerful, and to perpetuate an agenda that is only about power and geopolitical interests, which in retrospect always seem small and limited. Their primary purpose, damn the cost, is to keep fear alive.

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Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist and nationally syndicated writer. You can respond to this column at [koehlercw@gmail.com](mailto:koehlercw@gmail.com) or visit his Web site at [commonwonders.com](http://commonwonders.com).)

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# SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN.com

## Let's get out of WMD business

By Francine Lindberg |

5/9/2010

Lest New Mexicans begin celebrating prematurely, they might do well to understand the implications of the Obama Administration's recently released Nuclear Posture Review. The New Mexican's April 11 editorial is a case in point.

The Chemical and Metallurgical Research Replacement Building at Los Alamos, in spite of what is distributed for public consumption here at home, is understood by all parts of the administration and in Congress as part of a new pit factory and, coupled with unprecedented public hand wringing by lab directors and hawks regarding concerns about the reliability of the stockpile, can be viewed for what it is: a step toward building new weapon designs at Los Alamos. Not just for research purposes, but production.

What effect this merging of these two very different cultures, research and manufacturing, will have at Los Alamos remains to be seen. But let's be clear, the reality is not reconcilable with the rhetoric coming out of the White House.

Independent experts assure Congress that our stockpile will remain reliable and perform as designed well into the second half of this century or longer with existing Life Extension programs.

The lab directors, particularly at Los Alamos, clamor for more investment; to make weapons, that have already been tested and certified reliable, more so? No. To make novel new weapons, which will never be tested unless the U.S. really abandons all concern about world opinion.

There will always be those who suggest, as some do now about the reliability of the current stockpile, that if we don't test, we cannot be sure the new generation of weapons will function as designed. The pursuit of a new generation of weapons will do absolutely nothing to enhance our national security and may well have the opposite affect. It's a shell game to maintain, at any cost, a relic of the cold war that is long overdue for the scrap yard.

The New Mexican erred when it stated that Iran was not a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. It is. However, its nuclear-armed regional neighbor Israel is not. In terms of reducing proliferation pressures in the region, might it not be more effective to develop a nuclear-free Middle East initiative? Israel would still be nestled comfortably under the protection of the U.S., but the pressure for its Arab neighbors to pursue a nuclear capability would be substantially reduced.

The Obama Administration has gotten a lot of mileage out of its rhetorical commitment to disarmament and nonproliferation.

But the paucity of substantive measures that would actually lead the U.S. on a firm path toward disarmament must be acknowledged. We cannot expect other nations to forgo that which we will not make concrete steps to give up ourselves. They will see this infrastructure reinvestment for what it is,

and our duplicity will undermine our credibility.

The NPT has turned out to be a clever maneuver by the nuclear-weapons states to lock in a two-tiered system of haves and have-nots in perpetuity. The frustration of the rest of the world mounts and empty rhetoric will no longer do the trick: A credible nuts and bolts program leading to the prudent, coordinated disarmament of the nuclear weapons states by a date which is certain is the only engine that will successfully drive nonproliferation efforts. The U.S. ought to lead, rather than resist, this effort.

For New Mexico to rise out of its derelict standing at, or very near, the bottom of virtually every measure of social well being, we might try a livelihood that is not centered on weapons of mass destruction. That strategy has clearly failed us.

*Francine Lindberg of El Prado is a 21-year resident of Taos County. She works with at-risk youth in Taos Public schools, and is active in nuclear weapons disarmament.*

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URL: <http://www.abqjournal.com/news/state/17234292664newsstate05-17-10.htm>

Monday, May 17, 2010

## **N.M. Labs May See \$40 Million**

**By John Fleck***Copyright © 2010 Albuquerque Journal Journal Staff Writer*

The Obama administration wants to spend an extra \$40 million this year at Los Alamos and Sandia to get a head start refurbishing the B61, a 1960s- and '70s-era nuclear weapon that is the most common bomb type in the U.S. arsenal.

The money, if approved by Congress, would allow the labs to expand a study aimed at determining what upgrades the aging bomb might need. Administration officials say the money is needed now to meet a Pentagon deadline to deliver the first refurbished B61 to the military by 2017.

Critics say the open-ended nature of the study could lead to rising costs in future years in a nuclear weapons budget already stressed by plans for multibillion dollar nuclear buildings in New Mexico and Tennessee.

Officials said the new money in the current fiscal year was not likely to lead to significant new hiring at the labs.

The proposal for expanded work on the B61 was laid out in a May 5 letter from the National Nuclear Security Administration to congressional funding committees.

The project would allow the modifications necessary for the B61 to be carried aboard the Air Force's new F-35 fighter, a key part of the deadline, according to Hans Kristensen, a nuclear weapons analyst at the Federation of American Scientists, a Washington, D.C., think tank.

The study will also look at adding enhanced safety features to the bomb, according to the May 5 NNSA letter to Congress.

The mid-year funding request is part of a broader administration effort to increase the budget for maintaining U.S. nuclear weapons, even as it pursues an agreement with the Russians to reduce the size of the U.S. arsenal. The increased spending is needed, officials argue, to ensure the safety, security and reliability of the weapons that remain.

The B61 request follows last month's release of the administration's Nuclear Posture Review, a blueprint for U.S. nuclear weapons policy. The document emphasized the importance of refurbishing the aging B61, first developed by Los Alamos and Sandia weapons designers in the 1960s.

### Future costs

An analysis in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists described the B61 as "perhaps the most versatile and abundant nuclear weapon in the U.S. stockpile" because of its suitability for a variety of war-fighting missions, with both high and low explosive yield options.

With the additional money, the budget for the B61 work would be \$57 million this year. That would rise to \$252 million next year, with additional increases likely in the future, according to the Obama administration's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request.

But the real future cost figures will not be known until after the current study is completed and could be significant, depending on how much refurbishment of the weapon the NNSA decides it needs to do, noted Greg Mello of the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group.

Mello said "there is a train wreck coming" as costs for the B61 work in future years collide with the administration's plans for a multibillion plutonium research building at Los Alamos National Laboratory and a similar project for uranium work at the Y-12 plant in Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Those rising estimates of future costs are beginning to raise questions among members of Congress, who will need to approve the spending, Kristensen said.

NNSA spokesman Damien LaVera issued a statement defending the spending, saying the Obama administration "has demonstrated its commitment to modernizing the NNSA infrastructure to support the full range of nuclear security missions," including the work on the B61.

#### Avoiding tests

The National Nuclear Security Administration's labs and factories have been refurbishing aging nuclear weapons for years, in ways that avoid major changes that might require a nuclear test, something currently prohibited by U.S. policy.

The work has focused largely on the weapons' nonnuclear components — the electronics, fuses and firing systems. The nuclear explosive at its heart, the explosives, plutonium and uranium that create the weapon's massive blast, have seen some changes in the process.

But Mello and others argue that the proposed work on the B61 has the potential to include far greater changes to the nuclear explosive package, potentially driving up the cost because of the complexity of the issues involved in working with the weapon's plutonium, uranium and high explosives.

LaVera argued that there is precedent for refurbishment projects including work on the nuclear explosive parts of warheads and bombs.

Congress last year clamped down on such work, placing a restriction on spending any money on a study of the refurbishment of the B61's nuclear guts, limiting all work to the nonnuclear parts pending the completion of the Nuclear Posture Review and its determination of whether broader work on the weapon was needed.

The National Nuclear Security Administration's budget request, submitted to heads of the key congressional committees May 5, asks Congress to lift that restriction along with expanding the budget this year for the work.

Four congressional committees responsible for nuclear weapons spending and policy must approve the request for the work to go forward.

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## **Boost to the Nuclear Weapons Industry under Obama: The Dangers of the New Nuclear Legislation in the US Congress HR 5136,**

**By Greg Mello**

Global Research, May 23, 2010

### **New Nuclear Legislation**

*Let's take a close look at Greg Mello's (Los Alamos Study Group severe criticism of the new proposed legislation, HR 5136 by the House Armed Services Committee, and need for vigilance as Congress and the Obama Administration veer strongly to the right on nuclear policies!*

*Despite the increase in nuclear activism, all the fine work that people been done leading up to and including the NPT Conference and NGO meetings, the overall situation is growing more alarming due to the persistence of the nuclear industry and pressures exerted on the US congress*

*Let us not lose heart but - somehow- regain fortitude to carry on and challenge these hawkish philosophies and policies now becoming even more embedded in American domestic and foreign policy. Too, we need to increase our ties and alliances with other activists/NGO's from other nations who also are wanting a nuclear -free world.*

*Arn Specter, editor, The Nuclear Review*

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Clearly, the sole use of disarmament rhetoric by the U.S. is now to disarm foreign and domestic opposition to U.S. policies, especially "non-proliferation- themed" geopolitical ambitions. Other than dismantlement of the thousands of warheads put into the dismantlement queue by that pacifistic president George W. Bush, there is no disarmament going on in the U.S., whether specifically of nuclear weapons or the more general disarmament foreseen in the second clause of the NPT's Article VI, and none is contemplated. Quite the reverse as we see here. The importance of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense policies is not decreasing. Not yet. There is no political force or reality yet visible which could make it decrease. It is extremely unlikely that any such force is will arise from within the U.S. during this Administration. Wishing or hoping won't change this. Should such a force appear, it will be from other sovereign states. We will do what we can here, but the situation is far, far more difficult than it was even 3 or 4 years ago.

There is no sign of this international resistance yet -- not at the NPT RevCon or anywhere else, according to the White House.

The Obama Administration has experienced very little international blowback regarding its plans to maintain the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile, a senior White House official said last week. Gary Samore, the White House's arms control and WMD coordinator, credited the President's ambitious nonproliferation agenda and push to eventually abolish nuclear weapons for easing international opinions on the nation's efforts to upgrade the infrastructure of its nuclear weapons complex and pour billions into maintaining its nuclear weapons stockpile. International support is especially important as the United States seeks to generate consensus on strengthening the wavering nonproliferation regime at this month's Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference. "I think that it's easier to do the maintenance part if you also show you have a long-term commitment to nuclear disarmament," Samore said during a May 11 exchange with the Defense Writers Group. "We've actually gotten very little criticism I would say from the things we're doing to make sure our forces are going to be adequate for the time being for the foreseeable future."

Todd Jacobsen, Nuclear Weapons and Materials Monitor, 5/14/10 p. 5

One reason for this is the unaccountable, not to say irrational, patience of the domestic and international NGO disarmament, peace, and justice community with the very hawkish Obama Administration.

I have been in Washington quite a bit in the last month and in my opinion Congress and Washington as a whole have shifted dramatically to the political right on nuclear weapons issues under Obama. Budgets are

increasing and are likely to increase further before encountering what are likely to be very strong fiscal headwinds in a few years. When exactly that will be, and what will then happen, is unpredictable. Today's project delays could be tomorrow's terminations -- or, as is also likely, the militarization of our society could increase much more, as U.S. geopolitical power decreases further overall and as our society begins to cave in further, leaving the military as by far the strongest and most trusted institution in society. It is easy to forget that corporations can now contribute unlimited sums to congressional races, a new factor in our politics.

Hawks in Congress foresee the fiscal problems ahead and want to lock in commitments to nuclear weapons upgrades and new factories, as we see below. They are counting on congressional, NGO, and media support for Obama's rhetoric about "disarmament" to be part of the wind at their back, specifically via the push for New START ratification. Secretary of Defense Gates called this "ironic" in Senate testimony last week.

[Gates] said he had been trying to get money for the modernization of nuclear infrastructure for three-and-a-half years. "This is the first time I think I have a chance of getting some," Gates said. "And ironically, it's in connection with an arms-control agreement [New START]. But the previous efforts have completely failed.

It seems critically important to inject the reality of U.S. policies into the NPT RevCon while we have the chance. Of what use is comity in comparison? As far as I can tell, the U.S. wants comity at the RevCon primarily as a foundation for punitive sanctions against Iran, which in our judgment have little to do with nonproliferation per se and everything to do with U.S. geopolitical ambitions.

Does the following draft legislation passage square with what the U.S. delegation has been saying at the RevCon? With New START as a "first step" and all that?

Most of the leadership is probably going to have to come from non-U.S., or non-U.S.-big- foundation-funded, NGOs.

Greg Mello

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Whole bill, HR 5136 as reported by House Armed Services Committee) <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c111:2:./temp/~c111GWTz Wm::>  
(Section) <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c111:2:./temp/~c111GWTz Wm:e599705>:

#### SEC. 1058. LIMITATION ON NUCLEAR FORCE REDUCTIONS.

(a) Findings- Congress finds the following:

(1) As of September 30, 2009, the stockpile of nuclear weapons of the United States has been reduced by 84 percent from its maximum level in 1967 and by more than 75 percent from its level when the Berlin Wall fell in November, 1989.

(2) The number of non-strategic nuclear weapons of the United States has declined by approximately 90 percent from September 30, 1991, to September 30, 2009.

(3) In 2002, the United States announced plans to reduce its number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 by December 31, 2012.

(4) The United States plans to further reduce its stockpile of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 during the next seven years.

(5) The United States plans to further reduce its deployed ballistic missiles and heavy bombers to 700 and its deployed and non-deployed launchers and heavy bombers to 800 during the next seven years.

(6) Beyond these plans for reductions, the Nuclear Posture Review of April 2010 stated that, 'the President has directed a review of potential future reductions in U.S. nuclear weapons below New START levels. Several factors will influence the magnitude and pace of such reductions.'

(b) Sense of Congress- It is the sense of Congress that--

(1) any reductions in the nuclear forces of the United States should be supported by a thorough assessment of the strategic environment, threat, and policy and the technical and operational implications of such reductions; and

(2) specific criteria are necessary to guide future decisions regarding further reductions in the nuclear forces of the United States.

(c) Limitation- No action may be taken to implement the reduction of nuclear forces of the United States below the levels described in paragraphs (4) and (5) of subsection (a), unless--

(1) the Secretary of Defense and the Administrator for Nuclear Security jointly submit to the congressional defense committees a report on such reduction, including--

(A) the justification for such reduction;

(B) an assessment of the strategic environment, threat, and policy and the technical and operational implications of such reduction;

(C) written certification by the Secretary of Defense that--

(i) either--

(I) the strategic environment or the assessment of the threat has changed to allow for such reduction; or

(II) technical measures to provide a commensurate or better level of safety, security, and reliability as before such reduction have been implemented for the remaining nuclear forces of the United States;

(ii) such reduction preserves the nuclear deterrent capabilities of the `nuclear triad' (intercontinental ballistic missiles, ballistic missile submarines, and heavy bombers and dual-capable aircraft);

(iii) such reduction does not require a change in targeting strategy from counterforce targeting to countervalue targeting;

(iv) the remaining nuclear forces of the United States provide a sufficient means of protection against unforeseen technical challenges and geopolitical events; and

(v) such reduction is compensated by other measures (such as nuclear modernization, conventional forces, and missile defense) that together provide a commensurate or better deterrence capability and level of credibility as before such reduction; and

(D) written certification by the Administrator for Nuclear Security that--

(i) technical measures to provide a commensurate or better level of safety, security, and reliability as before such reduction have been implemented for the remaining nuclear forces of the United States;

(ii) the remaining nuclear forces of the United States provide a sufficient means of protection against unforeseen technical challenges and geopolitical events; and

(iii) measures to modernize the nuclear weapons complex have been implemented to provide a sufficiently responsive infrastructure to support the remaining nuclear forces of the United States; and

(2) a period of 180 days has elapsed after the date on which the report under paragraph (1) is submitted.

(d) Definition- In this section, the term `nuclear forces of the United States' includes--

(1) both active and inactive nuclear warheads in the nuclear weapons stockpile; and

(2) deployed and non-deployed delivery vehicles.

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#### HOUSE DEFENSE AUTH. AMENDMENT IMPOSES HURDLES ON FUTURE CUTS

If the United States wants to pursue further reductions to the size of its nuclear weapons stockpile beyond the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, it will have to demonstrate to Congress that it has

adequately maintained the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile and modernized the nation's nuclear weapons complex, according to language inserted into the House version of the Fiscal Year 2011 Defense Authorization Act last week. With strong support from Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee, the panel approved an amendment authored by Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.) that would require a host of certifications from the Pentagon and National Nuclear Security Administration—including a requirement that “measures to modernize the nuclear weapons complex have been implemented to provide a sufficiently responsive infrastructure”—before any additional stockpile cuts are made. “The world is safer with a strong America,” Lamborn said. “The Obama Administration must be prevented from enacting naive and short-sighted policies that erode our strength and weaken our national defense.”

The New START Treaty, which was submitted to the Senate May 13, would cap the strategic deployed stockpiles of the United States and Russia at 1,550—down from the 1,700 to 2,200 allowed under the 2002 Moscow Treaty—and would limit the countries to 800 deployed and reserve strategic delivery vehicles, with a maximum of 700 missile launchers and bombers allowed to be deployed at one time. The strategic deployed stockpiles represent only a part of each country's nuclear weapons arsenal, which includes non-deployed and reserve warheads as well as tactical warheads. Unveiling previously classified information earlier this month, the Obama Administration said that it had 5,113 active warheads in its stockpile, and experts believe another 2,600 to 3,000 are retired and awaiting dismantlement.

The Administration has said it would pursue further reductions to the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile once the New START Treaty is ratified, and talks could include tactical and non-deployed nuclear weapons, which were left out of the recent arms control talks. Arms control experts are not optimistic that those talks will be completed quickly, if at all, given the differences that exist between the United States and Russia on tactical nuclear weapons, non-deployed nuclear weapons and missile defense. Lamborn said the Administration's push for more reductions does not match the state of affairs in the world today. “Rogue nations with nuclear weapons pose a constant threat to world peace and domestic security,” Lamborn said. “I am concerned that the Obama Administration has set our nation on a path to eliminate our nuclear weapons in a time when the threat to our nation has not diminished.”

#### **'It Seems Like Common Sense'**

Nonetheless, the House amendment requires that any reductions in the nation's nuclear forces be supported by a “thorough assessment of the strategic environment, threat, and policy and the technical and operational implications of such reductions,” and demands that the Administration justify the reductions with several certifications by the Secretary of Defense and NNSA administrator. Primarily, the Administration would be required to certify that the strategic environment or the assessment of the threat has changed to allow for the reductions, or the safety, security and reliability of the nation's stockpile has improved, and that the remaining nuclear forces provide “a sufficient means of protection against unforeseen technical challenges and geopolitical events.” The deterrence capability of the nation's nuclear triad of intercontinental ballistic missiles, ballistic missile submarines, and heavy bombers should also be maintained, and the nation's targeting strategy should not shift from counterforce targeting to countervalue targeting. “America once had tens of thousands of nuclear weapons,” Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) said. “Now we're down to 1,500. It seems like common sense to me that before we proceed below the level included in the New START Treaty that we would want to ensure our stockpile is safe, secure, and reliable.”

#### **Amendment Highlights Declaratory Policy Frustration**

House Republicans also succeeded in getting language inserted into the bill that says the shift in the Nuclear Posture Review away from a nuclear declaratory policy of calculated ambiguity “weakens” the nation's national security posture. A “Sense of Congress” amendment authored by Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio) highlights the committee's frustration in the Administration's pledge not to use nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear, chemical or biological attack by countries without nuclear weapons that remain up-to-date on their nuclear nonproliferation obligations. That group notably does not include Iran and North Korea, but previous administrations had left open the possibility of using nuclear weapons to respond to nuclear, chemical or biological attacks. “My amendment is aimed directly at attackers, aggressors and adversaries of this country,” said Turner, the ranking member on the panel's Strategic Forces Subcommittee. “I do not think the American people expect that we are going to restrict our response to attackers, aggressors or adversaries regardless of the weapons or means they use against us. The American people expect that we would respond with any means possible.”

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## Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

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### Bunker mentality: Is NNSA digging itself into a hole at Los Alamos?

BY GREG MELLO | 26 MAY 2010

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and Congress are currently weighing whether--and at what pace and scale, and with what capabilities--to build two large production facilities for warhead components with a combined price tag in the range of \$6-7 billion.<sup>1</sup>

While on the surface these plans appear settled, there has been no administration or congressional go-ahead to build either project, and none are warranted. Beneath the surface, significant unresolved issues concerning mission, urgency, scale, budget, and design remain.

Some of these issues are related to the word "capacity," as in a supposed "need" to augment or replace the production capability that exists--but what remains a mystery is what precise purpose this capacity serves, how great it should be, how it connects to existing facilities, and when it might be necessary. In the case of these two facilities, none of these questions has been satisfactorily answered.

The first of these projects, and the focus of this article, is the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility (CMRR-NF) to be built at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).<sup>2</sup>

The CMRR project is composed of two buildings, CMRR-NF being the second and by far the more expensive one, comprising 90 percent of the total estimated project cost. The first CMRR building, the Radiological Laboratory, Utility, and Office Building (RLUOB), is physically complete, and NNSA expects it to be ready for use by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2013. The CMRR project is located directly adjacent to LANL's main plutonium facility, PF-4.

The primary purpose of the CMRR project, and especially the CMRR-NF, is to increase LANL's installed capacity to make plutonium warhead cores ("pits"), *while minimizing the use of existing facilities at LANL and elsewhere in the weapons complex*.<sup>3</sup>

CMRR-NF is currently expected to cost about \$3.4 billion.

The other project, the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) at the Y-12 site in

Tennessee, would make uranium-containing thermonuclear "secondaries." UPF carries an even vaguer but generally comparable cost.

**Uncertain, untallied costs.** Costs for each project may grow. The price of CMRR-NF has already grown by roughly a factor of 10, raising renewed questions about the soundness of the business case for the project as a whole and the particular building being designed.

Neither the CMRR-NF nor the UPF budgets, respectively, include the capital costs for all the required new or refurbished support facilities, or the expenses related to operating the buildings or related programs.

Focusing now on the CMRR exclusively, large-scale plutonium pit production may require--in addition to a few hundred million dollars in related capital projects *already* requested--replacement or augmentation of other major LANL facilities in projects *not yet* requested by NNSA.<sup>4</sup>

In documents submitted to the Senate this month as part of the New START ratification package, the administration projects \$16 billion in new warhead spending over this decade. The attempt to build CMRR-NF and UPF, and to do so simultaneously, is a major part--roughly 40 percent--of this proposed additional spending. Most of the rest is needed for a proposed Obama administration increase in the pace and intensity of warhead life-extension and upgrade programs.

**Not ready for prime time.** CMRR-NF construction (including excavation, initial sub-foundation, site utilities, and concrete batch plant) could begin as early as next fiscal year; this is from one to three years before NNSA can complete a baseline for the project, which includes a careful cost estimate, preliminary design, and construction schedule.

NNSA currently anticipates replacing a 50-foot-thick horizon of unconsolidated volcanic ash beneath the site with a 125-foot-deep, slab of "lean concrete"--225,000 cubic yards of it--before completing preliminary building design.

CMRR-NF is a highly complex and utterly unique project. Preliminary design has taken seven years so far and isn't done. The U.S. has not successfully built a plutonium facility since 1978, when PF-4 opened its doors. An attempt to do so at Rocky Flats in the mid-1980s failed spectacularly. Despite all this, despite NNSA's poor project management record, and despite what appears to be a lack of convincing mission need (discussed below), CMRR-NF is being managed as a concurrent design-build project.

Under that approach, between one-half and \$1 billion will have been spent on the project before preliminary design, cost estimates, and schedules have been completed.

NNSA currently projects CMRR-NF completion in FY 2022--this is 11 years later than originally projected. Given NNSA's history, the history and difficulty of this particular project, and future uncertainties we can only guess at, this date must be

considered tentative.

The administration is currently requesting \$225 million for the CMRR project as a whole for next year (FY 2011), a dramatic increase from this year's \$97 million. Perhaps one-fourth of this sum would go toward outfitting RLUOB.

**Pyrrhic design.** The 270,000-square-foot CMRR-NF would add only 22,500-square-feet of additional plutonium processing and lab space to LANL's existing 59,600-square-feet of comparable space in PF-4, a 38 percent increase.

The new labs would comprise just 8 percent of the CMRR-NF floor area. Most of the building would be occupied by utilities, ventilation, safety equipment, and by the heavy structure itself.

A 6-metric-ton vault (roughly tripling LANL's present plutonium capacity), some miscellaneous programmatic space, and room for handling and cleaning out explosion containment vessels<sup>5</sup> bring the total programmatic space in CMRR-NF up to just 14 percent of the total floor area. If built, CMRR-NF would be a highly inefficient building in this sense.

The current cost of CMRR-NF lab space works out to \$151,000 per square foot, or \$1,049 per square inch. PF-4 cost \$75 million to build in 1978 (\$213 million in 2009 construction dollars). Thus, in constant dollars, CMRR-NF lab space would cost 42 times as much as LANL's existing plutonium labs did, assuming costs do not increase further.

### **Did a New Mexico Senator's enthusiasm suppress more careful analysis?**

Over the past seven years, congressional discussion of CMRR-NF has waxed and waned. Senate appropriators, guided by then-Sen. Pete Domenici from New Mexico from the beginning of the project through his retirement in January 2009, have strongly favored the project. The Armed Services committees have generally favored the project as well; although in 2009, \$50 million, about half the year's authorized spending, was fenced off pending provisional resolution of seismic and safety design issues between NNSA and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, which later occurred.

House appropriators attempted to halt or delay the CMRR project for its first five years, insisting on first having a new Nuclear Posture Review, stockpile plan, and overall infrastructure plan. The first of these plans was released in April, but detailed 10-year stockpile and infrastructure plans have not yet been submitted to Congress. There has never been a business case or detailed mission analysis for CMRR-NF, and these 10-year plans are unlikely to contain any. Congress is supportive of infrastructure modernization overall. Yet at the same time there is a new and growing unease, especially in the Senate, about the fiscal and management practicality of NNSA's grand ambitions for the coming decade. These plans include three aggressive warhead modernization initiatives (more of them, and more aggressive, than were planned in President Bush's final years), the two big new factories, and other projects.



**If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.** For the past few years, the CMRR-NF project has struggled to adequately respond to "new" seismic and safety issues. Actually, these issues were appreciated by NNSA senior management from the beginning of the project to some degree, but they were not officially accepted as applicable. LANL is underlain by a fault system that has produced three earthquakes measuring 6.5 to 7.0 on the Richter scale in the last 11,000 years.

These "new" seismic issues, along with requirements for so-called safety-class ventilation equipment that was also not initially accepted by LANL, have dramatically increased CMRR costs and are not yet fully resolved.

These seismic issues--paired with NNSA's intent to construct a deeply-buried building, the bottom of which would be in or near a thick layer of unconsolidated volcanic ash--significantly complicate construction logistics, safety, and security. More than 20,000 heavy trucks may need to enter LANL just to deliver the concrete ingredients for this building.

**Alternatives would be available if the mission weren't so absurd.** Despite its name, CMRR is not a "replacement" for LANL's old Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) building. It is quite a different building, with significantly different and generally expanded capabilities, especially as regards pit production. And it is now known that at least one wing of the CMR building could be retained.

LANL has considerable latent pit production capacity, with or without CMRR-NF. NNSA's commonly-communicated production capacity--which has varied over an order of magnitude--is not based on physical limitations but rather on administrative and managerial decisions that are flexible to varying degrees with respect to changes in national policy.

But why make pits at all? Aside from the many potent reasons to steadily diminish a reliance on nuclear weapons and to decrease our stockpile size and investments, there is already a surfeit of backup pits (or backup warheads containing pits) for each delivery system. All these pits will last for many decades to come, far longer than today's planning horizons. The capability to make pits in considerable quantities is already present today and can be preserved indefinitely in LANL's existing facilities, where pit production currently occupies only about 30 percent of the total processing space.

Although there would be no rational reason to do it, production capacity could be expanded without CMRR-NF, for example, by allocating additional space and equipment to pit production in PF-4, adding work shifts, increasing management focus, conducting some of the preliminary or ancillary work needed in other facilities, setting up additional production lines in other plutonium facilities--or by implementing all of these.

There is no shortage of space to make pits, either at LANL or nationwide--assuming there were any need to make them, which there isn't. Were CMRR-NF in place, the above steps and others would increase production capacity to an even more absurd

level. The policies and variables affecting pit production capacity have simply never been meaningfully discussed in the open literature by NNSA or LANL.

CMRR-NF's extremely high space costs--at least 10 times what they were at the beginning of the project--should trigger intensive examination of previously-rejected alternatives, which would require greater mission clarity as well.

With or without CMRR-NF, pit production is difficult, dangerous, and expensive. To successfully do it would require, at a minimum, a truly convincing national need. There isn't one, and there won't be one until long past the foreseeable future--assuming science matters. Spending billions of dollars on an unneeded bunker with excellent plumbing and ventilation won't create a need for new pits, however much some seem to be pining for it.

Every aspect of the CMRR-NF project, from the mission itself to the practicality of the building design, should be questioned far more deeply than Congress has done to date. For once, genuine and balanced security in all its aspects--and not just spending a lot of money to aggrandize the physics labs--should be the goal.

1 All costs are taken from the Department of Energy (DOE) congressional budget justifications, available under "products and services" at <http://www.cfo.doe.gov/index.htm>. There are no direct links.

2 For more background see [http://www.lasg.org/CMRR/open\\_page.htm](http://www.lasg.org/CMRR/open_page.htm).

3 Although CMRR-NF would have other uses, facilitating prompt large-scale pit production is the primary mission driver.

4 For example, Building 0066 in TA-3, the Sigma Complex, is in poor condition and did not meet seismic requirements even in 1997. Most pit components do not contain plutonium and were produced in that building, up to the late 1990s and may still. Reliable sources inform us, and both logic and NNSA site planning documents suggest, that NNSA maintains a prioritized draft list of additional infrastructure requirements for which funding has not yet been requested. For a list of requested capital projects at LANL related to increased pit production as of two years ago, see <http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/the-us-nuclear-weapons-complex-pushing-a-new-production-capability>.

5 These vessels, which contain explosions involving plutonium isotopes, are to help certify new pits under a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty regime. For historical information about this program at LANL see <http://www.lasg.org/technical/subcritical-trident.htm>.

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