



# Los Alamos Study Group

*Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability*

## **House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Strategic Forces Hearing**

**9 Apr 2019**

## **FY20 Priorities: Atomic Energy Defense, Nonproliferation, Safety & Environmental Management**

<https://armedservices.house.gov/hearings?ID=D0024E51-C44F-4E91-8A3D-BDB219CDED79>

1:09:56

Congressman Garamendi questions Lisa Gordon Hagerty:

"Back to the 80 pits. You said that the 80 pits are required by the strategic, by the Department of Defense. Is that correct?"

LGH: "Correct."

JG: "For what purpose?"

LGH: "To maintain and modernize the current nuclear weapons."

JG: "For what specifically, for what weapons, for what delivery systems?"

LGH: "For currently, the W87-1, which is the 78 replacement. And for a number of other systems that we're working on right now.

So, but it's specifically the 87-1 which has a FPU of 2030 that we have to produce the pits for that period for that weapons system."

JG: "And how many for that purpose?"

LGH: "That number is classified but I would be happy to go into a closed session with you and explain and have DoD with me."

JG: "I would be happy to know ..."

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Same hearing at 44:04

LGH: "We haven't had a plutonium production capability since the early 1990's. The last time we produced 11 war-reserve what we call diamond-stamped pits for the United States was over 2 decades ago. (At 44:16) We are trying to modernize and recapitalize that capability at Los Alamos National Laboratory. We have them on a path forward and progress to produce not less than 10 pits per year in 2024, 20 pits in 2025, and in 2026 maintain 30 pits per year. That is really stretching their capabilities. After all, Los Alamos National Laboratory and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory are known to be nuclear weapon design agencies, not production sites."

At 44:48: LGH continues:

"And again, we shuttered our production capabilities in the early 1990's. We're modernizing an existing stockpile. And in order to do so, we need nuclear weapons, or the pits for those nuclear

weapons. (44:59) And in order to get to that 80 pits per year and recognizing the challenges we have ahead of us, in 11 years, in 11 years, we are going to have to produce not less than 80 pits per year. (45:12) We conducted an Analysis of Alternatives and an Engineering Assessment and the best way to get there given the risks and risk mitigation factors, is to repurpose the facility at Savannah River Site and produce the remaining 50 pits per year starting in 2030 at Savannah River Site. (45:31) And we believe that's a good investment of taxpayer resources (45:35) because otherwise we will not be able to get to that 80 pits per year if we looked at the plan of going forward at Los Alamos which would consider major new construction activities."

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Same hearing at 1:42:30:

Congressman Wilson: "And again, what is your assessment of the need to repurpose the MOX facility for the plutonium pit production?"

LGH: "The Department of Defense and the Nuclear Weapons Council stated that the Department of Defense requirements of not less than 80 pits per year beginning in 2030. And at which point several years ago we conducted an Analysis of Alternatives and eventually followed on by an Engineering Assessment that stated the different approaches under which we could produce that not less than 80 pits per year were several options. We winnied those/skinnied those down to approximately 4 options of which 3 were at the Los Alamos National Laboratory which would undertake significant resources to build out additional facilities there. Or because we were approaching the plan to terminate the MOX facility we could repurpose that partially constructed facility which we thought was the most appropriate way to go and would also provide us with a resilient and redundant capability that we have not had in this United States since the late 1980's early 90's.

AW: "So, the justification for the two-pronged approach you feel is very clear?"

LGH: "Very clear. (1:43:45) Clearly, our United States needs a redundant and resilient capability for future nuclear weapons stockpile requirements. And the time is long past that we retain or obtain the capability to produce nuclear weapons pits. And doing it (1:44:00) at Los Alamos will not get us to the required 80 pits per year."

AW: (1:44:07) "And you've done the cost analysis of Los Alamos Savannah River Site as to not have a two-pronged approach?"

LGH: (1:44:20) "Yes sir, we have. And we will not meet the ... It's challenging as it is. Let's be frank. 2030 is only 11 years away. And that's challenging in and of itself. To try to then identify other needs and start to build new facilities and additional facilities to our current operations at Los Alamos while we are maintaining or obtaining, getting to, a place where we will be producing 30 pits per year in perpetuity starting in 2026 makes it even more challenging. (1:44:46) And we will not be able to get to that 80 pits per year required by the Nuclear Weapons Council."

AW: (1:44:52) "I appreciate your clarity on this."

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<https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/19-03-28-department-of-energys-atomic-energy-defense-programs>

**SASC hearing**  
**Department of Energy's Atomic Energy Defense Programs**  
**28 Mar 2019**

Lisa Gordon Hagerty, questioned by Senator Deb Fischer:

DF: (38:11) "NNSA's goal has been to be able to produce those 80 plutonium pits per year 2030. And I know that you do have a strategy to accomplish this. And you are pursuing it. But it is my understanding that as a result of the years of delay that this effort has faced. I guess you could say plans are extremely fragile at this point. And achieving this goal is going to be challenging for you. I am pleased you are focused on it. But my question is (38:44) "To what extent has NNSA thought about any contingencies or any supplemental plans should it face delays or any kind of disruption to your current strategy that you hold?"

LGH: (39:02) "We have a number of different options available to us. We are obviously focused on the most optimal which is to go with the two-pronged strategy for pit production which will be as the Secretary said Los Alamos producing pits 1-30 and as we repurpose the former MOX facility in South Carolina that we will look to have an aggressive plan for that."

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