

# End the Ukraine war, stop LANL's plutonium bomb factory (again!)

"Once a nation pledges its safety to an absolute weapon, it becomes emotionally essential to believe in an absolute enemy." (P.M.S. Blackett, one of Oppie's teachers)

Learn more at <https://lasg.org/Ukraine/Ukraine.html>, and/or come to our briefing and discussion on Saturday October 12, from 1-5 pm at St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Santa Fe, 550 W. San Mateo Road. We, our guest speakers, and community members will discuss the war in Ukraine, the legal implications of LANL's new mission, and more.

## We must quickly end the U.S. proxy war in Ukraine

Ending the very bloody U.S. proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and resuming normal relations with Russia must be one of the very highest priorities of government. It may not be obvious, but our democracy depends on it.

Ukraine has lost this war. Independent analyses suggest Ukraine may have already suffered as many war deaths as did the U.S. in all theaters of World War II. The Ukrainian economy is in tatters; its key infrastructure is badly damaged; its government is bankrupt. Several million Ukrainians have emigrated. Russia's casualties are far lower and its military is stronger than at the outset; its economy is healthy and growing despite massive sanctions; its society is solidly supportive of the war effort and of its president, Vladimir Putin.

There never was any chance that Ukraine, even with the gigantic subsidies and direct military assistance it receives from the U.S. and NATO, could defeat Russia in the latter's backyard, or reclaim the territory Russia now controls.

Russia's goals were and still are limited: a neutral Ukraine that is not an existential threat to Russia, and protection for the four breakaway provinces that are now part of Russia and of course for Crimea, which Russia accepted back in 2014.

These conditions are the only realistic bases for peace.

Ending this war now is essential for not only preserving lives and infrastructure in Ukraine but also for returning to more wholesome national priorities in the U.S. and Europe. An internal structural shift is required in this country.

Ending the war and reestablishing normal relations with Russia are pivotal for regaining a constitutional republic here in the U.S. Our whole government is now largely hostage to a controlling national security establishment fed by massive appropriations and supported by political corruption, a supine news media, and an Orwellian level of hate.

## We are at the brink of open war with Russia

As we write these words, President Biden is meeting with President Zelensky, asking for (among other things) U.S. permission and direct participation in launching long-range missiles deep into Russia.

Russia has made it clear that should any such strikes occur, Russia will consider itself at war with NATO and the countries involved in these strikes.

Yesterday (9/25/24), President Putin and the Russian Security Council announced that the conditions under which Russia might use nuclear weapons were being expanded to include attacks on Russia or Belarus using conventional munitions, including strategic or tactical aircraft, cruise missiles, drones, and hypersonic and other missiles.

Putin said Russia would henceforth consider using nuclear weapons "upon receiving reliable information about the massive launch of aerospace attack vehicles and their crossing of our state border." A rival nuclear power supporting a conventional strike on Russia would be considered to be attacking Russia, and could itself be subject to reprisal.

President Biden may acquiesce now or later to pressure from Zelensky, Secretary Blinken and others to strike Russia harder, despite the pushback he is getting from the Pentagon.

We are all in a dangerous situation, to put it mildly.

Mere public opinion will play no role in what happens, but there are clear differences between presidential candidates on this issue.

## The trillion-dollar nuclear rearmament caper

Within the trillion-dollar-plus-per-year "defense" budget (boosted by vast funds for what amounts to the further destruction of Ukraine – why are we doing this?), nuclear weapons expenditures are rising fast. Construction and manufacturing costs for the "big ticket" items on the nuclear wish-list are beginning to bite.

Nobody knows what it will all cost, or which projects will actually be completed. For sure, not everything will be. At some point, the U.S. will have to stop eating its children to finance runaway militarism.

New or upgraded ballistic missiles for land and sea; new missile silos and launch centers; new submarines and bombers; new cruise missiles for land and sea; new warheads for all these; plus extensive new command, control, and communications facilities – all this will cost more than a trillion dollars. That's exclusive of deploying existing nukes and trying to clean up the Cold War environmental mess.

## In a Nutshell

- Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is slowly building a \$22 billion factory for plutonium warhead cores ("pits") that will operate around the clock.
- The new LANL pits are not actually needed for any U.S. nuclear weapon, current or planned. They are needed for deploying multiple, not just single, warheads on some new missiles.
- LANL's old facilities do not meet federal safety standards. A new, safer pit factory is being built in South Carolina.



## LANL's obesity problem

Locally, after 5 years of "explosive" growth, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is now the best-funded nuclear weapons site in the world, with about 18,500 employees (so far) and an annual budget of \$5.2 billion (B). Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) is second, at \$5.0 B.

Over one-third of LANL's burgeoning budget is now devoted to trying to reliably manufacture at least 30 plutonium warhead cores ("pits") per year. It's a heavy lift. LANL expects to make its first new pit this year but will not be able to reliably make 30 per year until 2032 at the earliest. For LANL pit production, these are early days.

## Shiny new warheads: \$100 million each, just for the pits

These pits are for a new warhead (the W87-1) for a new intercontinental ballistic missile ("Sentinel"). LANL pits will allow the U.S. to increase the number of warheads deployed on each missile from the single warhead currently available to as many as three, assuming LANL can make that many. [This is rearmament, not maintenance and not disarmament.](#)

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), which owns and funds LANL (with taxpayer funds), expects to spend roughly \$22 B on the way to its 2032 pit milestone. Of this, \$8.5 B has already been spent. We estimate NNSA will spend at least \$35 B through 2039 to make pits at LANL, if LANL's aging facilities last that long and all goes according to plan. Which it isn't.

## Way over budget and way behind schedule

LANL's pit program is already 2-6 years behind schedule and 5-7x over budget. The overruns will get worse as NNSA gradually releases more data and cost projections.

LANL says it will need 4,105 full-time workers to make these pits and is searching all over the country to find them. Meanwhile LANL attrition is about 900 souls per year.

There is a lot of "churn," especially among recent hires. Enchanting vistas are not enough to keep people. Production, maintenance, and construction shifts already run 24/7. Round-the-clock work will intensify as production ramps up.

## LANL's new mission is illegal under international law

The Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) entered into force in 1970. All NPT states parties have an obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament per Article VI: **"Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."**

Taking that obligation and other law into account, in 1996 the International Court of Justice unanimously found that "[t]here exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

The purpose of LANL's pit mission is to make additional warheads for U.S. ICBMs. Rearmament is the opposite of these legal obligations.

## LANL's geography and location can't be wished away

Two-thirds of LANL employees live outside the county. Most commute to the lab. Not just LANL employees, but other local workers must also commute in, as rapidly-rising housing costs have driven most non-Lab workers out of the County also. Median home values in Los Alamos have doubled since the pit mission began – a massive windfall for homeowners but catastrophic for affordable housing.

Speeding and reckless driving are rampant. Local police have issued over 100 citations per day on special enforcement days. Accidents with injuries have more than doubled. NNSA's field office manager relates that for commuters, driving to work is the "terror" part of their day.

Road capacity is admittedly insufficient – and has been for years. Widening LANL's main access roads is well-nigh impossible due to the very steep topography in places and the roughly 2,000 Native American ruins and sacred sites that dot LANL.

Each year LANL produces yet another "vision" or "plan" to reduce commuter traffic. Implementation is at best spotty, largely for fundamental reasons that will never go away. Face it: LANL is just too big for its location.

## Black hole on the Hill

LANL says it needs a lot more electricity and a new power line across a portion of the scenic and culturally important Caja del Rio. This plan is widely contested and rightly so. NNSA has no intention of stopping this project and is searching for ways to mollify the opposition.

LANL's labor requirements are also far out of proportion to the region, sucking precious talent from needed civilian work elsewhere.

Pit production is nuclear-waste-intensive as well, lest we forget.

As LANL's plutonium factory takes shape, the footprint of nuclear rearmament will impress itself ever more deeply across the face of northern New Mexico. Our economy, society, and governance will be increasingly tethered to nuclear weapons, continuing to hold the state back while other states advance.

All in all, LANL is a powerful inequality engine. If LANL were going to create actual economic and social development, the \$150 B LANL has spent over the decades would have done that. A plutonium industry and identity will hurt, not help. There will be no "tech transfer" from plutonium.

Senators Bingaman and Domenici did not want LANL to be a pit factory. Senators Udall and Heinrich did. NNSA, under the previous administrator, assigned this mission to LANL under the assumption it would cost \$3 B, not \$22 B, to ramp up. The whole New Mexico delegation now supports it. [This is their core economic "plan" for northern New Mexico.](#)

Under law, there was supposed to be an environmental impact statement prepared prior to assigning this mission to LANL, which could have illuminated all these problems if done well. That didn't happen. NNSA, long ago captured by its contractors, has acted in bad faith and continues to do so today.

Since 1989, the Department of Energy and NNSA have tried four times to build a new pit production capability at LANL. Each time they failed. This is the fifth attempt. LANL is the wrong kind of facility and is in the wrong place for this mission – a mission which is not even necessary right now and perhaps never will be.

We aim to stop it. We hope you will help.



Want to know more about pit production? Come to our community briefing in Los Alamos at 6pm on October 24 at the SALA event center, 2551 Central Ave. Admission is free.

## What you can do

- Endorse the "Call for Sanity, Not Nuclear Production" by scanning the QR code below and join the more than 1,052 individuals and 238 organizational endorsers to date! [Help us recruit organizations, businesses, religious groups, and individuals!](#) Without visible opposition, Congress thinks we want this plutonium bomb factory.
- Sign up for email bulletins by sending a blank email to: [lasg-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:lasg-subscribe@lists.riseup.net).
- Come to our meetings, meet friends new and old, share experience and learn!
- Share our alerts on social media!
- Help support our work financially. Mail a check to our address below, or contribute on-line at: <https://lasg.org/contribute.htm>.



Los Alamos Study Group  
2901 Summit Place NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87106  
<https://lasg.org>