

Publication: Jnl Legacy 1995 to July 2005; Date: Jan 29, 2004; Section: Journal North; Page: 2



**Date:-01/29/2004 Section:-News
Edition:-Journal North Page:-1**

Plans For Pits Plant Delayed

John Fleck Journal Staff Writer

Carlsbad Leaders Trying To Lure Bomb Factory to N.M.

Federal officials announced Wednesday an indefinite delay in work on a new plutonium bomb factory because of congressional questions about whether it is needed.

The factory, which may be built in New Mexico, would manufacture new plutonium cores for U.S. nuclear weapons. Arms control activists oppose it, picking up unusual support last year from Republicans in the House of Representatives who questioned its need.

The cores, also called pits, are at the heart of modern nuclear weapons, triggering a thermonuclear explosion with a Nagasaki-sized blast.

A decision on a site for the plant, the Modern Pit Facility, had been scheduled for this spring. Carlsbad is one of five sites under consideration.

The head of the National Nuclear Security Administration announced the delay in a statement issued Wednesday afternoon.

"While there is widespread support in Congress for this project, I believe we need to pause to respond to concerns that some committees have raised about its scope and timing," said Linton Brooks, head of the NNSA.

The congressional criticism largely came from the Republican-led House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

Without a better idea of how many new nuclear weapons the nation will need, decisions on where to build the plant and how big it should be are "premature," concluded a report accompanying the 2004 nuclear weapons budget. The subcommittee voted to cut the project's budget this year by more than half.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said he supports the plutonium factory because it will be needed to maintain the future U.S. nuclear stockpile. But he agreed with the delay.

"It is important to know what the demand for pits will be in the decades to come. The delay the NNSA has announced will give the agency time to undertake the analysis needed," Bingaman said in a statement issued by his office.

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said he is not concerned by the delay.

"I am not troubled by this delay because DOE and the NNSA both know that the United States eventually needs to construct a modern pit facility to maintain our nuclear stockpile," Domenici said in a statement.

Arms control activists praised the delay.

"That's great news," said Greg Mello, head of the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group.

Mello and others in the arms control community have argued that the plant sends a dangerous signal to other nations about the United States' continued reliance on nuclear weapons.

The arms control community also has argued that the factory would give the United States the ability to manufacture large numbers of new, next-generation nuclear weapons.

"They don't need the production levels," said Jay Coghlan, head of Nuclear Watch New Mexico. "They don't need the capability for new designs."

Civic leaders in Carlsbad have been pushing hard to bring the project to southeastern New Mexico.

"We're kind of disappointed but really not that surprised," said Carlsbad Mayor Bob Forrest Wednesday.

Forrest said he believes the final decision has come down to a contest between Carlsbad and a site in South Carolina where the NNSA currently does nuclear weapons work.

Bomb Factory Plans Delayed

Carlsbad Could Be
Home for Project

BY JOHN FLECK
Journal Staff Writer

1/29/04

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••• THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2004

Pit Factory Delay Affects New Mexico

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Forrest said he believes the final decision has come down to a contest between Carlsbad and a site in South Carolina where the NNSA currently does nuclear weapons work.

Los Alamos National Laboratory also is on the list of potential sites, but lab officials have said they do not want the factory to be built there.



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

FEBRUARY 2004

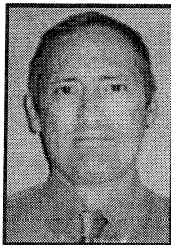
VOLUME 32, NUMBER 2

STRATCOM'S NEW GLOBAL THREAT SUBJECT OF 2004 ANNUAL PEACE CONFERENCE

The man who blew the whistle on last August's secret meeting at StratCom to plan a new generation of nuclear weapons will be the keynote speaker at the 2004 Annual Peace Conference Saturday, February 14. Greg Mello, Executive Director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a disarmament-oriented research and advocacy organization headquartered in Albuquerque, New Mexico, will speak on the topic "StratCom's New Mission: Full Global Strike." As has become traditional, a selection of Peace & Justice Workshops on topics ranging from Fair Trade to Whiteclay to the USA PATRIOT Act will also be featured.

The all-day conference, which is jointly sponsored by Nebraskans for Peace and the UNO School of Social Work, will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island, from 9:30 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. Registration is \$25 per person before February 11; \$30 per person at the door. (A student/low-income rate of \$10 is also available.) Coffee, juice and rolls and lunch catered by Valentino's are included in the registration cost. Child care will be provided, and up to four-and-one-half CEUs will be offered to certified Masters Social Workers and Licensed Mental Health Practitioners who attend.

Greg Mello's talk on StratCom's expanded focus and mission in the aftermath of 9/11 could not be more timely.



Greg Mello
Keynote Speaker

Over the past two years, StratCom has seen its limited role of maintaining America's nuclear deterrent grow to where it now serves as the command center for every conventional military intervention undertaken by the U.S. government. It was the Study Group's disclosure in January 2003 of a secret Stockpile Stewardship Conference at StratCom, however, that ultimately helped draw public attention to this dramatic shift in mission. In discussions that were closed to congressional representatives and the public, laboratory and production-plant contractors, Pentagon staff, and StratCom officers convened last August for a policy discussion on the proposed use of nuclear weapons in conventional conflicts (the so-called "mini-nukes"), and how in turn to sell their proposal to a reluctant Congress.

Greg Mello is uniquely qualified to weigh in on this discussion. Since co-founding the Study Group in 1989, he has led the Study Group in its research on the activities of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex and in environmental review and analysis.

Other Study Group programs led by him include congressional education and lobbying, community organizing, litigation, and advertising (Study Group billboards can be found between the Albuquerque airport and Los Alamos National Laboratory). From time to time, he has also served as a consulting analyst and writer for other nuclear policy organizations as well.

In 2002, Mello was a Visiting Research Fellow at Princeton's Program on Science and Global Security. He is a member of the Governing Council of the worldwide Abolition 2000 nuclear disarmament organization. This year, the *Albuquerque Tribune* recognized Mello as one of its ten

"rising stars" for 2004. He has provided key information to NGOs and diplomats at treaty conferences in New York and Geneva.

Mello's research, analysis, and opinions have been published in the *Washington Post*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *Issues in Science and Technology*, the *New Mexico* press and elsewhere.

Over the past decade, he has led the Study Group in bringing to the attention of Congress and the news media a number of clandestine nuclear projects and programs. These include: a new earth-penetrating nuclear bomb; a nuclear glide bomb; the planned upgrade of more than 3,200 submarine warheads into ground-burst, first-strike weapons, significantly affecting U.S./Russian strategic stability; above-ground testing of plutonium cores ("pits") in steel tanks; a laboratory program to "share" nuclear weapons secrets with "friendly" nuclear nations; and others.

Study Group work has delayed and downscaled production of plutonium pits, and has saved hundreds of millions of dollars in a variety of other wasteful and unsafe projects at Los Alamos National Laboratory—projects later found to be unnecessary from any perspective. In the course of his work, Mello and the Study Group have generated hundreds of news articles and segments in the regional, national and international press and in broadcast media.

His education is that of an engineer (B.S. with distinction, Harvey Mudd College, 1971) and regional planner (Harvard, 1975, HUD Fellow in Urban Studies). Greg and his wife Trish (also an activist, formerly with Serious Texans Against Nuclear Dumping [STAND] in Amarillo) live and work in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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Los Alamos Study Group

Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability

Bush Nuclear Agenda at Crossroads

KUNM commentary 6/15/04 gm

On June 3, Linton Brooks, President Bush's top nuclear weapons czar and the guy theoretically in charge of New Mexico's labs, announced that the Administration had approved a 40% cut in the total number of U.S. nuclear weapons by 2012, from about 10,400 to about 6,100.

Never mind for a moment that this plan has no transparency, milestones, or accountability, could be reversed with a stroke of the President's pen, and that these cuts don't go nearly as far as Russia – still the only U.S. nuclear rival – would like. It is still very good news.

But it is tempered with the knowledge that it's only the "dead wood" which is to be retired, and that the remaining weapons, under current plans *not* being debated in Congress, will become more capable and flexible, with more accurate warheads and precision, ground-burst fuzes to attack a greater range of targets. What is being debated are the new earth-penetrating weapons now under active development, and the low-yield "mininukes" which could be made from existing weapons at any time, now that Congress has removed the legal restrictions from doing so.

"In recommending this stockpile plan to the President," Mr. Brooks said, "we recognize that maintaining the nation's nuclear deterrence with a much smaller stockpile means that we must continue Administration efforts to restore the nuclear weapons infrastructure."

In other words, Mr. Brooks wants new factories – especially, as he says, a new factory for plutonium weapons cores, or "pits." Making pits is the most expensive, most dangerous to workers, and most waste-producing step in making nuclear weapons. He and the other weapons bureaucrats clearly hope that Congress will fully fund a new pit factories.

Factories, *plural*? This year about 9/10s of the pit production money is being spent in Los Alamos. LANL has spent a billion dollars so far gearing up for pit production – whatever have they done with all that money, since they had the buildings and equipment in place when they started? – and LANL will spend a couple of hundred million more this year on it. There's no debate in Congress about allocating this money. But Los Alamos does not have the physical capacity to make all the pits Mr. Brooks wants – *unless it expands a little bit*. Still, Brooks wants a bigger factory, in addition to the one being brought on line in Los Alamos.

Will he get it? Maybe. Last Wednesday, a House subcommittee said, "No, thank you," and zeroed out that big factory. The Republican chair of that committee will now have to do some horse-trading with his Senate counterpart, Pete Domenici. Will Senator Domenici trade away needed water projects in New Mexico for a big nuclear weapons factory, almost certainly to be located in South Carolina, just because the nukemeisters want him to carry *their* political water? We'll see. One thing is sure: Los Alamos pit production is growing. To what ultimate scale depends on many factors, not the least of which is citizen resistance.

This is Greg Mello, with the Los Alamos Study Group.

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The Online News Source for Los Alamos

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Wednesday, August 4, 2004

Last modified Wednesday, August 4, 2004 4:59 PM MDT

Anti-nuke group makes annual visit to town

ROGER SNODGRASS, roger@lamonitor.com, Monitor Assistant Editor

Northern New Mexico activist and their supporters will be in town for several activities Thursday. Organized by the Los Alamos Study Group, a public interest organization, the visit will cap several days of activities that began with workshops in Santa Fe and Albuquerque earlier in the week.

The program focusing on Los Alamos National Laboratory is called "citizen inspections" and will include aerial and walk-around tours.

A release by the group says, "(C)itizens can see for themselves some of the facilities involved in the Los Alamos weapons programs, barring interruptions by LANL security forces."

The laboratory has alerted its workforce of the visit, warning that the visitors may try to interact with LANL personnel.

"We have informed our employees and it's entirely up to them if they choose to interact or not," said Linn Tytler, a laboratory spokesperson, this morning. "We have asked them to be polite, as they would be to any citizens. They can choose to discuss unclassified information with anyone or they can choose not to."

LASG's invitations have noted the lab's current safety and security crises.

"True nonviolence does not capitalize on this event," Mellow wrote. "We will learn, listen and gently engage. It is, for some, a teachable moment, a moment when they begin to see what the lab is all about."

The core of the group arrives from Albuquerque, where LASG moved its headquarters several months ago, and from Santa Fe by car and van.

A couple of aerial tours that will avoid restricted air space will also bring special guests including journalists to the Hill.

In past years members of the group have been involved in non-violent demonstrations in which some members of the group were symbolically arrested and later released without charges.

This year, no written understanding has been reached between the group and the laboratory, according to LASG Director Greg Mello.

Writing to the laboratory in June, Mello requested permission to inspect several facilities, including "the interiors of the Plutonium Facility (PF-4) and Nuclear Materials Storage Facility (never used) in TA-55, and the site of the proposed Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Facility, also in TA-55."

The group also asked to receive "an unclassified, on-the-record briefing or briefings on all programmatic, budgetary, and infrastructure aspects of pit production at LANL.

A response by the Government Relations Office said that for national security reasons the visit could not be accommodated and suggested the group visit the Bradbury Science Museum as an alternative for meeting the group's informational needs without the security problems.

LASG proposes to hold a press conference at Sigma Facility parking lot south of the MSL building at 3 p.m. on Thursday.

"They have no authority to hold a press conference on lab property," Tytler said. "They have been told they don't have authority to hold a press conference on lab property."

She said that roadways and sidewalks on Diamond Drive and East and West Jemez roads are public property, but that signage clearly delineates government property. There are signs that say "No Trespassing," about every hundred feet in proprietary areas.

"We've had no indications that the Study Group or its adherents are looking to be arrested," Tytler said.

The proposed press conference will be followed later in the day by a public discussion at Fuller Lodge from 6-8 p.m., focusing on LANL's current and future role in the nation's nuclear pit production plans.

Special guests, joining Mello on a panel, will include

Jacque Breaver, a former Rocky Flats worker and Ron Avery a former pit production supervisor.

Laboratory spokespeople have been invited to participate, but Mellow said on Tuesday, that he had not yet found anybody to represent the laboratory.

Scientists who study the aging nuclear stockpile say new nuclear pits, the plutonium-based packages that provide the triggers for nuclear weapons, may be required in the next several decades.

Formerly, pits were made at the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado, until the FBI closed it down in 1989 because of health and environmental problems.

Subsequently, LANL was given the mission to develop a temporary pit-making capability, and was one of five locations under consideration for a new pit factory.

An environmental impact statement for the Modern Pit Facility was withdrawn last year, when a key House committee requested more information on the administration's pit requirements.

UC and LANL officials have not shown enthusiasm for bringing the facility to Los Alamos, and the New Mexico congressional delegation has favored Carlsbad as a location.

But Mello believes that Los Alamos, which was the Department of Energy's highest rated location for the production, may get the facility after all.

"People in Los Alamos don't understand that they are moving back into the bulls eye," for the pit facility, Mello said.

Anti-nuke group makes annual visit to town

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Monitor Assistant Editor

8/1/04

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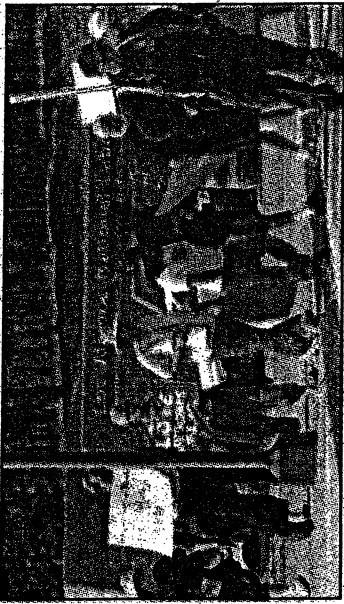
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GARY WARREN/Monitor
Anti-nuclear and peace activists marched on Diamond Drive last year on the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

VISIT Nuke group to come

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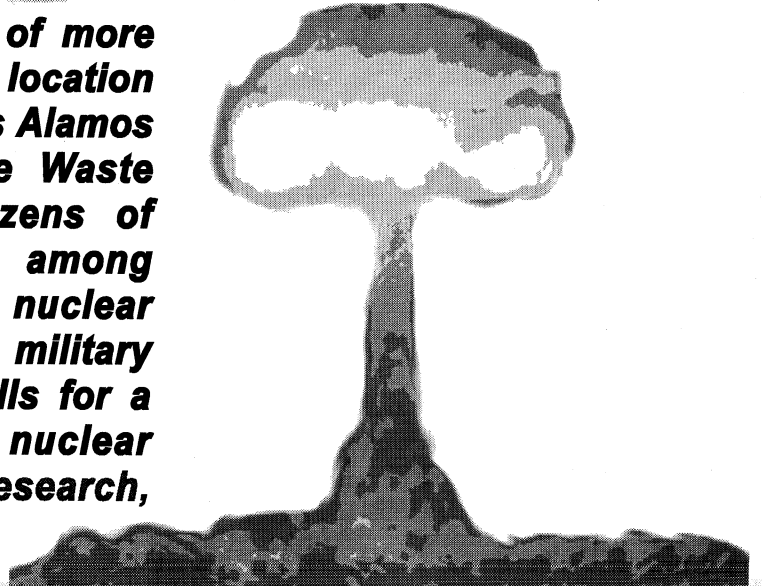
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Nuclear Weapons, Military Research and the University of New Mexico

Albuquerque holds a stockpile of more nuclear weapons than any other location on earth. New Mexico hosts Los Alamos National Lab, Sandia Lab, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, and dozens of military-industrial corporations among other facilities of the national nuclear weapons complex. Current US military and nuclear weapons policy calls for a renewed expansion of the nuclear weapons complex, weapons research, and military spending.



Where do UNM and New Mexico fit into this picture?

The Bush Administration's Nuclear Weapons Policy

Los Alamos National Lab

Universities and Weapons Research

New Nuclear Weapons

The Modern Pit Facility

"More Useable" Nuclear Weapons

WHEN: Wednesday October 8th at 7PM

WHERE: 'Lobo B' on the 3rd Floor of the Student Union Building

With Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group, and Darwin BondGraham & Emily Hell of Fiat Pax (a California based group focused on the militarization of universities, science, and education).

***Sponsored by the Progressive Student Alliance
and the UNM Campus Greens***

Publication: Santa Fe New Mexican; Date: Nov 23, 2004; Section: News; Page: 5



Activists rejoice after funding turned down for new weapons

By DIANA HEIL The New Mexican

Anti-nuclear groups declared a victory last weekend after Congress rejected funds for new weapons.

Although the Department of Energy got more money than President Bush requested, the most controversial projects either weren't funded or were funded at reduced levels. The moves came after some members of Congress questioned justifications for designing new weapons, building a new nuclear-weapons manufacturing plant and shortening the time it would take to resume nuclear testing.

Greg Mello, head of the Los Alamos Study Group in Albuquerque, counted it as a victory because the Bush administration did not get an endorsement for new nukes in the spending bill.

"No doubt there was real growth in the weapons program despite these cuts, and there will be real new weapons designed this year and upgraded weapons built — don't doubt this for a minute — but these important symbolic projects, which carry messages about the legitimacy of the whole, were stopped for now," Mello said.

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, with the help of engineers at Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico, was poised to design a so-called "nuclear bunker buster." This new nuclear bomb would burrow beneath ground and hit targets much deeper than possible with current technology.

The Bush administration asked for \$27.6 million for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, as it's called in Washington. But in the end, the bunker buster got nothing.

The Bush administration also wanted \$9 million for scientists to explore advanced concepts in weapons design, which could have included new nuclear weapons. But U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., who chairs the senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, helped change the program's direction and give it a new title.

The newly named Reliability Replacement Warhead Program — which Congress gave \$9 million last weekend — will encourage scientists to focus on refurbishing existing weapons instead, according to Domenici's office. Weapons designers, including those at Los Alamos, will be challenged to make existing weapons more reliable, easier to certify without testing and safer to store over time. Hypothetically, a brand new version of an existing warhead could be built.

Another project that took a hit was the administration's \$29.8 million request for a new facility to build plutonium pits for nuclear weapons. It was cut to \$7 million. The Energy Department can use the money to evaluate different sites for the facility and conduct environmental-impact studies.

Meanwhile, the Energy Department is wrapping up a major study on the life span of pits that will give legislators more information before they decide whether to build a new pit facility, according to Domenici's office.

What's more, part of the millions that would have gone for pit manufacturing and certification at Los Alamos National Laboratory went for another cause. Congress agreed to spend \$236 million to refurbish

W76, a submarine-launched warhead, according to Domenici's office.

The final bill provides \$23.3 billion overall for DOE in 2005. That is \$150 million more than President Bush requested and \$1.34 million more than the agency received this year. It awaits his signature.

"The fight against the Bush administration's nuclearweapons program was the No. 1 legislative priority of the arms-control community this year," said John Isaacs of the Council for a Livable World based in Washington, D.C.

He attributed the budget victory to Rep. David Hobson, an Ohio Republican who worked to kill these programs; the federal budget deficit; the need to find funds for the Yucca Mountain nuclear-waste dump in Nevada; and the hard work of arms-control advocates.

Hobson, chairman of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, has battled with Domenici, a supporter of the president's policies and an advocate for Los Alamos National Laboratory and other nuclear labs.