

Our daily tsunami

Each day we pour thousands of people — including New Mexicans — into maintaining a flood of nuclear weapons. When will we stop this folly?

By Greg Mello

1/6/05

The latest is the south Asian tsunami will claim 150,000 or more lives. It is by any measure a terrible disaster.

U.N. and private relief officials say famine, thirst and disease could claim as many lives as the sea if basic needs are not quickly provided. Many nations are pledging aid; President Bush has increased the initial U.S. offer from \$15 million to \$350 million.

Let us imagine, if we can, a catastrophe of this scale caused by human negligence. It would be a great crime. Unspeakably worse, however, it would be a planned catastrophe. Who could contemplate creating such a catastrophe or put the machinery in place to make it happen?

Actually, thousands of people in the United States do so every day. These are the men and women who lead and work in the government's nuclear weapons industry, including several thousand in New Mexico. Their job is to produce the threat of great danger to others through awesome weapons.

It has been done already. On Aug. 6, 1945, an atomic bomb with an explosive yield of 15 kilotons of TNT was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. Before Japanese authorities could digest this event, a second, 20-kiloton bomb was detonated above Nagasaki on Aug. 9. By the end of that year, 210,000 people had died from these two explosions; roughly another 90,000 prematurely died as a result of these bombs since then.

Those deaths were fully premeditated. Even before a full-scale test was conducted in July of that year in New Mexico, there was little practical uncertainty about the blast, heat and radiation effects of these bombs. What uncertainty might have remained was thoroughly dispelled by the Trinity test near Alamogordo.

Like the invasion of Iraq, which has also

TODAY'S BYLINE

Mello is director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a nuclear weapons monitoring group in Albuquerque.

caused civilian casualties comparable to this week's tsunami, the atomic bombing of Japan was a clear crime under existing law.

So let's call a spade a damn shovel. Our two nuclear labs, Los Alamos and Sandia National laboratories, are the world's foremost facilities for the production of mass death on demand.

Their weapons are like portable death camps; instead of laboriously bringing victims to gas chambers and ovens, the ovens can be brought to the victims in a matter of minutes — once all the preliminary work is done by so many willing hands.

These labs help provide our rulers a way to inflict on as many others as possible the most extreme opposite of what we would like others to do to us — the most extreme opposite of the Golden Rule.

Evangelicals, take note: This arguably makes nuclear weapons the central exemplar and metaphor for all that is upside down in our scale of values today. If it's OK to threaten complete annihilation for millions, surely far lesser forms of violence, both overt and structural, also are justified.

Over the past 60 years, our country has spent \$7 trillion of its citizens' labor and money to generate 70,000 nuclear warheads at an average cost of about \$100 million apiece. We retain 10,400 such weapons today in our nuclear arsenal.

The \$35 million promised in initially in relief for hard-hit Asian nations represents about one-third of what it historically has cost us for a single nuclear weapon — the casualties from which would likely exceed those from this week's tsunami.

Morality, and even law, are somewhat out of fashion in the hallowed halls of the

national security state, and so we ask only this: Which of what follows is the better national security investment?

This year, Los Alamos Lab will spend about \$200 million to produce plutonium bomb cores ("pits"). After spending about \$1.7 billion over a decade-long period, the lab hopes to start manufacturing pits in earnest in 2007 in order to augment the 23,000 pits the U.S. already has. If the lab slowed down these grotesque efforts to build that 23,001st pit by just 20 percent for just one year we could double our aid to the hundreds of thousands of people who are now in mortal danger. Which is the better security investment?

This year's budget for Los Alamos Lab is more than twice as much as will be spent on all the programs of the World Health Organization for the entire world. And the Iraq war costs more than 100 times as much.

Which is the better security investment, aggressively creating hatred against us while killing and maiming thousands of our own people in an unprecedented invasion of a foreign country? Or providing clean water, child immunization programs and increasing food security all over the world?

It is tragic that any of this has to be asked, and asked in a guest article like this one. It is too obvious.

If newspaper editors could find the courage in their hearts to speak up clearly and reporters to ask obvious but embarrassing questions, we would not be in Iraq, nor would Los Alamos be making plutonium pits.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. aid would be flowing to these stricken countries, and you and I need not cry out in shame for what our country has become.

Where will those editors find the courage to speak for basic human values? Dear reader, from our own, from our own.



Bush budget would mean more for LANL, less for Sandia

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DIANA HEIL | The New Mexican
February 8, 2005

The Bush Administration dished out a few surprises for the Energy Department with its Monday budget proposal.

"While there are some positive elements to this budget proposal, overall New Mexico's labs don't fare as well as I would like them to," U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman,

D-N.M., said in a news release.

If Congress goes along with it, spending for the Energy Department would fall 2 percent to

\$23.4 billion.

New Mexico would see a \$6 million decrease over current funding, which is at \$4.5 billion.

"It's possible, even likely, that the nuclear-weapons budget may decline for the first time since 1995 in projected constant-dollar terms," according to Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group in Albuquerque.

But Mello and other anti-nuke activists aren't celebrating.

The proposed budget is streaked with "misplaced priorities," according to Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, a watchdog group in Santa Fe.

Back on the table are four controversial nuclear weapons programs that Congress last year either completely cut, substantially reduced or redirected, Coghlan said. Of the increased funding, \$4 million, would go toward studying "bunker busters," a new weapon that could destroy hardened, deeply buried targets.

Meanwhile, a program to stop the spread of nuclear materials throughout the world got a 15 percent increase, to \$1.6 billion, a boost both senators Bingaman and Pete Domenici, R-N.M., praised.

New Mexico workers, however, may wonder what the 2006 budget proposal means for them. Some programs in the state would swell while others would shrink.

Los Alamos National Laboratory stands to gain more: \$1.8 billion, up \$29 million over this year.

Funding at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque would decrease to \$1.381 billion. That's \$121 million below what it got this year, according to Domenici.

"It's too early to speculate on what it would mean," Sandia spokesman John German said, noting that the proposed budget has a long road ahead through Congress.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad also would take a hit. The budget proposal includes

\$226 million for WIPP, down

\$11.5 million from this year, according to Domenici.

WIPP, which accepted its first radioactive shipment in March 1999, is designed to permanently store plutonium-contaminated waste more than 2,100 feet underground in ancient salt beds.

Within the LANL budget is money for programs to stop the spread of nuclear materials in the world, make plutonium triggers for nuclear weapons, build the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility, upgrade the power infrastructure and accelerate cleanup of contamination on lab grounds.

There's also \$27 million for the controversial and vastly over-budget Dual Axis Radiographic Hydrodynamic Test facility, an X-ray machine intended to produce three-dimensional images of materials during an explosion.

"Accelerated" waste cleanup at Los Alamos would receive \$142 million, up \$23 million from this year. The state is prepared to sign a massive environmental cleanup order with the Energy Department and Los Alamos lab. But Ron Curry, the New Mexico environment secretary, said he isn't sure what the budget means by accelerated cleanup and he plans to talk to lab Director Pete Nanos about it.

"There's a possibility that the funding the Department of Energy needs to push forward on this order could be cut," Curry said in an interview Monday.



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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF JEAN LAMBERT

PROMINENT PEACE ACTIVIST TO VISIT LONDON

8 March 2005

Jean Lambert, London's Green MEP is hosting a landmark visit to the UK by Greg Mello, one of the US's most prominent peace activists, especially around the area of US nuclear weapons plans and policies. In the USA, Greg Mello is well known for conducting citizens' inspections of nuclear facilities, demanding greater transparency and accountability from the nuclear industry.

The European Parliament will vote today on whether to accept measures on nuclear disarmament ahead of a conference on New York in May of this year.

Jean Lambert said; **"We want more money for weapons inspectors and a UN backed body to oversee nuclear disarmament, as well as restating the EU's commitment to the elimination of all nuclear weapons."**

Mr. Mello's trip to London and Brussels next week stems from his view that American nuclear policy needs a closer review by leaders in other democracies. **"You can't understand what's going on in U.S. nuclear policy by reading the U.S. newspapers, or even by following the debates in Congress, such as they are. On the one hand, U.S. nuclear policies are substantially driven by institutional factors which are poorly understood in the capital, and on the other, they are expressions of military imperatives which are seldom if ever openly discussed in those places,"** said Mello.

"As a result, there is a widespread, serious misapprehension that identifies Bush Administration rhetoric and programs with some kind of dramatic change in U.S. nuclear policy. There has been no such change, only a gradual intensification and ripening of programs and imperatives already in place and at work."

"We need help from western democracies less given over to the imperial thinking. The direction of U.S. nuclear policy is quite dangerous, and the state of debate in the U.S. is utterly incapable of restraining these dangers."

Jean concluded, **"It is essential that peace campaigners across the globe co-operate to explain and expose the reality of WMDs. Greg's trip will bring new information in this important 60th anniversary year."**

Press Contact Alex Rowe 020 7407 6280 alexrowe@greenmeps.org.uk

Notes to Editors

1) Mr. Mello lives and works in New Mexico, where the world's two best-funded nuclear weapons facilities (Los Alamos and Sandia laboratories) are to be found. A former engineer, for the past decade thirteen years, he has directed the Los Alamos Study Group, a nongovernmental organization devoted to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

2) This year is the 60th anniversary of the nuclear bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

3) Both Jean Lambert and Greg Mello are available for interview in the UK from Saturday 12 March and in Brussels on 16th and 17th March.

The Nuclear Disarmament Imperative

by Claire Long and Emily Strabbing,
Los Alamos Study Group

W e as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values... A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." The words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. ring with a relevance in this crucial time when the Bush administration has sent Congress the most massive military budget in our nation's history or the history of the world, including expenditures for a new generation of nuclear weaponry. This "spiritual death," referred to by Dr. King is not something ethereal and vague; rather, it is well within our power to transcend. One crucial component in the effort to decrease military spending and bolster citizens' well-being is to take a stand against nuclear weapons.

Nuclear proliferation, that is, the research and manufacture of nuclear weapons, is alive and well here in New Mexico, the birthplace of the atomic bomb. The continued possession, further development and manufacture of nuclear weapons by the United States undermines the ethical basis of our society, breaks treaties our nation has signed, wastes our nation's wealth, and permanently contaminates our environment, while providing no real contribution to U.S. national security.

This concrete manifestation of what Dr. King calls "spiritual death," this black hole of military spending, ironically provides us with a unique opportunity for "spiritual resurrection," if we choose to take the road of action with confidence. This means saying *no* to nuclear proliferation and *yes* to nuclear disarmament on behalf of humanity and the planet. The Los Alamos Study Group asks you to join more than 1000 New Mexicans and 187 200 New Mexico businesses and organizations that have made this choice by signing the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament." It is up to citizens to disrupt the trend of socio-political isolation and revitalize public discourse about the illegal production of nuclear weapons.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION ILLEGAL

Illegal! Yes, nuclear proliferation is indeed illegal, as stated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), ratified in 1970 by the United States and 187 other countries. The U.S. and other nuclear powers are therefore legally bound to abide by all articles within the treaty, including Article VI of the NPT, which clearly calls for all parties of the treaty to pursue "... complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

GUEST EDITORIAL . . .

Silence in the face of nuclear proliferation communicates support for the illegal, immoral industry of maintaining, researching, creating and deploying nuclear and other weapons.

The growing international spotlight on nuclear proliferation has also activated a worldwide groundswell of voices calling for disarmament. In addition to individuals, hundreds of national and international organizations have formed to work for nuclear disarmament. Members include political leaders, military personnel, business professionals, physicians, scientists, lawyers, religious leaders, communities of faith, artists, musicians, actors, students and concerned citizens everywhere. General Charles Horner, former President Jimmy Carter, Maya Angelou and Dr. Jane Goodall are just a few prestigious public figures who support nuclear abolition (<http://www.gsinstitute.org/gsi/you.html>).

Heads of government and political figures are also beginning to heed the call for disarmament. As stated by the World Court Project, "The vast majority of governments across the globe support nuclear abolition, but have not been strong, loud, or coordinated enough to help achieve it" (<http://wcp.gn.apc.org/>). One successful example is Mayors for Peace, a coalition of mayors from 714 cities representing 110 countries so far, working toward peace and nonviolent solutions to international conflicts. In the United States, mayors of 57 cities are now part of Mayors for Peace, including our mayor of Santa Fe, Larry Delgado, who we hope is leading the way for other New Mexico mayors to follow. This is no small feat! Using Mayors for Peace as inspiration, we must work with our allies and pressure our own political leaders and other important public figures to heed the call for nuclear disarmament (<http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/mayors/english/>).

GOALS FOR DISARMAMENT

You may be asking yourself, what does the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament" have to do with me? This is not simply a local petition; it is New Mexico's voice in the global chorus of numerous declarations against nuclear proliferation and the unjust violence inherent in the construction and threat of deployment of nuclear weapons. The World Court project states that "declarations [for nuclear disarmament] are therefore not petitions. They are not simply political tools. They are personal commitments intended to contribute towards the development of international law." This concept is the philosophical basis for the Los Alamos Study Group's "Call for Nuclear Disarmament," which states four concrete goals for disarmament:

1. Stop design and manufacture of all nuclear weapons, including plutonium bomb cores.
2. Dismantle our nuclear arsenal in concert with other nuclear powers, pursuant to Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

3. Halt the disposal of nuclear waste at Los Alamos.

4. Demand sensible priorities for health care for everyone, better education, renewable energy, and economic opportunity for those who don't have it.

LOS ALAMOS STUDY GROUP

Here in New Mexico we have an important historical imperative and current responsibility with regard to nuclear weapons research, development and production. While federal funding continued to pour into our state at a higher rate per capita than any other state, New Mexico's poverty rates increased, and our public education system was rated as one of the worst in the nation. Observation and rejection of this intimate, destructive relationship led to the creation of the Los Alamos Study Group in 1989.

The organization is a nonprofit whose careful research on the activity of nuclear weapons labs in New Mexico is devoted to educating the public on matters of nuclear activity and facilitating positive change in New Mexico, as well as nationally and internationally. Our work includes research and scholarship, education of decision-makers, creation of an information clearinghouse for journalists, organizing, litigating and advertising. We place particular emphasis on the education and training of young activists and scholars.

We are currently working even harder to bring our research into the public eye and to invite the public to become engaged in our research and action by joining the registry of public resistance to nuclear proliferation. 2005 is an important year for nuclear policy. In May a delegation from the Los Alamos Study Group will attend the five-year NPT Review Conference at the United Nations in New York. On July 15 and 16, we will host two literary events in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, "Mightier Than the Sword: Writers Address the Nuclear Age," to mark the 60th anniversary of the world's first nuclear explosion at the Trinity Site in New Mexico. To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the devastation of Hiroshima, August 6, and Nagasaki, August 9, the Study Group, in cooperation with many other organizations, will host "Hiroshima 60 Years," an all-day commemorative event on August 6 at Ashley Pond in Los Alamos. All are great opportunities to speak up where it really counts.

TO ENDORSE THE "CALL"

Silence in the face of nuclear proliferation communicates support for the illegal, immoral industry of maintaining, researching, creating and deploying nuclear and other weapons. To sign the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament" is to join your fellow concerned New Mexicans, owners of local businesses and leaders of nonprofit organizations and churches as well as people around the world in a declaration of public conscience. We need every individual, business, organization and church to endorse the "Call."

Please go to our website, www.lasg.org, first page, under "New Mexicans Call for Nuclear Disarmament," and click on the "Endorse the Call" button at the right of the page. Let's speak out, New Mexico. It's our issue.

For more information on how to get involved and to endorse the "Hiroshima 60 Years" August 6 event, visit our website at www.lasg.org, e-mail [Claire Long at clong@lasg.org](mailto:ClaireLong@clong@lasg.org), or reach us by phone at 505-265-1200.

The Nuclear Disarmament Imperative

"We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values... A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The continued possession, further development, and manufacture of nuclear weapons by the United States here in N.M. undermines the ethical basis of our society, breaks treaties our nation has signed, wastes our nation's wealth, and permanently contaminates our environment, while providing no real contribution to U.S. national security. This concrete manifestation of what Dr. King calls "spiritual death," this black hole of military spending, ironically provides us with a unique opportunity for "spiritual resurrection," if we choose to take the road of action with confidence.

This means saying "No" to nuclear proliferation and "Yes" to nuclear disarmament on behalf of humanity and the planet. The Los Alamos Study Group asks you to join more than a 1000 New Mexicans and 200 New Mexico businesses and organizations that have made this choice by signing the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament." It is up to citizens to disrupt the trend of socio-political isolation and revitalize public discourse about the illegal production of nuclear weapons.

Illegal? Yes, nuclear proliferation is indeed illegal as stated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) ratified in 1970 by the United States and 187 other countries. The US and other nuclear powers are therefore legally bound to abide by all articles within the treaty, including Article VI of the NPT which clearly calls for all parties of the Treaty to pursue "...complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

The current nuclear weapons budget for Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has tripled the average expenditures during the Cold War era. LANL is the largest facility for WMD in the world in dollar terms. Sandia National Laboratory is next in size. Almost half of U.S. nuclear warhead spending now occurs in New Mexico. Soon, LANL will be the only site in the U.S. that fabricates plutonium pits (bomb cores), which are necessary for making completely new nuclear weapons. LANL also houses the largest active nuclear disposal site in the Southwest.

According to a recent poll conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) and Knowledge Networks, 84% of Americans believe it a good idea to "work toward eliminating nuclear weapons as part of the non-proliferation treaty" (check-out "Americans on WMD Proliferation", at <http://www.pipa.org/> and search for "April 15, 2004").

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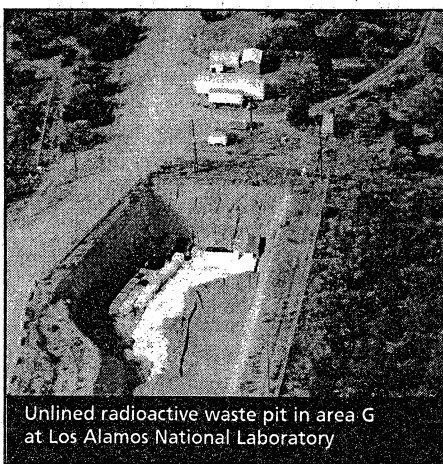
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- 3) Halt the disposal of nuclear waste at Los Alamos: and finally,
- 4) We demand sensible priorities for health care for everyone, better education, renewable energy and economic opportunity for those who have not.

Here in New Mexico we have an important historical imperative and current responsibility with regard to nuclear weapons research, development and production. While federal funding continues to pour into our state at a higher rate per capita than any other state, New Mexico's poverty rates climb, and our public education system is rated as the worst in the nation. The Los Alamos Study Group formed in 1989, is a nonprofit organization whose careful research on the activity of nuclear weapons labs in New Mexico is devoted to educating the public on matters of nuclear activity and facilitating positive change in New Mexico, as well as nationally and internationally.

To sign the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament" is to join your fellow concerned New Mexicans, owners of local businesses and leaders of non-profit organizations and churches as well as people around the world in a declaration of public conscience. Please go to our web site, www.lasg.org, "Endorse the Call" button at the right of the page. Let's speak out New Mexico. It's our issue.

For more information on how to get involved, to join the "Call for Nuclear Disarmament," or to endorse the Hiroshima 60 Years August 6th event, visit our website www.lasg.org, email Claire Long at clong@lasg.org or reach us by phone: (505)265-1200.



Unlined radioactive waste pit in area G at Los Alamos National Laboratory

Nuke administration proposes new warhead

By **WALTER PINCUS**
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The head of the nation's nuclear-weapons programs proposed Monday that Congress approve funds to study the feasibility of building a new, more reliable nuclear warhead that could be deployed without nuclear testing in less than 10 years.

Saying the current Cold War stockpile is inadequate technically and militarily, Linton F. Brooks, administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, told the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces: "We want to explore whether there is a better way to sustain existing military capabilities in our stockpile absent nuclear testing."

Recognizing such a proposal could be highly controversial, Brooks emphasized that a new nuclear war-

head is "still just a vision, nothing more," and that even planning for a feasibility study is "at the very early stages of development."

But he insisted the yields of most of the nuclear warheads in the current stockpiles, built to attack Soviet hard targets, "are probably too high." Because their casings were not designed to penetrate earth, "we have no capability against hardened, deeply buried targets." He also described the current stockpile as "unsuited for some specialized missions" caused by post-Cold War situations.

"Today's stockpile may not be the stockpile you want to have 20 years from now," Brooks concluded.

Greg Mello, director of the Los Alamos Study Group, an anti-nuke group in Albuquerque, took note of the policy shift. "This is the first time NNSA has openly spoken about building plutonium cores for new weapons

— and doing so soon, at Los Alamos," he said. "This is also the first time the Bush Administration has requested funds for manufacturing equipment specifically for these new weapons."

The push for new weapons is about a need for work to train a new generation of weaponeers at Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories, Mello said, "before the graybeards retire and die."

Although Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., had to leave the afternoon session early to attend the White House ceremony awarding the Medal of Honor to a Floridian, he gave an indication of the questions that others will raise in discussing the new warhead feasibility study.

"Is it an opportunity to have a serious review and discussion of nuclear weapons and nuclear policy?" Nelson asked. "Or is it just an excuse to develop a new nuclear weapon and to return to nuclear-weapons testing?"

Brooks said the warheads would be



designed to be less sensitive to aging and would be easier to certify as safe and reliable. He said money for the feasibility study would be taken from what Congress approved last year to initiate a so-called Reliable Replacement Warhead program that was originally proposed to study replacement parts for current warheads, designed almost 30 years ago and now being updated.

Those funds and new ones added in the proposed fiscal 2006 budget would be used "to begin concept and feasibility studies on replacement warheads or warhead components that provide comparable military capabilities to existing warheads," Brooks said.

If those studies produced a feasible program, he added, by 2012 to 2015 "we should be able to demonstrate through a small build of warheads that a reliable replacement warhead can be manufactured and certified without nuclear testing."

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US Nuclear Warhead Plan Under Fire

By Julian Borger
The Guardian UK

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Saturday 09 April 2005

Democrats and American arms control groups warned yesterday that a new Bush administration scheme to replace ageing nuclear warheads could be used as a cover for the eventual construction of a "black arsenal" of new weapons.

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The plan, known as the reliable replacement warhead programme (RRW), was unveiled this week by Linton Brooks, the head of the National Nuclear Security Administration.

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Instead of maintaining the old stockpile by monitoring the warheads and replacing occasional spare parts, RRW would entail the design, production and deployment of a new generation of warheads. These would not require testing, and therefore would not break the US moratorium on nuclear tests.

Mr Brooks said the new warheads would be used in existing cold war era weapons. The construction of a warhead production facility would also maintain the expertise and infrastructure for the US to respond flexibly to new threats.

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"We need to maintain the capability to respond to potential future requirements," he said.

Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher, a California Democrat and one of the party's leading voices on military issues, alleged that the administration was using the scheme as a cover for developing a range of "smaller and more usable" weapons which were blocked last year by Congress.

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"This administration doesn't take no for an answer," Ms Tauscher told The Guardian. "But every time we erect a fence they jump it."

Congress blocked development funds for the proposed robust nuclear earth penetrator, a "bunker-buster" for destroying enemy stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction or underground command posts. The legislature also stopped the advanced concepts initiative, a broad-ranging research programme for developing a new generation of weapons.

Opponents said both projects would undermine global counter-proliferation efforts and could eventually tempt policymakers to use a new generation of smaller weapons in a crisis.

Greg Mello, the head of the watchdog organisation the Los Alamos Study Group, said the RRW plan could have the same impact because it enabled the nuclear laboratories to custom-build small numbers of a range of warheads. He said: "It raises the spectre of a

separate arsenal - a black arsenal beyond public oversight.

"This is a way to perpetuate the nuclear weapons complex in its full panoply of capabilities and to allow the US nuclear stockpile to evolve for new missions under the guise of so-called reliability problems," Mr Mello went on.

"It is not compatible with US and other efforts to counter proliferation and it sends the wrong message around the world."

Bryan Wilkes, a spokesman for Mr Brooks said that the RRW plan was being misinterpreted. "The last new weapon in the stockpile is 20 years old," Mr Wilkes said. "If there is a problem with a component, you might have an entire class of weapons that goes bad. What we need is a way to replace some of those components. We are not talking about new weapons of new designs."

Mr Brooks argued that the RRW programme would lead to a reduction in the US arsenal rather than its expansion. He said the new warheads would be so reliable they would not need testing, and would not require the current large reserve of warheads on standby in case of malfunctions in the existing plutonium weapons.

"Establishing a responsive nuclear infrastructure will provide opportunities for additional stockpile reductions because we can rely less on the stockpile and more on infrastructure," Mr Brooks said.

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Stronger Steps Sought against Cluster Bombs

By Stefania Bianchi
Inter Press Service

Friday 08 April 2005

Brussels -- Stronger regulations are needed to protect civilians from cluster munitions during and following armed conflict, a group of leading human rights groups says.

A consortium of civil society groups, made up of the New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Belgium-based non-governmental organizations Handicap International and Netwerk Vlaanderen say the international community must halt the production, sale and use of such weapons, which they say harm hundreds of innocent civilians each year.

'The immediate effect and long-term impact of the use of cluster munitions over the past 40 years have demonstrated that cluster munitions pose unacceptable risks to civilians, yet little has been done to reduce the supply of and demand for the weapon, or to regulate its production, trade or use,' the groups said in a statement released during a press conference Thursday (Apr. 7).

'There is no transparency requirement in any conventional arms control regime that requires states to declare or notify other states of sales or transfers of cluster munitions,' they added.

Cluster bombs are weapons that contain a number of bomblets which get scattered over a wide area. Cluster munitions include artillery projectiles, aerially delivered bombs, and rockets or missiles that can be delivered by surface or from the air.

Submunitions delivered by cluster munitions are highly explosive and can be delivered in very large numbers from a long distance. However, many fail to explode and become explosive remnants of war (ERW), and these threaten the lives of civilians who come into

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International



U.S. nuclear warheads plan under fire

By Julian Borger

WASHINGTON, APRIL 9. Democrats and American arms control groups warned yesterday that a new Bush administration scheme to replace ageing nuclear warheads could be used as a cover for the eventual construction of a "black arsenal" of new weapons.

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"A covert plan"

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Opponents said both projects would undermine global counter-proliferation efforts and could eventually tempt policymakers to use a new generation of smaller weapons in a crisis.

Greg Mello, the head of the watchdog organisation the Los Alamos Study Group, said the RRW plan could have the same impact because it enabled the nuclear laboratories to custom-build small numbers of a range of warheads.

He said: ``It raises the spectre of a separate arsenal — a black arsenal beyond public oversight.

``This is a way to perpetuate the nuclear weapons complex in its full panoply of capabilities and to allow the U.S. nuclear stockpile to evolve for new missions under the guise of so-called reliability problems," Mr. Mello went on.

- Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

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May 17, 2005

Anxiously, Los Alamos Awaits a New Era

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

Two of the world's largest military contractors are challenging the nation's largest university system for the job of running Los Alamos, the government's pre-eminent nuclear arms laboratory. The winner will preside over a program valued as high as \$44 billion over two decades.

The issue is whether the University of California, the lab's longtime manager, should be awarded a new federal contract after presiding over years of safety problems, security lapses, financial irregularities and embarrassing scandals, culminating May 6 in the resignation of the director, Dr. G. Peter Nanos.

On a deeper level, the struggle is over Los Alamos's mission - whether it should turn away from its traditional role as a center of scientific excellence toward a narrower one focused on weapons design and production, in essence a bomb factory.

The university's history of automatic contract renewals ends in September; the Department of Energy says it will start receiving new proposals this week. Already, the lab is experiencing a wave of jitters, with retirements up sharply and officials expressing fears of a mass exodus.

The military contractors, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, are pursuing the contract separately. Their ambitions appear to align with those of the Bush administration, which wants Los Alamos to make atomic triggers for hydrogen bombs and a new generation of reliable, long-lived warheads.

The companies say they could revitalize Los Alamos as well. Dr. C. Paul Robinson, who recently resigned as director of the Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque to lead Lockheed Martin's bid for Los Alamos, said his company knew how to excel at industrial production without endangering its scientific mission.

"We don't want to devalue the role of science and technology," he said in an interview. "That's what drives the innovations."

But officials and experts both inside and outside Los Alamos say they worry that putting the lab in industrial hands may accelerate an exodus of vital personnel, diminish its ability to do world-class science and leave it poorly equipped to carry out the Bush administration's plans as well as its traditional responsibilities.

"I'm not sure that turning Los Alamos into a lackluster lab more focused on manufacturing is a good thing for the country," said Dr. Hugh Gusterson, an analyst at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who studies the nation's nuclear arms laboratories. "If you're trying to recruit a young Ph.D. from Princeton, and you tell them you're working for the University of California and not a bomb shop, it really matters."

Dr. Gusterson, who visited Los Alamos last month, said he had never seen morale so low. "People were just stricken," he said. "They're worried that Los Alamos will increasingly become a manufacturing facility. A lot of people were talking about early retirement."

A main worry of lab employees is that new management will never match the university's benefits, including its generous pension plan. Kevin Roark, a spokesman for Los Alamos, said worries over such matters had contributed to a recent increase in retirement inquiries.

"These are core people," he said, adding that most of them were not support staff but experts involved centrally in work on nuclear arms or on halting their spread.

Isolated in the mountains of New Mexico, the Los Alamos National Laboratory employs 14,000 people on an annual budget of \$2.2 billion. Nuclear weapons research is only one of its missions; it is ranked as one of the world's top laboratories in

terms of the number and quality of its unclassified scientific papers, as measured by how often subsequent papers cite them. Los Alamos has long maintained that the high quality of its science lifts its other endeavors.

The University of California's role goes back to 1943, when J. Robert Oppenheimer, then a top physicist there, founded the lab and brought along his employer. Historians say the university took on the management job reluctantly, mainly as a wartime public service.

The academic tie helped recruit the geniuses who built the first atom bomb but also brought a conundrum that endures today: the best civilian brains are capable of distinctly nonmilitary behavior. At wartime Los Alamos, Richard Feynman, later a Nobel laureate, spent a fair amount of time irritating the military authorities by cracking their safes.

Admirers say the climate of academic freedom lets dissenters speak out and gives the best and brightest minds a chance to clash; in science, sharp criticism is the backbone of rigor. But critics say the university's hands-off management style - especially after the cold war, when the central focus of the lab shifted from innovating to caretaking - resulted in a run of awkward and sometimes dangerous lapses.

"They lent their name and credentials for recruiting but were not in the day-to-day operations," said a senior Los Alamos official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, saying he feared reprisal. Part of the problem, he said, was that the university got only \$8 million a year for its work. In the new contract, he said, the figure is to climb to around \$100 million, the higher pay coinciding with tougher management duties.

The biggest upset on the university's watch involved Dr. Wen Ho Lee, a Los Alamos scientist arrested in 1999 on 59 counts of mishandling secret data. All but one of the charges were dropped after a judge found significant problems with the government's case.

Apprehension about security increased in 2000 when two computer hard drives containing secret data vanished from a safe and were found weeks later behind a copying machine.

In 2002, the Energy Department said such jolts reflected a "systematic management failure," and in April 2003 it announced plans to end automatic contract renewals and open the pact to competition.

Now, two years later, the department says it will lay out the new contract's terms and expectations in a final request for proposals this week. Competitors will have 60 days to submit their bids. The management fee will be the same no matter who wins.

A career civil servant at the Energy Department, as yet unnamed, is to make the choice; the idea is to remove the risk of pressure that a political appointee may face.

"The future of the lab is up in the air right now," said Greg Mello, director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a private arms-control organization in Albuquerque that monitors weapons laboratories. "The question is how hard core Los Alamos is going to be, how much science and how much production."

On Wednesday, Bechtel, the world's largest construction and engineering company, said it would join the University of California's bid. Before that announcement, S. Robert Foley, a retired admiral who oversees the university's weapons lab management, said in an interview that adding a large industrial partner would "back up the capabilities on the business side to match what we have on the science side."

He acknowledged a history of management errors and weakness at the university, the lab and the government. "They played musical chairs," he said. "They didn't hold people accountable. So there is plenty of blame to go around."

If Lockheed Martin wins the bidding, Dr. Robinson, formerly of Sandia, will become the new Los Alamos director. The company is also talking to the University of Texas - the nation's second biggest university system - to see if it will join as an academic partner.

Northrop Grumman says its strong suit is its expertise in developing advanced technology and managing large-scale military programs. "Northrop Grumman's strength lies in its people - scientists and engineers much like those at Los Alamos - who

apply their energy and creativity to solve the nation's most challenging problems," the company's president, Dr. Ronald D. Sugar, said in a statement.

But Dr. Gusterson of M.I.T. said the government needed to move carefully lest it cripple what has been a giant of national security.

"I'm sure it's attractive to have a tightly run ship," he said. "But you'll get worse science."

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3 Labs Rip U.S. Nuclear Complex

John Fleck Journal Staff Writer copyright 2005 Albuquerque Journal

Senate Unveils DOE Budget Today

The United States' current approach to maintaining its nuclear arsenal "looks increasingly unsustainable," according to an internal report by senior officials at the nation's three nuclear weapons labs.

The nuclear weapons program's future costs exceed the available budget, and the effort to maintain aging warheads is forcing the nation to retain a larger nuclear arsenal than would otherwise be needed, the report concludes.

Completed last month, the report's findings mirror in some respects those of a key House of Representatives subcommittee.

The House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee issued a report last month calling for a sweeping reorganization of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex as part of its proposed 2006 Department of Energy budget.

The two reports set the stage for today's unveiling of the Senate's version of the DOE budget, written by Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.

The outcome of the debate is critical to New Mexico, which is home to Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories, two of the three U.S. nuclear weapons design laboratories. The federal government will spend an estimated \$2.9 billion this year for nuclear weapons work in New Mexico, more than in any other state.

The House and lab reports both argue that it is no longer feasible to maintain the existing Cold War nuclear arsenal by nursing along old weapons, refurbishing aging parts when necessary.

The labs' report, written by a quartet of senior nuclear weapons scientists and endorsed by the weapons program chiefs of the three U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories, argues that continuing to maintain weapons is possible "only at significantly increasing cost."

The program, dubbed "Stockpile Stewardship" when it was established a decade ago, "merely preserve(s) nuclear weapons with out-dated technology and a ponderous and expensive enterprise required to support old technology," the labs' report concludes.

Because of resulting uncertainties about long-term weapons reliability, "the United States must retain a relatively large number of reserve weapons to ensure against contingencies," the lab scientists from Sandia, Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories wrote -- spares in

case problems crop up in some of the primary stockpile weapons.

Official stockpile numbers are classified, but the independent Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental and arms control group, estimates there are 5,300 nuclear weapons in the active U.S. stockpile and another 5,000 being held in reserve.

The House Subcommittee, led by Rep. David Hobson, R-Ohio, raised similar arguments last month, concluding that the nuclear weapons labs need to design a new "Reliable Replacement Warhead" that is easier to care for in the long run.

Hobson's 2006 budget report calls for the new warhead to be "designed for ease of manufacturing, maintenance, dismantlement and certification without nuclear testing."

To do that, Hobson's spending plan would:

- * Reduce spending on refurbishment of current U.S. weapons;
- * Increase spending on design efforts for the new Reliable Replacement Warhead;
- * Reduce spending on preparations for possible future underground nuclear test blasts at the federal government's Nevada Test Site;
- * Cut spending on nuclear weapons supercomputers, arguing that they have not lived up to their promise as a way of conducting virtual nuclear tests to maintain existing weapons;
- * Eliminate funding for a new factory to build plutonium nuclear weapon cores; and
- * Delay money for a new plutonium lab at Los Alamos until the weapons designers have a clearer picture of what the newly designed warhead requires.

Greg Mello, an arms control activist at the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group, called Hobson's vision of a new nuclear weapons program "sweeping."

Aides to Domenici declined comment, saying they preferred to wait until they released their own proposed version of the 2006 nuclear weapons budget.