



# Los Alamos Study Group

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

August 26, 2021

**G**reetings! We hope you and your family are enjoying the summer, despite the serious crises besetting our country and the world. Santa Feans – residents, businesses, and visitors alike – are uniquely placed to help address one of these crises, namely a vast new nuclear arms race, now underway at the expense of far more important national priorities.

We at the Los Alamos Study Group ([lasg.org](http://lasg.org)) have prepared the enclosed flyer to summarize the folly involved in the huge expansion of Los Alamos National Laboratory’s (LANL’s) nuclear weapons programs. Originally designed for hand distribution, we are accelerating flyer delivery with the help of the U.S. Postal Service, which also gives us the opportunity to send you this letter with the easier-to-use coupon below.

If you want to share this letter or the enclosed flyer, you can find them at [http://lasg.org/campaigns/door-hangers\\_Aug2021.html](http://lasg.org/campaigns/door-hangers_Aug2021.html). You can find much more background at our web site.

The central issue is this: with little fanfare, LANL and its federal overseer the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) have decided to construct a multibillion-dollar plutonium processing and nuclear warhead core (“pit”) manufacturing center at LANL (see the enclosed flyer).

LANL has attempted this dangerous, unnecessary expansion four times previously, and failed. This time NNSA and LANL are saying as little as possible about their plans. Few know about these plans. Hence this letter, and our appeal to you.

If you want to know more, or want to help us defeat these plans, please fill out and send us the coupon below. You can also write us by email at [gmello@lasg.org](mailto:gmello@lasg.org) or [twm@lasg.org](mailto:twm@lasg.org), or call our office at 505-265-1200.

Plutonium “pit” production was the mission of the former Rocky Flats Plant near Denver. The plant was a serious hazard to workers and the public during operations. It is now a permanent nuclear waste site. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, LANL has already logged more than 1,600 occupational deaths. We can be sure that when pit production gets underway that number will rise. Troubling accidents in LANL’s plutonium facility are already occurring.

The scale of LANL’s nuclear expansion is unprecedented. Thousands of radiation workers would be hired. It would be the largest single project in New Mexico history by far. No one knows where these workers – the temporary construction workers and the industrial shift workers – would live, or how they would get to work. LANL has proposed new trailer parks (“man camps,” in other words) at Indian Pueblos, new highways, a huge fleet of buses, and new power lines. If completed this transformation will have dramatic impacts – social, environmental, and political – on Santa Fe and northern New Mexico. An essential part of Santa Fe’s spirit and heritage would be ruined. LANL itself would become more a “production agency” than a laboratory.

**I want to learn more, or might be able to help!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ I prefer  in person events,  on-line events, or  neither.

I would like  national email updates (~1x/2 weeks),  New Mexico updates and invitations (~1x/week), or  neither.

I might like to help with  outreach,  alliance-building,  other. Contact me by  phone,  email, or  wait for now.

I can help financially with  a one-time gift,  a monthly donation,  in other ways (see [lasg.org/contribute.htm](http://lasg.org/contribute.htm)).

Cut off & mail this section to the address below. LASG is a 501(c)(3) organization; all donations are tax-deductible.

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None of this is needed. The sole purpose of this vast project is to accelerate production of a novel warhead for a proposed new Air Force missile. Pit production at LANL is not needed to maintain any deployed U.S. nuclear weapon. A better, brand-new pit facility is being completed in South Carolina, ten times farther from residences than LANL's cramped old facility – which will be 48 years old by the time production begins in earnest. The SC facility won't be ready until the early 2030s. This is not fast enough for our nuclear warmongers, so they want both. The price tag? \$30-\$40 billion, more than half to be spent at LANL. LANL's part of this is pure waste.

LANL's plans are part of what is now a roughly \$1.5 trillion nuclear weapons operations and modernization program over the 2017-2046 period, the projected cost of which increases each year with no end in sight.

Runaway nuclear weapons spending is just part of this year's \$934 billion (\$7,738 per household) bill for U.S. "defense" overall. U.S. military spending exceeds the combined total military spending of all the other countries in the world save three. The U.S. spends more on just nuclear weapons than the entire defense budgets of all but nine countries.

How can we build strong, resilient communities with priorities such as these? How can we address the existential crisis of climate change? How can we provide a good education for all our children, and support for our elderly? How can we provide real vocations, with real meaning, for the rising generation? More war, and more preparations for nuclear war, are the opposite of any answer. The scale of the wrong-headed investments we are making corrupts our politicians, drains our treasury, and degrades our morality, dragging down our city, our state, our country, and quite possibly our world, even without considering the rising risk of nuclear war.

To repeat, the crash program of pit production at LANL, to begin a decade or more in advance of any real need even from a hawkish perspective, has nothing to do with nuclear deterrence so-called. It's for an unnecessary new warhead that keeps the nuclear contractors swimming in money.

NNSA needs silence and acquiescence from Santa Fe in order to continue this reckless folly. The last thing LANL and NNSA want is to have to justify their plans in public. Meanwhile LANL hopes to subordinate our educational institutions to their needs, so our children can enter their "pipeline" of plutonium workers to be a kind of cannon fodder for dreams of world domination.

It is long past time for the U.S. to fulfill its treaty obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, pull back from more of the nearly 800 bases it has been maintaining in about 70 countries, and focus much more on the real dangers and opportunities here at home. Our collapsing climate alone requires a "whole-of-government" response.

Sincerely,

*greg mello*

Greg Mello, on behalf of the Los Alamos Study Group

