



Los Alamos Study Group

Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability

December 17, 2015

Dear friends –



As we approach the winter solstice and the end of 2015 it is time to thank all of you who have supported the Los Alamos Study Group financially – this year, and in previous years. We also want to thank the volunteers directly helping, and the many others who have helped in the past, donating precious hours of their skilled work.

Without generous support of *both* kinds there almost certainly would be a [huge construction project](#) under way, sprawling across two mesas and a dozen or more technical areas at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), aimed at greatly increasing U.S. manufacturing capacity for plutonium warhead cores (“pits”). In early 2012 that project was [deferred](#) “for at least 5 years.” It was finally [cancelled](#) in 2014.

Those of you who wish to help support our efforts and have not yet done so can donate by [check](#) to the address below, by [credit card](#) over the phone or via secure [link](#), by donating [stock](#) (thus avoiding capital gains and the associated taxes), or by donating your [car, boat, or real estate](#). You can set up a [monthly donation](#). You can ask [Positive Energy](#) to [install a photovoltaic system](#) at your home or business; when the project is complete they will give the Study Group \$500. *If you are already a donor please consider being an ambassador for us.* The Study Group is a 501(c)(3) organization; all donations are fully tax deductible.

We set great store on peer-to-peer fundraising. You have contacts and friends that we do not. Fundraising conversations are themselves important political work – among the most important.

Returning to LANL’s “great expectations” in processing and manufacturing plutonium, pit production at *any* scale is [very poorly justified](#), even to maintain a huge, diverse U.S. arsenal. U.S. pits age very slowly (see [here](#) and [here](#)); they all have several decades more “deterrence” (translation: “apocalyptic threat to most life on earth”) remaining. In addition to the pits in [7,200 intact warheads and bombs](#), the U.S. also maintains an inventory of [several thousand other pits](#) (the “war reserve”; see also p. 19 [here](#)). *One* kind of planned new warhead might “need,” *sometime after 2030*, more pits of a certain type than are present in current inventory. The new pits would be

[Dr. Frank von Hippel, Princeton Program on Science and Global Security](#): “The Los Alamos Study Group plays a unique role in the nuclear-weapons policy debate. Its Director, Greg Mello, understands more deeply than any other independent expert the plans and policy initiatives of the nation’s nuclear-weapon laboratories as they try to construct a future of planned obsolescence and continual renewal for the U.S. nuclear-weapon arsenal. He is a precious early warning system and strategic advisor for those of us who propose, in contrast, a future in which the U.S. nuclear stockpile is steadily reduced and increasingly marginalized in U.S. security policy considerations.”

[David Krieger, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation](#): “The Los Alamos Study Group is one of the most effective organizations in the country in providing clear and understandable information about what is going on behind the closed doors of the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The Laboratory is one of the major proponents and drivers of continued US reliance on nuclear weapons. Without the Los Alamos Study Group much of what happens at the Laboratory would be hidden from public view or distorted beyond recognition by clever public relations.”

“needed” just to make extra warheads, enough to quickly double or triple the number of warheads on U.S. ICBMs if desired, after the New START treaty expires in the early 2020s. The new pits to be made, and the new industrial capacity to quickly build them, are “needed” solely to enable, and thus threaten, breakout from New START nuclear deployment levels.

This proposed new and gratuitous warhead is the main justification for what is now a \$4.2 to \$6.1 billion (B) plutonium factory expansion project at LANL. (The estimated cost of the expansion just rose by another \$800 million this month; see [here](#) vs. [here](#). These costs do not include hundreds of millions in new waste infrastructure and other new facilities. Neither do they include hundreds of millions in annual program expenses.) Once the new works are built, even more billions will be required to actually *operate* this factory complex and actually build the warheads, plus *still more tens of billions* for the new (or renewed) ICBMs to carry the new warheads, *plus* major silo and communications upgrades, all of which together will cost many tens of billions more.

All this is still just a small part of the whole enchilada. All in all, [Obama's nuclear weapons plans and programs](#) are expected to cost [at least \\$1 trillion over the next 30 years](#), assuming all goes smoothly. (It won't.)

Nobody knows for sure where all this extra money will come from. It is significantly more than current DoD and Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear spending. Full funding to replace the entire nuclear arsenal – Obama's plan – implies further rebalancing of U.S. priorities away from society and the environment, toward the military and the corporate nuclear complex. It implies a different America.

This trillion-dollar “self-licking ice cream cone” was ordered up by an unholy alliance between neoconservatives (in Congress, and embedded in the Administration – both), a weak White House, a DOE captive to its contractors, the powerful DOE and DoD contractors, the nuclear military itself, and pork-barrel politicians, including and especially New Mexico Democrats.

It sounds crazy, or criminal. It is both, and more. These unnecessary “investments” are not even about “deterrence” *sensu stricta*, at all. Rather they are part of a plan to “break” Russia, as Henry Kissinger recently [described](#) our policy, while further militarizing our country, turning it rightward politically, and undermining existing social and environmental commitments while preventing new ones. I cannot emphasize this enough. *Our nuclear missiles and bombs are militarily useless, but they have powerful domestic roles.* They shape our politics, nationally and especially in New Mexico. They keep this state down – economically, politically, and socially.

Friends, Russia will not “break,” nor should she. What is “breaking” is our own social contract, the morality and coherence of our own foreign policy, and our willingness to address the real problems we face.

It is our job to instead “break” these grandiose nuclear weapons plans and the nuclear war-fighting assumptions and policies behind them. We can do at least some of that, perhaps a critical part. We have done so before. But we need your help, now more than ever. We greatly depend on individual, private donors.

We have not described our programs and [personnel](#) in this brief appeal, either what we have recently done or what we [hope to do](#) in 2016. Please do visit our [web site](#), or just [ask](#)! Please peruse our [bulletins](#), local [letters](#), and [work products](#) (also [here](#)); see our [press coverage here, here, and here](#). [Last year's appeal letter](#), which is not at all out of date, can provide more useful background.

The Study Group brings to the national nuclear weapons debate unique expertise, an internationalist as well as a local perspective with associated detail, accumulated credibility from more than two decades of detailed engagement, and knowledge across the narrow issue “stovepipes” that characterize professional careers in Washington. We also have an enviable track record of halting projects and exposing malfeasance.

We particularly seek to train young people as researchers, activists, and lobbyists, beyond the political and career limitations of the Washington, DC Beltway. This, like everything else, takes money – more money than we have had in recent years.

We are proud to be an active partner in the [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons](#) (ICAN). Our reference materials, analyses, and in-person presentations about U.S. nuclear weapons programs have been a feature of diplomatic conferences in New York, Vienna, and Geneva. Two of our [board](#) members play central roles in NGO nuclear diplomacy and are widely respected for that work. Before and after the landmark [Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons](#), we [spoke](#) to hundreds of NGO activists, then think tanks, university classes, NGO meetings, and members of the [Scottish Parliament](#) before returning to New Mexico.

It would be extremely helpful to educate a few funders to the radical possibilities of the present moment, – for good and for ill – at the intersection of national security, climate, energy, economic, and social issues. That dialogue is not happening in the philanthropic community, or even in the academy, itself so constrained. “Arms control” and “nonproliferation” are far from sufficient. Some of you are in a position to help broker that dialogue.

We at the Study Group can provide a platform for your own commitment and work, but of course we aren't for everybody. The main thing is to get seriously involved and stay that way. At this point in history we all have little choice but to do so. If we don't change our society's direction very fast, and profoundly, and in the direction of sustainability and respect for one another and the living earth, there won't be much more history.

Sincerely,

Greg Mello, for the Los Alamos Study Group

[A hyperlinked version of this letter can be found at http://www.lasg.org/LASG_2015_funding_appeal.pdf]