Plutonium warhead factory under construction near Santa Fe

Huge expansion of nuclear weapons mission underway despite climate collapse, dying economic and social needs

Twentynine miles from the Santa Fe Plaza, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has a crash program to build a plutonium processing facility and nuclear weapons factory at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Its purpose is to make new plutonium cores (“pits”) for a new kind of nuclear warhead for a new $100 billion international ballistic missile (ICBM). To create the new factory LANL is remodeling its 1970s vintage plutonium processing facility while still operating the old, unsafe, unreliable one. The new nuclear arms race is on.

Why a crap warhead factory? Why at LANL? The answer lies in the obscene profits that can be reaped from new nuclear arms races: old, unsafe, unreliable new arms complex factories are now planned. Once production is underway, they are expanding. Two billion-dollar nuclear facilities are now planned. One is to be built at Hanford. The third: LANL. A new large plutonium factory will also be needed.

Meanwhile LANL’s production capacity is too small to meet its targets. LANL may not have a functioning pit facility since 1989. There is tremendous political pressure to build an adequate, reliable facility, beyond LANL’s (very) rigid, tempestuous and difficult. The new facility will be built adjacent to a partially-built plutonium facility in South Carolina (SC), which is decades behind schedule and not expected to come online until 2025 at the latest. This is so that new pits can be made in time for LANL to be able to meet its production targets.

LANL’s pit factory and related expansion is the costliest project in the history of New Mexico. Construction and startup costs for the facility lie in the $11 billion range, far above initial estimates. LANL will use about $3 billion for construction. LANL pits cost an average $50 million each, at a minimum.

LANL’s pit factory and related expansion is the most expensive construction project in the history of New Mexico. Rivaling construction of all the state’s interstate highways put together. This gigantic undertaking already employs more than 2,000 permanent employees, plus hundreds of subcontract workers. When and if it starts, pit production would be a 24/7 endeavor, because LANL needs 1,800 new pits in the 2030s and 2040s — which we can be sure will be an era of deepening climate collapse, global famine, and other severe crises threatening the very existence of the U.S. — plus whatever new pits are needed.

Even more nuclear weapons jobs will not benefit the region

Even after decades of rising lab budgets coupled to falling economic and social performance, LANL products have benefited economically, but most have not. As a now-paranoid, regionally-centralized program, LANL is beset by regional inequality, with devastating social, economic, and political impacts. Perhaps worst of all, political leaders come to focus and depend on LANL, and its wealthy employees — or else fear its power, exerted in a variety of ways. This plutonium pig is toxic to the very existence of the U.S. — the moral, the political, and the civic leadership and provides false, self-serving answers to the economic, environmental and social problems we face. Instead of coming together to truly grapple with these problems, we leaders talk about LANL “jobs,” a narritive that centers our attention on LANL and its wealth on, in our communities.

LANL suborns the loyalty and support of our political leaders. We all support LANL’s new mission without question. Our Senators, Congresswoman Fernandez, and our Governor all support LANL’s new mission without reservation, even without knowing what it entails. So far, these politicians oppose transparency and environmental accountability. We have asked many times, how many more nuclear weapons workers will be needed? How many more nuclear weapons will be built? How many more nuclear weapons sites will be needed?

Information & Planning Meeting

• Thursday, September 30th, 6:00 – 8:00 pm
• Gathering Room, St. John’s United Methodist Church, Santa Fe, 1200 Old Pecos Trl
• This is a large hall with superior ventilation. Wear a mask.

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LANL’s old facilities don’t meet federal safety standards. LANL’s new, safer facility is being built in South Carolina. The LANL facility would have huge regional impacts.

What can be done, and how you can help

LANL’s semi-secret plans are unclear even to LANL. Even if LANL is expanding, two additional billion-dollar nuclear facilities are now planned. One at Hanford. The third: LANL. LANL and NNSA want is to have to justify their plans in public. Meanwhile LANL hopes to subdue our educational institutions to their needs, so our children can enter their “pipeline” of plutonium workers to be carried on to career development, and movement. And the plan is for never-ending production of nuclear weapons. The plan is really to build a plutonium factory. The plan is to have a plutonium factory that will not be needed in 15-25 years from now (or even longer if the U.S. stockpile shrinks). New pits aren’t needed for any U.S. nuclear weapon. New pits are needed “just in case.” They are needed to “grow” LANL’s weapon program.

We can be sure that LANL plans are not needed. LANL’s pit factory and related expansion is the costliest project in the history of New Mexico. New pits aren’t needed for any U.S. nuclear weapon. New pits are needed “just in case.” They are needed to “grow” LANL’s weapon program. New pits aren’t needed for any U.S. nuclear weapon. New pits are needed “just in case.” They are needed to “grow” LANL’s weapon program. New pits aren’t needed for any U.S. nuclear weapon. New pits are needed “just in case.” They are needed to “grow” LANL’s weapon program.

Our state & country desperately need wholesome priorities, not an arms race

How can we build strong, resilient communities and cities 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? How can we fix our broken political system? How can we provide real vocations, with real meaning, for the rising generation? More war, and more plutonium bombs.lanl.org/

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