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Los Alamos Nuclear Weapons Lab Director Paid Double President Obama

Santa Fe, NM - On December 10 President Barack Obama will receive the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway for his beginning efforts to abolish nuclear weapons. The President is paid \$400,000 a year for running the country. Michael Anastasio, the Director of the Los Alamos nuclear weapons lab in northern New Mexico, is paid double that of the President, \$800,348 a year. Unlike the President, Mr. Anastasio has been an unabashed supporter of new-design nuclear weapons and resumed industrial-scale nuclear weapons production. Over 60% of the Lab's \$2.1 billion annual budget is specifically dedicated to nuclear weapons research and production, while much of its remaining budget supports those core programs.

The newly released information comes from the home page of recovery.gov, which requires listing the salaries of the five highest paid executives of any entity receiving economic stimulus funds. In all, the for-profit company that runs the Lab, the Los Alamos National Security, LLC (LANS), whose primary partners are the Bechtel Corporation and the University of California, has received approximately a quarter billion dollars, the tenth largest single contract in the nation using Recovery funds. The overwhelming majority of that funding is being used to clean up radioactively contaminated land that the Los Alamos County wants to use in part for privately owned condominiums.

According to Census Bureau data, in 2007 Los Alamos County had the 4th highest median household income (\$101,098), while New Mexico was the 45th state in median household income (\$41,509) with the 3rd highest poverty rate. Politicians and the Department of Energy constantly remind New Mexicans that the nuclear weapons industry is vital to the state's economy. Despite that, historically New Mexico has slipped to 47th in per capita income in 2007 from 37th in 1959. In contrast, Bechtel has experienced record setting revenues for each of the last six years (\$31.4 billion in 2008).

Last week the independent congressionally chartered Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board urgently recommended that the Los Alamos Lab take steps to prevent potentially fatal offsite doses in the event of earthquake-induced fires at the nation's only facility for production of plutonium pit "triggers" for nuclear weapons. Those potential consequences have been known for the last four years, but remain uncorrected. A second consortium with Bechtel and the University of California again as the primary partners also run the nation's second nuclear weapons design lab, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. Livermore's flagship nuclear weapons facility, the National Ignition Facility (NIF), has mushroomed in cost to more than \$5 billion from its originally estimated \$2.1 billion and is years behind schedule.

"That LANS pays Michael Anastasio \$800,000 per year, double President Obama's salary, and that two other LANS executives make more than \$520,000, shows a priority for exorbitant salaries over good management and environmental cleanup. Taxpayers expect and deserve better," says Don Hancock of Southwest Research and Information Center, who first found the information on the recovery.gov website.

After decades of mismanagement and serious security lapses Congress insisted that the management contract which the University of California held since 1943 be put out for competition in 2004. Nuclear Watch New Mexico used that opportunity to submit a bid highlighting the need to redirect the Lab toward preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, dismantling nuclear weapons, combating global climate change, achieving clean energy independence, and cleanup of the radioactive and chemical wastes that are contaminating deep groundwater and the Rio Grande. Not surprisingly, that bid was rejected by the Department of Energy nuclear weapons agency.

Concerning his organization's rejected bid, Jay Coghlan, NukeWatch Director, commented, "I have no regrets trying to promote what New Mexico and the nation really need. What is regrettable is that so much taxpayers' money is misdirected toward nuclear weapons of mass destruction, contrary to the spirit of the Peace Prize that President Obama is about to receive."

The University of California received \$8 million per year while running the Lab on a nonprofit basis. After taking management control in June 2006 the for profit Los Alamos National Security, LLC promptly instituted significant employee layoffs while being eligible to receive up to \$76 million per year based on performance.

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For specifics on the award of Recovery funds to the Los Alamos nuclear weapons lab, please see <http://www.recovery.gov/transparency/pages/recipientprojectsummary508.aspx?awardidsur=58755&awarctype=Contracts>

[Census Bureau data is available at www.stats.indiana.edu/](http://www.stats.indiana.edu/)

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