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## **New Nuclear Weapons Plan: Large Arsenal Maintained, Dismantlements Bottlenecked, Plutonium Pit and Waste Production at Los Alamos Expanded**

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has prepared but not publicly released a FY 2011 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan. NNSA describes it as “an unprecedented and comprehensive effort to detail the plans for managing the Nation’s nuclear deterrent in the coming decades.” Other than some incremental arms reductions, conspicuously lacking are planned concrete steps toward reaching the nuclear weapons-free world that President Obama claimed as a long-term national security goal in his now-famous April 2009 Prague speech.

Some key points from the FY 2011 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan:

- The new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia limits each side to around 1,550 deployed strategic warheads. However, the total future stockpile planned by NNSA is double that with 3,000 to 3,500 warheads, including deployed weapons, spares and reserves.
- The current backlog of retired U.S. nuclear weapons slated for dismantlement won’t be completed until 2022. If ratified, START may add yet more weapons to the queue. The Plan outlines an aggressive schedule of Life Extension Programs that block dismantlements because the same facilities are needed for both assembly and disassembly of nuclear weapons.
- NNSA’s nuclear weapons budgets are projected through 2030, rising to \$9 billion by 2018, 40% above the historic Cold War average. From there the budget continues to climb to \$10 billion in 2030, which perhaps reflects a modest rate of inflation. In any event, no decline in NNSA nuclear weapons spending is planned in the next two decades, despite the U.S. government’s official position that it is working toward a nuclear weapons-free world.
- The production complex is to be expanded through the creation of a plutonium pit production complex at Los Alamos; a new \$3.5 billion Uranium Processing Facility for thermonuclear secondaries near Oak Ridge, TN; and a new privately financed Kansas City Plant for nonnuclear components production that will cost taxpayers \$1.2 billion in rent over 20 years.
- Los Alamos Lab has repeatedly denied that production of the cores of nuclear weapons, the plutonium pits, will take place at the planned \$4 billion Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Project-Nuclear Facility. However, the Plan states that the Nuclear Facility “provides analytical capabilities in support of pit surveillance and production” and will “ramp up to full operations in 2022.”
- Immediately following that, the Plan calls to increase plutonium pit production capacity and capability at the adjoining, existing production facility and to ramp up to 80 pits per year in the same year of 2022.
- To meet future plutonium pit production requirements the Plan proposes a “master plan”

Consolidated Waste Capability at LANL. This includes a new Transuranic (TRU) Waste Facility (\$60 million) for plutonium bomb wastes; an upgraded Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility (\$115 million); and new, probably unlined, “low-level” radioactive waste dump pits (costs not available) to replace those in Area G ordered closed by the New Mexico Environment Department.

- The Plan states “Modernization of the stockpile will be accomplished through life extension programs ...” and lists three possible options: refurbishment, reuse of existing components, and complete replacements. The Plan states the first two methods are preferred, but ultimately the Lab Directors are to pick and choose based on technical assessments. However, in the recent past the Lab Directors have strongly supported new-design Reliable Replacement Warheads. Their choices may also be motivated by the fact that they also act as presidents of the for-profit corporations that run the labs.
- Approximate costs for planned Life Extension Programs are given: the sub-launched W76 warhead \$4 billion, the B61 bomb \$4.9 billion, the W78 ICBM warhead \$4.8 billion.
- The Plan states that the U.S. is committed to pursuing nuclear disarmament under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and will not give existing nuclear weapons new military capabilities. But the refurbished W76 is being fitted with a new fuse that is believed to have selectable heights of burst. In combination with increased warhead accuracy, the W76 is transformed into a nuclear warfighting weapon that can destroy hardened, deeply buried targets.

Jay Coghlan, NukeWatch Director, commented, “This Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan is backwards. Its priority should be to accelerate dismantlements instead of extending the lives of nuclear weapons for many decades and possibly giving them new military capabilities. We should be cleaning up, not building up new production plants that will produce yet more radioactive and toxic wastes. We should be following a conservative curatorship program that prudently maintains the stockpile, saves American taxpayers dollars, and demonstrates leadership toward the nuclear weapons-free world that global security truly needs.”

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Also see:

[Further Analysis on the Plan by Nuclear Watch New Mexico  
LANL’s Consolidated Waste Capability](#)

The *NNSA FY2011 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan* is available along with our extensive compilation of annotated excerpts at our [Front Page](#).

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