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LANL Budget Increased by Nearly \$1 Billion to Accelerate Work As Production Site for Nuclear Weapons Designs by Livermore Lab Cleanup Cut by 46%

Santa Fe, NM – The Trump Administration has released more budget details for its proposed Fiscal Year 2021 federal budget for the Department of Energy and its semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is slated to receive nearly a one billion dollar increase for its nuclear weapons programs (up 48%), overwhelmingly for new production. At the same time cleanup, whose need is caused by nuclear weapons production, is cut by 46%.

Significantly, LANL's FY 2021 budget for design work of nuclear weapons stayed flat after falling by 28% from FY 2018 to FY 2019. Meanwhile, funding for nuclear weapons design work at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory more than doubled from FY 2019 to FY 2021.

This dramatically demonstrates Los Alamos's increasing role as a production center for Livermore's nuclear weapons designs, starting with plutonium pit bomb cores for the W87-1 warhead, a new Livermore design. In addition, the three LANL Directors during 2005 to 2017 all came from Livermore's nuclear weapons programs, as does the current head of NNSA's nuclear weapons programs. This movement towards becoming a production center for Livermore designs is a fundamental shift in LANL's role and culture. Historically the two nuclear weapons labs were archrivals in competition over nuclear weapons designs. In addition, the Los Alamos Lab viewed itself as an extended University of California scientific "campus," with far more prestige and benefits than a nuclear weapons production site.

The new budget details also demonstrate that the percentage of LANL's annual total institutional funding earmarked for nuclear weapons has climbed from 71% in FY 2020 to 79% requested for FY 2021. These facts are contrary to the Lab's public relations claims over the diversity of its programs, especially when LANL's remaining programs either directly or indirectly support the Lab's nuclear weapons programs.

Most of LANL's \$955 million dollar increase is for nuclear weapons "Production Modernization" which nearly tripled from \$316 million in FY 2020 to \$845 million requested in FY 2021. This includes not only a 10-fold increase for \$225 million in upgrades for LANL's plutonium facilities in FY 2021, but also \$618.5 million for "Savannah River Site Plutonium Modernization." NNSA plans to produce at least 30 plutonium pits per year at LANL and 50 or more pits per year at the Savannah River Site (SRS) in South Carolina. LANL is the original plutonium pit production site, but budget details are still lacking that could explain the depth of the Los Alamos Lab's involvement at SRS. Nevertheless, that huge sum of money for SRS work at LANL could perhaps help mollify Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, both of whom have strenuously opposed plutonium pit production at SRS.

In addition, Trump's budget proposes that the Savannah River Site itself receive \$442 million in FY 2021 to repurpose its MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility into a plutonium pit bomb core factory. The MOX Facility, designed to produce fuel for commercial power reactors from military-grade plutonium, was a budgetary disaster, wasting some 7 billion dollars of taxpayers' money before it was terminated.

In all, NNSA is requesting nearly \$1.5 billion in FY 2021 alone for expanded plutonium pit production, while controversially claiming that an outdated 2008 public review of its plans meets legal requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act. In addition, the rationale for expanded plutonium pit production seems to have shifted from the originally claimed need to guard against unforeseen technical problems or geopolitical surprise to replacing every pit in the planned nuclear weapons stockpile (approximately 4,000) over the next 50 years.

It is not clear why plutonium pit production needs to be expanded as the US has more than 15,000 pits stored at the Pantex Plant near Amarillo, TX. Furthermore, independent experts have concluded that pits have reliable lifetimes of at least a century without any projected end date (the average age of pits in the active stockpile is under 40 years). Moreover, no pit production is scheduled to maintain the safety and reliability of the existing nuclear weapons stockpile. Instead, future pits will be heavily modified from tested designs for speculative new-design nuclear weapons such as the W87-1. The danger is that these pits cannot be full scale tested for reliability given the existing global nuclear weapons moratorium, or worse yet could prompt the US back into testing with serious international proliferation consequences.

Other highlights of LANL's proposed FY 2021 budget are:

- Cleanup is cut from \$220 million to \$120 million in FY 2021. That is 3% of LANL's total institutional budget, when the Lab's nuclear weapons programs have historically caused extensive groundwater contamination and are now dramatically expanding.
- Nonproliferation Programs are slated to receive a 10% increase but still comprise only 8.5% of LANL's total institutional budget. Nuclear Watch NM advocates for dramatic expansion of LANL's Nonproliferation Programs instead of more nuclear weapons production that feeds into a new global nuclear arms race.
- LANL has touted itself as the world's premier scientific institution, which is growing more difficult to claim as the Lab increasingly becomes a secretive nuclear weapons production center. Illustrative of this, LANL's "Science" programs are proposed to be cut by 17% to \$62.4 million, or only 1.7% of LANL's total institutional budget. Science at LANL is completely dwarfed by the Lab's \$2.9 billion nuclear weapons programs.
- "Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Programs" are cut from \$15.4 million to \$3.5 million in FY 2021, or .1% of LANL's total institutional budget.

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch NM Director, commented, "Follow the money. For years New Mexicans have been spoon fed LANL's public relations claims about the diversity of its programs. But the budget facts show that the Los Alamos Lab is increasingly becoming more entrenched in the nuclear weapons business while cutting real needs such as cleanup and renewable energy research. It's past time for New Mexicans to demand that their congressional delegation show real leadership in genuinely changing the Lab's mission and protecting our environment and precious water resources once and for all!"

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All budget data are from the Department of Energy's FY 2021 "Laboratory Tables" at <https://www.energy.gov/cfo/downloads/fy-2021-budget-justification>

For a graph displaying LANL's proposed FY 2021 budget superimposed on the last two fiscal years see <https://nukewatch.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FY21-Lab-Table-LANL-Chart-Feb-25.pdf>

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