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Contact: Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch New Mexico, 505.989.7342, jay@nukewatch.org

## **Los Alamos Lab Seeks to Quadruple Plutonium Bomb Pit Production; New Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Reveals Related Radioactive Wastes and Plutonium Storage Will Double**

Santa Fe, New Mexico - With no public notice, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency within the Department of Energy (DOE), has posted a new draft Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for Continued Operations of Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) on the internet. In it, NNSA states that its "preferred alternative" for continued Laboratory operations is "the Expanded Operations Alternative, [in which] NNSA would operate LANL at the highest levels of activity currently foreseeable, including full implementation of the mission assignments." These include the accelerated production of additional nuclear weapons and new designs.

NNSA is seeking to sanction the production of up to 80 plutonium pits per year at LANL through the EIS. Plutonium pits are the "triggers" for nuclear weapons. Pit production formerly took place at the Rocky Flats Plant near Denver, where operations stopped following an FBI raid investigating environmental crimes. Since then pit production was relocated to Los Alamos, but with a ceiling limiting production to 20 pits per year.

In addition to increasing production capacity, NNSA plans to extend the life of LANL's plutonium pit facility by 25 years, according to the EIS. This will involve massive upgrades for which costs are not disclosed. Expanded nuclear weapons production will add another 250 cubic yards of radioactive wastes to the 260 cubic yards now generated each year. That means 1,800 or more 55-gallon barrels of "transuranic" wastes will be shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, located in southern New Mexico, every year.

The EIS also states that Los Alamos will store up to 6.6 metric tons of "special nuclear materials inventory, mainly plutonium." In 1994, the Department of Energy admitted that it held 2.7 metric tons of plutonium at LANL. There was no explanation for the increase.

Under the projected expansion of nuclear weapons operations, the Lab will process 87,000 pounds of high explosives, and up to 6,900 pounds of depleted uranium will be blown up in "dynamic experiments" annually. Two thousand, two hundred pounds of highly enriched uranium will be used for the fabrication of nuclear weapons components, and 200 reservoirs of tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen used to "boost" nuclear weapons, will be produced each year. Finally, the EIS states that LANL will receive five to ten shipments of radioactive wastes a year from other DOE sites.

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch Director, said, "Following the recent change to management at the Lab, which now includes private corporations such as Bechtel, we are seeing accelerating evidence of a shift to nuclear weapons production. As a result, the Lab will inevitably lose its veneer as some kind of scientific ivory tower. It will be more clearly seen as a purveyor, designer and producer of weapons of mass destruction. Given the end of the Cold War and new national security threats such as energy independence and global climate change, is this really the best that Los Alamos can do?"

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A link to the voluminous draft "Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for Continued Operations of Los Alamos National Laboratory" is available at [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org).