



Independent Review Confirms Plutonium Pits Last A Century Rationales for Future Nuclear Weapons Complex and New Designs Seriously Undermined

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, November 29, 2006 Contact: Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch New Mexico
505.989.7342, cell 505.920.7118 jay@nukewatch.org

Santa Fe, NM – A report delivered today to Congress by a group of eminent scientists concludes: Most primary types have credible minimum lifetimes in excess of 100 years as regards aging of plutonium; those with assessed minimum lifetimes of 100 years or less have clear mitigation paths that are proposed and/or being implemented.

Nuclear Watch New Mexico has made this report available at:
http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/JASON_ReportPuAging.pdf. The primaries are the plutonium pits, the core “triggers” for nuclear weapons, surrounded by high explosives used to implode the pits for nuclear detonation.

The report has profound implications for the future nuclear weapons complex that the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) proposes, including a “Complex 2030” capable of a baseline production capacity of 125 plutonium pits per year and new-design nuclear weapons under the so-called Reliable Replacement Warhead. With pit lifetimes independently assessed at 100 years, in contrast to the NNSA’s previously accepted 45 years, the agency’s claimed rationales are seriously undermined.

Fittingly, Nuclear Watch was given the report by the office of Senator Jeff Bingaman (D.-NM). In early 2004 Nuclear Watch asked the Senator to sponsor legislation that would require independent review of the NNSA’s ongoing “accelerated aging” studies of plutonium, and an unclassified report to Congress of the results of that review. The Senator successfully did so as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2005 Defense Authorization Act, requiring completion of the report this year.

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch Director, commented, “Now that the potential effects of plutonium aging have been knocked out as an excuse for the future that NNSA wants, let’s move on to a sharper debate over current U.S. policies that provide bad examples for global nonproliferation. We need to guard against pork interests making the nuclear weapons complex an end unto itself. We simply don’t need new-design nuclear weapons and expanded bomb production, and it’s time to defeat NNSA plans once and for all.”

The oldest nuclear weapons in the U.S.’s planned stockpile are 28 years old (documentation at <http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/WeaponsAge.pdf>). Therefore, even the oldest nuclear weapons still have seven decades or more of operational life.

###