



Facts Vs. Claimed LANL Facts

The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is publicly pushing for “Transformation” of the nuclear weapons complex, which includes expanded plutonium pit production at the Lab. LANL has produced a fact sheet entitled “Claim Versus Fact: The Truth about LANL’s Role in Complex Transformation,” http://www.lanl.gov/natlsecurity/complex_transformation/ In it, the Lab claims that “Some opponents of LANL and the Complex Transformation project are spreading falsehoods about LANL and its mission,” and then purports to report the facts. This was clearly in response to fact sheets that Nuclear Watch New Mexico had produced by itself or in collaboration with others. Here, we rebut some of LANL’s so-called facts (Lab excerpts are italicized; bolded language is from the original).

CLAIM: *The Department of Energy is expanding its plutonium-pit manufacturing complex at LANL.*

FACT: *No expansion of manufacturing operations is taking place. All pit manufacturing operations have been performed and will continue to be performed in an existing facility, known as TA-55/PF-4. The purpose of the Complex Transformation project is to **streamline and reduce LANL’s nuclear operations footprint by nearly 50 percent, and reduce the number of staff supporting nuclear weapons activities by 20 percent over the next decade.***

REAL FACT: No expansion of manufacturing operations is taking place now, but is explicitly planned. This is obvious given that one primary purpose of “Complex Transformation” is to increase pit production at LANL from the currently sanctioned 20 pits per year to between 50 to 80. What part of “expansion” is not understood here? Regarding “expanding its plutonium-pit manufacturing complex,” the Lab itself calls its Technical Area-55 a “plutonium complex.” Massive upgrades are planned for PF-4, the existing pit production facility, which includes wholesale replacement of gloveboxes and increased production floor space through the transfer of non-weapons work elsewhere.

Moreover, LANL seeks to build a new 200,000 square foot plutonium facility next door to PF-4 called the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Project (CMRR), and production of 50 to 80 pits per year is entirely dependent upon it. PF-4’s upgrades, the new CMRR and planned expansion of TA-55’s security perimeter are what we call expansion of LANL’s plutonium complex.

We find the fact that LANL’s nuclear footprint will be reduced by nearly 50% not that significant given that the CMMR is to replace the old CMR Building in TA-3. That old building is a huge (550,000 square feet) and inefficient facility. Again, it is the new CMRR, at half the size, that enables expanded pit production. With respect to planned reduced staff, Nuclear Watch believes that points to the necessity of Lab mission diversification so that future jobs can be better assured. Unfortunately, expanded pit production will likely restrict mission diversification, and leave northern New Mexico substantially economically dependent upon production of the worse weapons of mass destruction, an industry that should shrink anyway.

CLAIM: *LANL will be building more new nuclear weapons and expanding the stockpile.*

FACT: LANL will **not** be expanding the stockpile or adding more weapons, but will instead build parts to maintain existing weapons. In fact, LANL actually has the lead role in continuously reducing **the nation's stockpile of nuclear weapons, to its lowest levels since the 1950s.**

REAL FACT: It is indisputable that LANL has long planned to produce components for new nuclear weapons, the so-called Reliable Replacement Warheads (RRWs). We have never stated that the actual number of gross nuclear weapons would increase, although there is a concern that could happen during any transition period between future RRWs and existing weapons. "Parts" that LANL will produce include plutonium pits, the essential "triggers" for today's extremely destructive thermonuclear weapons. They are also WMDs unto themselves, as the destruction of Nagasaki show. "Lowest levels since the 1950's" - - that's a good thing, but is it enough? That's the level at the beginning of the escalating Cold War arms race, and the Cold War has been over for sixteen years or more. What about the obligation the U.S. agreed to in the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty to qualitatively, not quantitatively, disarm nuclear stockpiles? Instead, LANL seeks to perpetuate nuclear weapons forever.

CLAIM: Pit production at LANL is slated to increase from 10 pits in 2007 to as many as 80 pits per years, and an even more extreme alternative under consideration calls for production of up to 200 pits per year.

FACT: LANL will have the capacity to make as many as 80 pits per year, but actual production will be determined by needs. The option to build up to 200 pits is not what is being recommended or considered, and, in fact, that alternative was specifically eliminated from contention as a preferred option.

REAL FACT: The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), DOE's semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency (and LANL's "landlord"), continues to strongly push new-design weapons, the so-called "Reliable Replacement Warheads" (RRW). NNSA's FY 2008 budget request explicitly scheduled LANL to begin producing 50 RRW pits per year in 2012. At the same time, NNSA was proposing a new plutonium pit production facility that would begin producing 125 RRW pits per year by 2022, but Congress rejected both RRW and that new facility. NNSA has fallen back on existing and new or upgraded pit production facilities at Los Alamos, but still pushes RRW. The bottom line is that expanded pit "capability" is still ultimately about producing future RRWs. As we stated, the "50/80" alternative is the selected preference, but as also stated 200 pits per year is an alternative under consideration.

CLAIM: America is telling others not to have nuclear weapons while we continue to make new ones.

FACT: LANL is supporting efforts to **REDUCE, not expand, the weapons stockpiles and is continuously doing so.** LANL will build parts to maintain existing weapons, but will **not** be expanding the stockpile. In fact, the United States has not build a new nuclear weapon since 1989!

REAL FACT: Complex Transformation is all about a "responsive infrastructure" that could produce new nuclear weapons as needed. NNSA continues to push for RRW. Further, one existing type of nuclear weapon is going thorough a "Life Extension Program" that is giving it new ground burst capability and increased accuracy. This effectively transforms that weapon into a new one in terms of potential military use, from a weapon of deterrence to a possible preemptive first strike nuclear weapon.