



# WATCHDOG

news that bites back

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## Geopolitical Plate Tectonics Shifty Nukes Policies At Home and Abroad

### Why should we get rid of nuclear weapons?

Consider the following: While keeping "all options" on the table, President Bush alludes to World War III over Iranian nuclear ambitions. Eerily echoing the run-up to the Iraq war, US fears of another nation's WMDs impede rather than spur diplomatic dialogue. Martial law is declared in Pakistan, which could slip into civil war, potentially increasing the opportunity for theft of its nukes by extremists and/or the chances of nuclear war against archrival India. Israeli warplanes bomb a site in Syria alleged to be a plutonium bomb-making reactor. Arab countries announce they want their own nuclear programs. Closer to home, six "loose nukes" warheads fly across the country from North Dakota to an Air Force base in Louisiana, an American command-and-control blunder previously declared impossible. The U.S. and Russia continue to maintain thousands of nukes on high alert, while the Bush Administration perpetually pushes for new weapons. We could go on, but it is already commonly agreed that nuclear weapons are the biggest national security threat to the U.S., and thus we should lead in getting rid of them.

That should have happened after the end of the Cold War. We should have begun seriously talking about eliminating nuclear weapons after the Berlin Wall fell. We should not get rid of nuclear weapons unilaterally, but must lead in concrete multi-lateral steps under the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty Article VI's mandate to "enter into serious negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament..." We should intensely pressure NPT non-signatories (Israel, India, Pakistan) to join the global nonproliferation regime. We have got to get rid of these indiscriminate killers of men, women, and children that can utterly destroy whole cities.

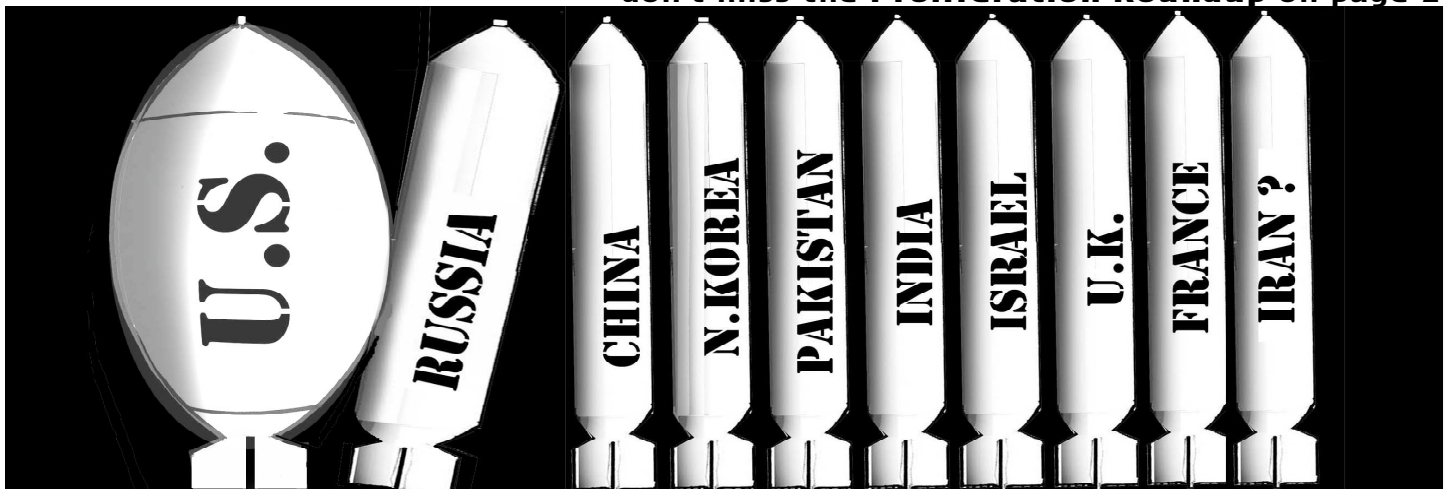
### How to do it? Begin by leading internationally.

- Refrain from new-design nuclear weapons, the so-called Reliable Replacement Warheads. (Good news--RRW is in trouble.)
- Refrain from creating effectively new nuclear weapons from existing weapons. The most common U.S. nuclear warhead (the W76, six times more powerful than Hiroshima) is now being given dramatically increased accuracy and ground burst fuzing, which is modifying the weapon from its "deterrence" value to first-strike capabilities.
- Limit the production of plutonium pits, the crucial "triggers" for nuclear weapons, now known to last at least 100 years (more than double previous projections), a finding which renders RRWs unnecessary to begin with.
- Reverse the 4-to-1 ratio of funds spent on nuclear weapons design/production programs versus spent on nonproliferation programs under DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). To truly enhance national security, technologies for verifying present and future arms control treaties should be dramatically augmented, as well as for securing nuclear materials around the globe and preventing the smuggling of nuclear weapons onto our shores (our maritime port security is a national disgrace).

In short, a reprioritization of U.S. nuclear weapons policies is urgently needed, probably not possible under the Bush Administration. But times are a-changin'--both across the nation and in New Mexico.

**Politics:** The Bush Administration is starting to run out of time for its new-design nuclear weapons under the Reliable Replacement Warhead Program and for a transformed nuclear

**don't miss the Proliferation Roundup on page 2**



weapons complex “enabled” (their word) by RRW. Together, both would ultimately cost 100’s of billions of taxpayers’ dollars. In reaction to these proposals, the House and Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees have legislated pending review of post-Bush U.S. nuclear weapons policies. Further, House Appropriations passed a 10% cut to NNSA’s nuclear weapons programs, the very first in more than a decade.

The political landscape in New Mexico is key, home to 2 of the nation’s 3 nuclear weapons labs and where a whopping 43% of NNSA’s money for nukes gets spent. The announced retirement of senior Senator Domenici, the proverbial “St. Pete” patron of Los Alamos and Sandia Labs, is of monumental importance. The probable entrance of Rep. Tom Udall into the resulting wide-open Senate race is huge as well, which polls indicate would likely block the ascension of Domenici’s groomed successor, Rep. Heather Wilson. Udall has for the most part promoted the message that Los Alamos must now diversify its missions.

In contrast, Rep. Wilson has made claims about the House cuts that have little or no basis in fact. For example, she has repeatedly and publicly stated, “The irony is that their [House] cuts are so deep that they would stop paying the guys who dismantle the nuclear weapons coming out of the stockpile too.” Contrary to her false claim, the House added \$121 million to NNSA’s \$52 million request for dismantlements, and directed the agency to “view dismantlement as a priority in and of itself, rather than as a workload leveling function.”

Wilson also stated that, “The decisions imbedded in this [House appropriations] legislation will lead us either to return to nuclear testing, or to abandon nuclear deterrence because we will stop maintaining the stockpile”, a grave--but wrong--claim indeed! She argues that new nuclear weapons designs under RRW must go forward. Ironically, those new designs are *themselves* a potential national security threat. First, new U.S. nukes would severely undermine our credibility in persuading other countries to forego nuclear weapons. Second, NNSA explicitly plans to pay for proposed RRWs (which could never be full-scale tested without severe global proliferation consequences) by terminating maintenance programs for existing (tested) nukes, those now proven to be far more reliable than once thought. Does that sound like the right kind of “Stockpile Stewardship” that NNSA claims to be following, and for which it has already been paid some \$80 billion taxpayers dollars to date?

--Jay Coghlan

# proliferation roundup



**in case you need further convincing  
that it’s time for globally eradicating nuclear weapons:**

## **Pakistan Goes Critical**

The man President Bush has called one of his key allies in the “War on Terror,” Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, seized “emergency powers” on November 3, effectively declaring martial law in his nuclear weapons country. He suspended the nation’s constitution, fired the Supreme Court, made it criminal to criticize him, clamped down hard on media, and arrested thousands of lawyers, opposition party leaders and human rights activists.

Musharraf claimed he had to act decisively in order to contain growing Islamist extremism in Pakistan. However, it is widely believed that his motivations are political; he faced a hostile Supreme Court that was going to declare his presidency unconstitutional. The U.S. has supplied Pakistan with up to \$10 billion in military aid since 9/11. Instead of targeting Osama bin Laden or the Taliban, the great bulk of that money was spent on big-ticket weapons systems that could be used against nuclear archrival India (South Asia has long been regarded as the world’s most dangerous spot for potential nuclear war).

Again, we see that in our own national security interests the U.S. must pursue unswerving plans to eliminate its gravest strategic threat: nuclear weapons. Because Pakistan supported and trained the Taliban to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan, the Reagan Administration looked the other way while it developed its clandestine nuclear weapons program. The lead scientist for the Pakistani bomb, A.Q. Khan, went on to create a global black market for nuclear weapons technologies that is believed to have included North Korea and Iran, our hottest proliferation crises du jour. This shows that nuclear disarmament must endure and be prioritized above transient geopolitical marriages of convenience.

## **Don’t Split Hairs on Hair Triggers**

The Bush Administration’s representative to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament recently declared, “U.S. nuclear forces are not and have never been on hair-trigger alert.” To the contrary, long after the Cold War, both Russia and the U.S. still keep an estimated 2,000 nuclear weapons ready to launch within 20 minutes. To concretely illustrate the danger, in 1995 Russia came within minutes of launching nuclear forces in retaliation after initially mistaking a U.S.-Norwegian atmospheric research satellite for an incoming threat.

At the 2000 UN Review Conference for the NonProliferation Treaty, the U.S. and other nuclear weapons powers agreed to “further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems” as one of 13 practical steps toward disarmament. The Bush Administration subsequently repudiated those steps. On October 31, 2007, the UN General Assembly voted by 124-3 to again call on nuclear states to “decrease the operational readiness” of their nuclear weapons, which the United States, France and Great Britain voted against. Similarly, a UN resolution urging ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was recently adopted with 166 countries voting in favor and one against, guess who?-- the US.

## **Syrian Whodunit**

On September 6, in a mysterious event, Israeli warplanes struck at what intelligence sources believe may have been a partly-built reactor in Syria. Satellite “before” photos show a structure quite similar to a North Korean plutonium production reactor. The Syrians deny the site was nuclear, but later photos show that they hastily cleaned up after the strike, scraping the site down to bare earth, making conclusive international inspections unworkable. North Korea denies any involvement, and the Israelis are vague about whatever took place.

Hmmm...

## NukeWatch Wins Big on Public's Right-to-Know

In September a federal judge ruled that DOE makes a "mockery" of legally required freedom of information. In March 2006 we filed suit under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for "Ten-Year Comprehensive Site Plans" of various nuclear weapons sites. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency within DOE, has described these Plans as the foundation of strategic planning for its future nuclear weapons complex. Given excessive delays (in some cases up to 17 months), we filed an argument alleging a "pattern and practice of unlawfully withholding agency records."

The Federal District Court of New Mexico decisively ruled in our favor. As the Judge himself noted, "The purpose of FOIA is to allow citizens to learn what their government is doing and how it is being done... it is intended to allow any citizen or group to receive government information 'promptly'... the [NNSA's] argument [why delays are merited] is contrary to both logic and law..." We think that about covers it.

Most significantly, the Judge ruled that Nuclear Watch's case is not closed because further court hearings will be held on "remedies for this violation of FOIA." Our bottom line is that we want what the law says. We demand that NNSA determine within 20 working days whether documents will be released, followed by their actual release within days or weeks. We won't tolerate the months and years of delay and suppression of information that NNSA is guilty of. We will be pressing on to achieve court-ordered remedies that require prompt disclosure of information under citizens' legal right-to-know.

The federal court order is available at <http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/OrdergrantingNWNMSJM.pdf>

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#### Good News: Disarmament Progress with North Korea

A U.S. team is now in North Korea to oversee disabling its plutonium production, which could pave the way for lifting UN sanctions imposed after Pyongyang's nuclear weapons test last year. This relatively quick resolution (assuming it endures) to a crisis that threatened potentially catastrophic war in the Far East came after the Bush Administration *finally* agreed to talk to North Korea, and implemented much of the terms of the Clinton Administration's "Agreed Framework" of 1994 that it formerly scorned. Now if only the lame duck Bush Administration would seriously negotiate with the Iranians instead of threatening war.

#### Russian Strategic Rocket Forces Secured

More good news: The National Nuclear Security Administration has announced that it has finished funding security improvements at 25 Russian nuclear missile sites. The joint project to prevent terrorists from stealing nukes began as part of the Global Threat Reduction Initiative that followed the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. These security upgrades included advanced intruder detection systems, guard towers and entry portals with nuclear material sensors. Other non-proliferation efforts in Russia are reportedly ahead of schedule. This is good work, deserving praise, which should be prioritized far above NNSA's other, less-deserving plans--like building new nuclear weapons.

#### The Science of Port Security

U.S. maritime ports are both vital economic gateways and targets for weapons of mass destruction. Our ports must be absolutely secure. Let's get behind putting the science at our national labs to work securing our ports instead of designing and building new nuclear weapons!

--John Witham



ZEN  
AND THE ART OF  
ACTIVISM

Your support  
helps keep us on target.

We're proud of our accomplishments and want to keep 'em coming. Advocacy, public education, litigation, research and active participation at hearings and within coalitions...that's the mix we want to maintain and strengthen. At the top of this page, read about our success in our recent FOIA lawsuit, another example of us aiming high and hitting the bull's-eye.

Help us hit the mark  
again in 2008.

Breathe deeply, send us a (tax-deductible) check now...and settle into your holiday madness with a clear conscience.



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## **DawgBites** quick news items

### **Baghdad-on-the-Rio-Grande**

In echoes of defense contractor KBR's Iraq war profiteering, LANL subcontractor KSL Services has been overcharging and mispending taxpayer money. The "K" in KSL is KBR, under Congressional scrutiny for fraud and abuse relating to more than \$11 billion in Iraq contracts (by far the most of any war contractor). Up until last April, Halliburton, the old company of VP Dick Cheney, owned KBR, but divested itself of its subsidiary and moved its corporate headquarters to the "friendlier" tax environment of Dubai. Similarly now, albeit on a much smaller scale, the Energy Department's Inspector General finds that KSL has consistently overcharged--sometimes billing for work not done. In one instance, KSL entered a one-penny "place holder" in a computerized system for future work, only to collect more than \$100,000 for work that was not formally approved. There's no direct connection we know of between fraud in Iraq and overcharging at Los Alamos, but there's certainly a long history of government contractors ripping off the taxpayer. Welcome to the Greed Zone.

### **Hazard Play**

In August a radioactive object the independent Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) described as a "rock" was found in an old part of the Lab that had been contaminated with strontium-90 and uranium-238 from early operations. This area of Bayo Canyon was cleaned up in 1962 and subsequently transferred to Los Alamos County in 1967, with parts of the Canyon used as a County recreation area. According to the DNFSB, the rock (which has since been removed) clocked in at 1 million disintegrations per minute (DPM) of beta/gamma and 12,000 DPM of alpha radiation. In July the NNSA had downgraded Bayo Canyon from being a "Hazard Category 3 nuclear facility" to a far less stringent "radiological facility", but are there other "hot rocks" yet to be discovered?

### **Nuclear Safety, the Issue that Won't Go Away**

DNFSB further reported that LANL's nuclear facilities are operating under safety guidelines that haven't been updated in up to 12 years. This includes, for example, LANL's facility for plutonium pit "triggers," slated to increase production from 20 to 50 pits/year. Lab managers claim they may not have sufficient funding in 2008 to update these "safety bases," nor to assess the impact of new studies indicating seismic risks are 50% higher than previously believed (but they do hope to have money to make more pits!). All this, despite the fact that LANL stopped nuclear operations for seven months beginning in July 2004 to resolve safety and security problems. That "standdown" cost taxpayers an estimated \$360 million.

### **Sprawling Bio-Insecurity**

In October the Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congress's investigative arm, described a "sprawling biodefense research infrastructure that operates without any centralized government oversight." Since yet-to-be-explained anthrax attacks in 2001 (thought perhaps to be an "inside" job), funding for biodefense research has increased from \$583 million to more than \$3 billion, arguably proliferating the risks. It's no surprise LANL would like a piece of this lucrative action and wants to open its own Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) lab for working with bioagents such as anthrax and plague (which litigation by NukeWatch has stopped since 2002). The GAO reports that in the last four years there have been over 100 accidents or missing shipments at similar facilities across the country, mostly due to human error. As the number of biodefense facilities increases more accidents will likely happen. Recently, congressional subcommittee chairman Rep. Bart Stupak suggested we may already have enough facilities, demanding, "Less construction, more research." The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the BSL-3 Facility at LANL is currently due out for public comment this November. It may be time to leverage Stupak's sentiment and the poor safety record of many existing facilities to ask tough questions about the risks of operating such a facility at LANL. Please stay tuned to [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org).

### **Bomb-Squad Bees**

LANL scientists harnessed bees (literally) in attempt to detect roadside bombs. The Defense Department invested more than \$2 million in the Los Alamos Stealthy Insect Sensor Project, whose purpose was to address the growing deadly threat to coalition forces in Iraq from improvised explosive devices. The Lab's researchers trained honeybees strapped in a box to react when they smell explosives. Advantages cited for the bees are that they are small, discreet and offer the element of surprise. No kidding! However, there are a few drawbacks to bomb squad bees. For one thing, after money spent, LANL scientists finally realized that insect repellent could abort the bees' missions. Ultimately, the Pentagon withdrew support after questions arose on how to control bees in war zones.

# ***Time For New Mexico Labs to Come Up with Real Solutions!***

Sixty-two years after the dawn of the nuclear age, dangerous radioactive wastes are still being disposed of using the litter box “scratch and cover” method. As the need for nuclear weapons and the Labs that produce them winds down, the time has come for the Sandia and Los Alamos National Laboratories to focus on eliminating the radioactive wastes they were so central to creating.

By law, the federal government is mandated to dispose of the nation's nuclear waste. The current “solutions” are to dump so-called low-level wastes in unlined pits and trenches, and to build two deep geologic repositories. The world's first is the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in southeastern New Mexico for nuclear weapons “transuranic” (i.e., bomb-making) wastes. The second is the Yucca Mountain Site in southwest Nevada for commercial nuclear reactor wastes and high-level wastes from processing bomb-making plutonium. While WIPP has opened to dispose of continued bomb-production wastes, many feel, for good reason, that even after \$17 billion to date, Yucca Mountain will never open.

National political opposition is rising and joining the State of Nevada's long time struggle against Yucca Mountain. On October 31 presidential candidate Hillary Clinton declared, “It's time to move on from Yucca Mountain. I believe we should start over, and assemble our best scientific minds to identify alternatives. In the meantime, we need to make sure we are storing waste safely and securely at the reactor sites where it's located today.”

Yucca Mountain was supposed to open by 1998, but has been halted by lawsuits, questionable data and funding shortfalls. Nevertheless, existing commercial nuclear power plants have been permitted life extensions and are generating high-level radioactive wastes at a rate of 2,000 metric tons per year. Given the dangerous wastes already slated for disposal, Yucca Mountain is effectively “full” before it even opens.

It makes no sense to generate enormous, additional amounts of nuclear waste when we haven't figured out what to do with the tens of thousands of tons already on hand. Presidential candidate Governor Bill Richardson has suggested making Yucca Mountain a national laboratory or research facility, switching its focus away from a repository. He said, “We cannot expand nuclear power in this country until we figure out what we are going to do with the waste.”

New Mexico Lab scientists have been central to DOE's misguided efforts to open Yucca Mountain. In January 2007,

Sandia National Laboratory was designated as the lead laboratory for geologic repositories including Yucca Mountain. However, in October Nevada demanded that Sandia be investigated and possibly suspended from the Yucca Mountain Project for “putting schedule over safety.”

LANL is investigating volcanism and erosion hazards that could emerge in Yucca's geological future (after all, these wastes remain dangerous for more than 100,000 years). Among other things, there is a serious question whether the above-ground facility required to stage spent hot reactor fuel before burial can ever meet temporary storage standards, given the site's vulnerability to earthquakes and a newly found seismic fault right under the staging area!

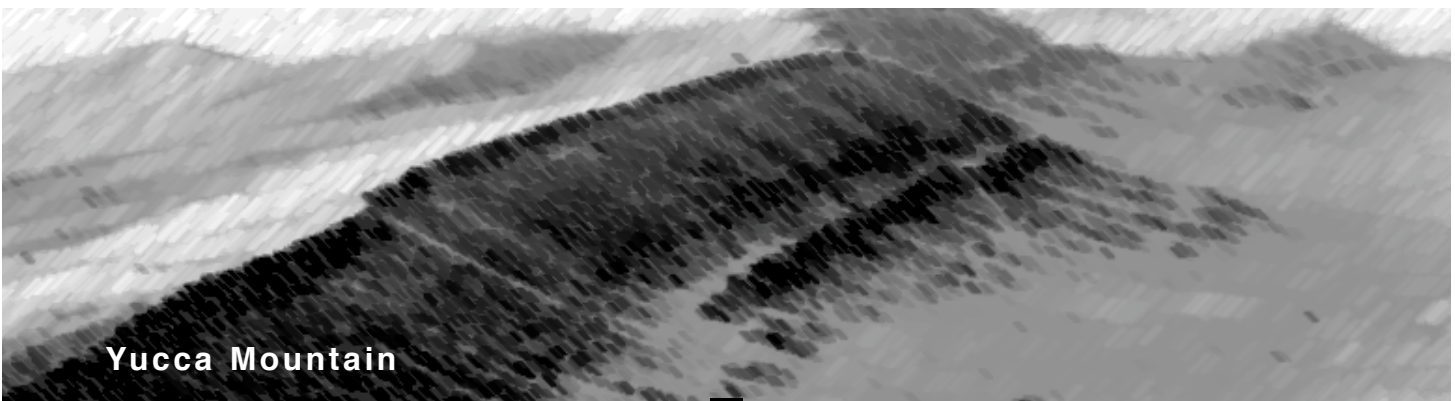
If Yucca Mountain ever opens, high-level radioactive wastes will be transported to there from across the nation. An estimated 44 states will have to guard against serious terrorist threats and other hazards as nuclear waste is transported past communities, schools, hospitals, businesses and homes.

After more than 60 years, federal efforts to deal with the dangerous wastes have come full circle, which is effectively doing nothing. The chief executive of the firm submitting the first application in nearly 30 years for two new nuclear power plants said that its future radioactive wastes could stay on the company's sites for the next century, and added, “Whether Yucca Mountain happens or not plays no part...”

We challenge the Labs to think outside the litter box and to research safe and effective nuclear waste disposal. What is really needed is a “Manhattan Project II” to solve the intractable problems left by the first Project. Before genuine solutions are found, we strongly urge the Labs to design “Hardened On-Site Storage” (HOSS) facilities for monitored, retrievable waste storage that avoid transportation risks. An out-of-sight, out-of-mind mentality will not work for nuclear waste with dangerous half-lives longer than recorded human history. We must keep the wastes right in front of us until we find suitable solutions.

Most importantly, why generate more of these wastes with dangerous half-lives longer than history? We simply don't need more nuclear bomb production and massive taxpayer subsidies for a nuclear power industry that is incapable of standing on its own economic two feet. What we do need: energy conservation that saves everybody money (except perhaps profit-hungry corporations) and a world free of nuclear weapons!

--Scott Kovac



**Yucca Mountain**



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#### mission statement

The mission of Nuclear Watch New Mexico is to provide timely and accurate information to the public on nuclear issues in the American Southwest, and to encourage effective citizen involvement and activism in these issues. We seek to promote greater environmental protection, safe disposition of radioactive wastes, and federal policy changes that will curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

***In This Issue: Geopolitical Plate Tectonics/Proliferation Roundup;  
Why Aren't NM Nuclear Labs Making Progress on Nuclear Waste Solutions?  
Ever-Popular DawgBites; FOIA Lawsuit--We Win, We Win!!!***

## What to do

### Want to hear the latest about nuclear safety, or lack thereof, at LANL?

Come hear the independent Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board ask the Lab some hard questions. The Board will examine Lab plans to ensure adequate protection of the public and workers, and collect information on health and safety concerns at LANL. Public comments will be taken from those who sign up beforehand. The meeting will be at 6 p.m., December 5, at Duane W. Smith Auditorium, 1400 Diamond Drive, Los Alamos. For more info, go to [http://www.dnfsb.gov/pub\\_docs/dnfsb/pm.html](http://www.dnfsb.gov/pub_docs/dnfsb/pm.html)

**Heads up!** Wouldn't you know it, DOE plans to give us some "holiday gifts"-- right when the average citizen wants to relax. The long-delayed environmental impact statement (EIS) for the LANL biolab is due soon, along with the draft "Global Nuclear Energy Partnership" EIS for reprocessing highly radioactive wastes (part of Bush's trumpeted nuclear "renaissance"), and the draft Transformation EIS for the future nuclear weapons complex (formerly dubbed "Complex 2030", but in partial victory now forced by citizens to scale down). **Keep an eye on our website for updates when these important documents are released.** Should LANL just "cap and cover" its toxic soup of hazardous and radioactive wastes, or dig up the poisons and get rid of them? You have a chance to tell the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) what you think. The "closure" plan for Area G and other Lab Cold War dumps will be subject to public comment (deadline January 11, 2008) before NMED's final decision. For more info, go to <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/hwb/lanlperm.html>

**Throw the dawgs a bone!** LANL's budget is around 15,000 times our budget, and they got 12,000 folks instead of us three (on the other hand, their overhead is truly exorbitant, and ours is ridiculously small). Nevertheless, please help even out the odds a wee little bit.... We can use it, and use it wisely, a big bang for the buck!



nuclear watch new mexico

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