watchdog

"float like a butterfly, bite like a dawg"

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http://www.nukewatch.org

THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS STATE OF THE UNION

In his State of the Union address, President Bush declared that "the United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most dangerous weapons." He also said that the US "seeks a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror." He did not give any indication that the US would seek to disarm itself of its own threatening weapons of mass destruction, specifically nuclear weapons. Here is some **analysis of the nuclear weapons state of the union.**

The bottom line can be arrived at right away. The cold hard fact is that, to this day, both the US and Russia each hold some 2,000 nuclear armed missiles on high alert. Government officials have made much of the fact that these missiles are no longer targeted at each other. However, target coordinates can be reentered in under half a minute. The USA and Russia came terrifyingly close to an accidental nuclear war in January 1995 when the Russian strategic nuclear command mistook a US-Norwegian atmospheric research satellite for an incoming nuclear warhead. Moreover, Russian early warning systems and reconnaissance satellites have seriously eroded since that time, making the Russians all that much more likely to launch in a "use them or lose them" situation.

Much has also been made of the Crawford, Texas summit where Bush and Russian President Putin called for the reduction of their respective nuclear arsenals from over 6,000 deployed weapons down to 2,000 or under. However, since that December 2000 summit **the US Department of Defense has released a new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).** [These periodic reviews essentially set the nuclear force requirements believed necessary to implement the US's nuclear warfighting plan (which includes some 2,000 targets in Russia alone). They also generally set the parameters of the nuclear weapons complex believed necessary to support those requirements.] Putin clearly believed that these reductions would be actual irreversible dismantlements. Instead, the DoD plans on putting US weapons into a "reserve" from which they can be redeployed if desired. This drew sharp denunciations from the Russian Foreign Minister who insisted that any arms reductions must be "radical, verifiable and irreversible." A member of the Russian Academy of Sciences has said that shuffling nuclear weapons from deployment into reserve and possibly back is tantamount to a "swindle." One of our own leading senators has called it "Arthur Andersen accounting."

The reason for a reserve is the unlikely event of resurgent militarism in Russia, particularly the reconstitution of its strategic nuclear forces. Faced with severe fiscal constraints, Russia continues to undergo *de facto* nuclear disarmament (and furthermore is now a key ally in our present "war on terrorism"). Conversely, **budgets for American nuclear weapons programs have flourished.** The Cold War average was right around $4 billion for nuclear weapons research, development and testing. The new DOE budget for comparable activities in FY 2003 is $5.87 billion (please see related budget article).

All of this money is being poured into DOE's so-called **Stockpile Stewardship Program**. The program's purported rationale is that it is necessary to maintain the safety and reliability of the US nuclear weapons stockpile without underground full-scale testing. It was touted from its beginning in 1994 as the platform that could help ensure US acceptance of the long-sought-for **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty** (CTBT), the "holy grail" of nuclear arms control meant to cut off the continuing advancement of nuclear weapons. In what can be regarded as a classic bait-and-switch, DOE got greatly expanded funding for the Stockpile Stewardship Program, but ratification of the CTBT has been blocked, in part due to the lukewarm support of the nuclear weapons labs directors. In the NPR, the Bush Administration is explicitly opposed to the CTBT. Moreover, **there is now increasing momentum to return to full-scale testing,** but whatever occurs, **we will still be stuck with the bloated Stockpile Stewardship Program.**

One further grand irony in all of this is that DOE's very own negligence is now being used as substantial justification for a return to full-scale testing. DOE is seriously behind in routine stockpile surveillance, the nuts-and-bolts operations that help to ensure the safety and reliability of our nuclear arsenal.

Only a small minority of the components in a nuclear weapon is actually nuclear; therefore the vast majority can be lab-tested. DOE has largely failed to do so. In addition, DOE has made much of the potential risks of plutonium aging. Yet their own past documents state that serious aging problems in plutonium pits (the primary or "triggers" for modern thermonu-

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clear weapons) have not been found in pits up to 30 years old. Moreover, more recent studies indicate that the material structure of plutonium actually grows more stable with age.

Finally, DOE has implemented an **aggressive schedule of alterations and refurbishments to the existing stockpile** (please see "Alterations, Modifications, Refurbishments and Possible New Designs" fact sheet at www.nukewatch.org). Arguably, for the sake of confidence, the last thing that you would want to do is introduce uncertainties through changes to a nuclear arsenal that you have already extensively proof-tested. Yet this is precisely what DOE plans to do. So, these two key points - - 1) that DOE has not prioritized routine stockpile surveillance and 2) that DOE is aggressively implementing changes to the stockpile - - expose the Stockpile Stewardship Program for the smokescreen that it really is. The hidden purpose of the program is not only to preserve nuclear weapons literally forever, but to also **continue design advancement** even in the face of the current full-scale testing moratorium. Important evidence to this is the fact that Los Alamos now states that the target of its plutonium pit campaign - - the most key production operation in the entire nuclear weapons complex - - is to produce both existing pits and new design pits without underground testing.

What this utimately means is the continuing **ascendancy of weapons budgets over the cleanup budgets.** Long gone is any illusion of a peace dividend from the end of the Cold War. DOE has pushed political solutions such as the **Waste Isolation Pilot Plant** so that it can falsely claim that it has cleaned up the complex. This, in turn, allows it to generate yet more radioactive waste in continuing bomb production. To add insult to injury, DOE is now laying the groundwork to further abandon its cleanup obligations (please see article on the new DOE budget). What this further means is yet **more major facilities directly tied to nuclear weapons design and production.** We already have the over-budget **$5 billion** National Ignition Facility in California. To this can now be added a **$4 billion** facility in Tennessee for weapons alterations and refurbishments and plans for a **$2 billion** advanced nuclear weapons design facility in Los Alamos and a **$4 billion** super plutonium pit production facility in South Carolina. The latter will be capable of production rates of up to 500 pits per year, comparable to Cold War rates!

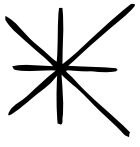
What is this all for? Again, it is to preserve nuclear weapons forever, which is in contravention to the 30-year-old Non-Proliferation Treaty (to which the US repledged to in 2000 as an "unequivocal commitment"). But it is also to pursue and weaponize "advanced nuclear concepts," in contravention to the express purpose of the CTBT. All of this leads not only to the preservation of the classic Cold War-style "deterrence" policy of strategic overkill. It also leads to, in the words of the Sandia Lab Director, a new secondary level of targeting addressed to "whom it may concern" (the so called rogue states). The end result is that we see a **concerted drive to forever legitimize nuclear weapons, at the precise juncture that the world most needs to rid itself of weapons of mass destruction.**

At the same time, we need to be aware that our nation's nuclear weapons programs are intentionally embedded in **a larger program of all things nuclear.** The weaponeers see that the broad nuclear matrix helps to support their programs.

A prime example: the DOE has recently ruled out the immobilization of excess weapons-grade plutonium, which would involve placing plutonium into glass for permanent safe and secure disposal. It is the safest, surest and cheapest method. Instead, DOE's plan now is to turn excess plutonium into mixed oxide (MOX) reactor fuel for use in commercial reactors. This is being touted as a non-proliferation measure in that it would purportedly use up weapons material. This is, shall we say, ironic given that under present technologies the use of MOX fuel will breed additional plutonium in the reactors. Moreover, it will **inject plutonium into international commerce and transportation** and create the need for risky reprocessing plants, setting a deplorable international example. It will also heighten opportunities for terrorism and the proliferating diversion of nuclear materials. The final irony of MOX is that in the US, DOE officials have said we must do MOX because the Russians are going to do it. Yet in Russia government officials have said we must do MOX because the Americans are going to do it. Furthermore they are giving us money to do it! From such circular logic a major international nuclear program is born, one that will be fraught with grave international implications.

In a move that even more directly **erodes the barriers between US military and civilian nuclear materials production** the DOE is preparing to produce tritium in commercial reactors. Tritium is a radioactive isotope of hydrogen used to radically boost the explosive power of plutonium pits in modern thermonuclear weapons. DOE cites tritium's decay rate of 5.5% per year as the justification for resumed tritium production (its own tritium reactors were shut down in the late 1980's for safety reasons). The irony is that **tritium from excess warheads would be more than enough to replenish the US nuclear arsenal** until the middle of this century if those weapons were truly retired (i.e., not kept in active reserve) and if the US were not maintaining an aggressive nuclear warfighting posture. Therefore, it is very telling that **DOE is now overturning the military/commercial nuclear materials production prohibition** that had been in place in the US since the dawn of the atomic age.

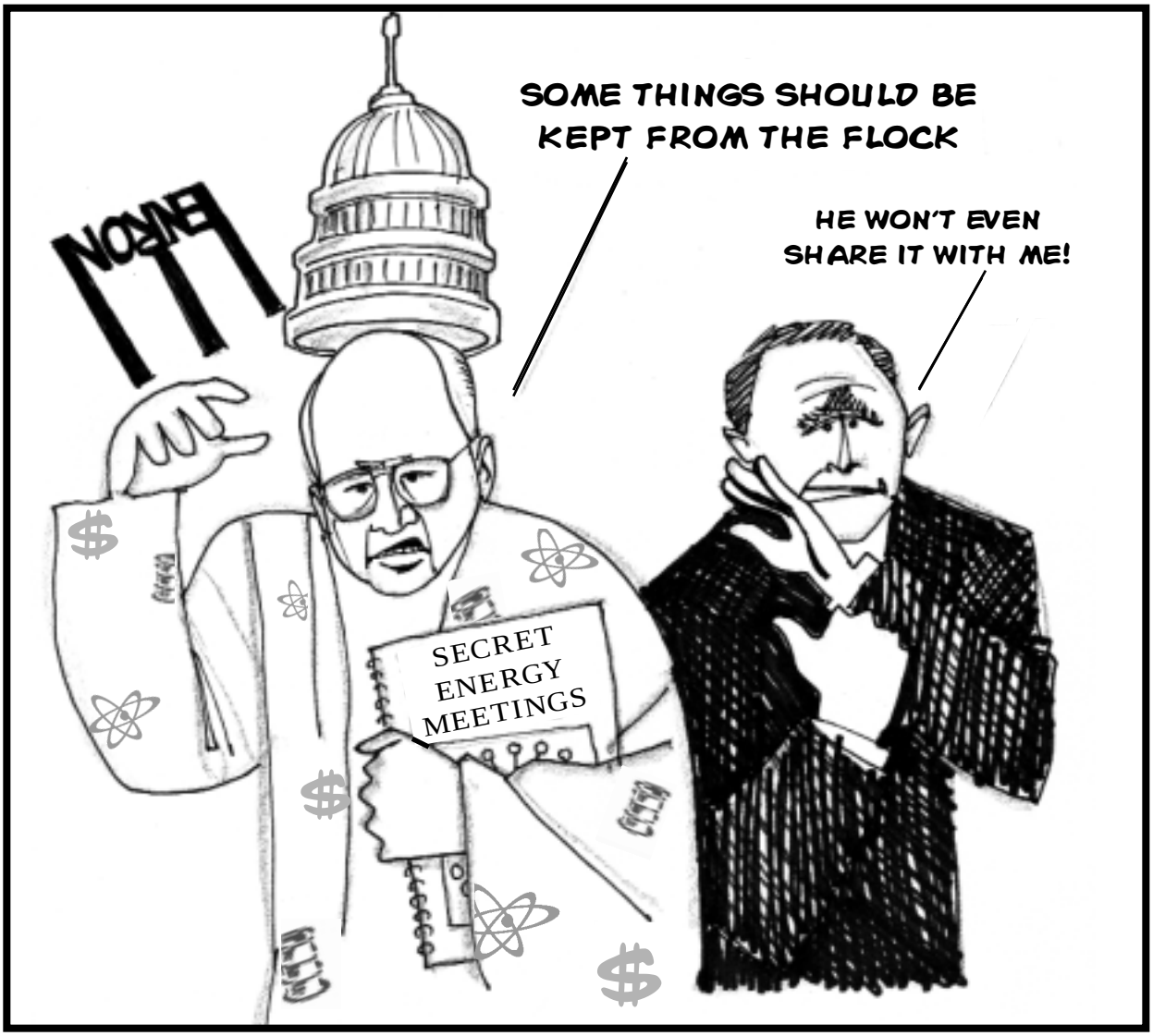
In summary, **the nuclear weapons state of the union is not good.** Nuclear Watch of New Mexico does believe it absolutely essential that despotic regimes should not be allowed to acquire weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, **the US needs to lead by example.** The world has been far too close to nuclear war between India and Pakistan. The best thing we could do is end our massive investments in nuclear weapons, bring their continuing advancement to a close, lower our own hair-trigger status and adopt an interim curatorship posture while preparing for dismantlements. In our own interests we should do these things while insisting that other nations do the same.



DAWG BITES

The New Mexico Environment Department's Oversight Bureau (NMED OB) will continue to receive insufficient funding for their work. A letter requesting more funding, sent out by NM Environment Secretary Peter Maggiore to US Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, was answered by the DOE Assistant Secretary of Environmental Management Jesse Roberson two months later stating that they would have little money to give to NMED OB. DOE has requested only $725,000. To put this in perspective, in the mid '90s, NMED OB operated with a budget of over $3,000,000. **Reduced money means diminished oversight.** Call your the New Mexico Congressional delegation and tell them NMED OB funding must be restored.

Based on Secretary Abraham's recommendation **President Bush has approved the Yucca Mountain Site in Nevada as the nation's high-level nuclear waste dump.** Yucca Mountain has too many serious flaws to list here in DawgBites. Nevada Governor Guinn has pledged to veto the project. However, Congress is expected to override the State's veto. The nuclear power industry has declared that opening Yucca Mountain is vital to its survival, even as federal funding for renewable energies continues to decline.



Policy from Above
by Jamie Chase

Lackluster Cleanup Plans for LANL's "Legacy Waste"

Cleaning up after the legacy of nuclear weapons production continues to be a major hurdle for both environmental regulators and watchdog groups, like Nuke Watch, who are trying to influence the prioritization of cleanup programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Cleaning up this "legacy waste" is increasingly urgent, as new information continues to indicate potentially significant risks to human health and the environment. **Perchlorates**, a common compound in rocket fuels, have recently shown up in preliminary water tests in streams and springs around LANL. Preliminary tests have also shown the possibility of **tritium** in groundwater under LANL. Tritium is a radioactive isotope of hydrogen, and like its sister non-radioactive sisotopes forms water when it reacts with oxygen. The result, tritiated water, is very destructive to living cells when ingested. One of LANL's waste dumps, the notorious Area G in Technical Area 54, also contains documented contaminants such as **PCBs, asbestos, volatile organic compounds, and highly radioactive nuclear reactor control rods.**

Despite all these confirmed or potential contaminants at LANL, the laboratory continues to drag its feet on real cleanup. The Department of Energy (DOE), appears to endorse this dangerous stance toward health and safety by **slashing cleanup funds year after year.** (To learn more about these cuts, please see our "Graph on Nuclear Weapons vs. Cleanup Budgets for Los Alamos National Laboratory" at www.nukewatch.org). The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), responsible for oversight and regulation of hazardous and mixed wastes in New Mexico (i.e., both hazardous and radioactive wastes), has not been aggressive in enforcing timely and effective cleanup at LANL. On January 22 of this year a comment period ended on a cleanup schedule issued by the NMED. This cleanup schedule, called a **Work Plan**, supports a much larger document issued by LANL called an **Installation Work Plan**. These two documents are used to prioritize cleanup efforts at LANL. Here at NWNM, we found that the Work Plan was seriously deficient for several reasons: it lacked justification for actions NMED plans to ask LANL to conduct; it lacked completion dates for a number of important projects; and, with one or two exceptions, it failed to request real cleanup, instead substituting more studies. **You can read the comments we submitted on the NMED Work Plan at www.nukewatch.org.**

Where Do All the Dollars Go?

Last July, Nuclear Watch of New Mexico began a study of the Department of Energy's (DOE) **impact on New Mexico's economy.**

The DOE, and public officials that support it, often justify its pervasive presence in our poverty-stricken state by portraying its operations as an economic windfall. No doubt the DOE employs thousands of people, but an economic windfall to New Mexico? Nuke Watch doesn't think so! Our preliminary economic data for the tri-county area (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, and Santa Fe) around Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) demonstrate a tremendous **per capita wage disparity.** Over the past four decades, per capita earnings in Los Alamos County, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, were over 4 times greater than Rio Arriba County, 1.5 times greater than Santa Fe County (home to Santa Fe, a prosperous tourist city and New Mexico's State Capital), 2.6 times greater than the state as a whole, and 1.5 times greater than the national average. This indicates that the majority of **money spent by the DOE** on LANL employee wages **appears to largely stay in Los Alamos County**.

The New Mexico State Legislature has considered rescinding the State's food tax. Doing so, however, would mean the State loses an estimated $90 million. That's a lot of money for a state with a small budget. Nuke Watch has a very **simple solution** that we would like to put forth. LANL is booming. In fact, it is believed that its budget for the coming fiscal year will grow to over $2 billion. Yet, that money is not taxed because LANL's manager, the University of California, is an "educational institution." If New Mexico were to **charge LANL the going rate** for services and business conducted in this state, the lab would generate tax revenues well beyond the $90 million lost from a rescinded food tax.

As we continue with this project, we will provide more detailed analysis. Look for information on our web site, **www.nukewatch.org**.

Polychlorinated Bi What?
Another Mission Change for WIPP

Polychlorinated Biphenyls, or PCBs, were the catalyst for the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976. PCBs are a mixture of synthetic organic chemicals (organics not made by nature). PCBs can range from oily to waxy in texture. They have also been used in a wide variety of industrial and commercial applications. More than 1.5 billion pounds of PCBs were manufactured in the United States before 1977, when it became illegal to produce PCBs.

So what is the big deal about PCBs? Well, the big deal is that they are carcinogenic (they cause cancer).In addition, they have been known to have other significant ecological and human health effects. These include neurotoxicity, reproductive and development toxicity, immune system suppression, liver damage, skin irritation and endocrine disruption, to name a few. Add to this that PCBs have adverse consequences that will not show up until later generations which can lead to things such as lowered birth weights in children born to mothers contaminated by PCBs.

So why is Nuclear Watch writing about PCBs? As it turns out, the Department of Energy (DOE) is now pushing ahead with a plan to submit a permit modification request that will allow for the disposal of concentrated amounts of PCBs in radioactive wastes at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). Until now, WIPP regulations have forbidden permanent disposal of concentrated PCB waste at WIPP.

The question that needs to be asked is simply this: Why does the DOE need to bring PCBs to WIPP when they already have enough waste to meet the requirements to fill WIPP? WIPP is designated to be the dump for plutonium-contaminated waste and mixed hazardous waste. Consider that the DOE is already in the process of submitting a request to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval to start sending PCB waste to WIPP. This request will move ahead without any substantive public input. Once EPA approves this, DOE will submit a permit modification request to the New Mexico Environment Department to allow PCB waste to come to WIPP. It is without question that DOE should gain the New Mexico Environment Department's approval first **before** they go to the EPA. This way public process is fullfilled and the Environment Department can objectively rule on this modification.

As it currently stands, DOE plans to submit a Class 1 Permit Modification Request to NMED for PCB disposal. This is simply a ridiculous move on DOE's part. Class 1 modifications are used in the case of minor changes (i.e., typos in the original permit, changing names of supervisors, etc.) This **request to dump PCBs at WIPP does not remotely come close to the requirements of a Class 1 modification!**

The entire issue of modifications continues to be a major concern for a number of watchdog organizations. In several meetings, DOE has stated that they will limit their modification requests to ensure that there is not a modification a month. In fact, at one meeting DOE stated that they would request modifications only in January and July...twice a year instead of nearly one a month! Contrary to their stated intentions, they have now missed their January deadline and will be coming out with several modifications this year, not in just two intervals. Time and again, **DOE claims to cooperate** with groups like Nuclear Watch of New Mexico; time and again **they prove themselves unreliable.**

have done...will do

Nukewatch actions in 2001

- Helped block several proposed DOE modifications to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP);
- Successfully pressured the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to compile the complete archive for the LANL hazardous/mixed radioactive waste permit;
- Pursued the issue of a proposed biological lab at LANL; exposed related safety issues and the legal need for a national study on DOE's existing biological program;
- Actively participated in the management of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, the Back From the Brink Campaign to de-alert nuclear weapons and a fund to support citizen studies of DOE environmental programs;
- Published fact sheets on nuclear weapons issues, produced bi-weekly cable TV shows and expanded an award-winning web site (nearly a quarter-million hits); and
- Hired two new full-time staffers so that we can better do our work.

Nukewatch agenda for 2002

- Continue to oppose DOE modifications to WIPP that seek to expand its mission;
- Track and publicize rising funding for nuclear weapons programs and declining support for cleanup;
- Pressure NMED for stringent regulations and real cleanup in its pending renewal of LANL's waste permit;
- Push for national review of DOE's bio agents program and resolution of the many safety issues concerning the lab's proposed biolab;
- Analyze and provide public information on DOE's actual economic impact on New Mexico;
- Promote real nuclear arms cuts and the lowering of the hair-trigger status of nuclear weapons; and
- Ongoing public education in all of the above and more!

ENERGY DEPARTMENT RELEASES NEW BUDGET

On February 4 the DOE released its proposed budget for fiscal year 2003 (FY 03). The bottom line is that $$$ for nuclear weapons is going up and cleanup is going down.

Total Nuclear Weapons Activities

DOE is requesting from Congress $5.87 billion under this budget category for its **National Nuclear Security Administration** (NNSA). Next year's request is 5.5% over the this year's $5.59 billion, or 45% greater than the Cold War average of $4 billion for comparable nuclear weapons programs. Under the NNSA's new **Future Years Nuclear Security Program** weapons funding is expected to rise to $6.3 billion by FY07. Remarkably, 49% of the NNSA's FY03 nuclear weapons funding will be spent in New Mexico at the **Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories** (LANL and SNL) and the **DOE Albuquerque Operations Office.** The economic benefits to New Mexico of this apparent federal largesse is disputable given the lack of widespread business spinoffs, the state's continuing rating near the bottom in per capita income and its consistent position as highest in child hunger.

The NNSA nuclear weapons budget is divided into four major categories. The first is **Directed Stockpile Work** (DSW), up 18% this year, which includes research, development, engineering, and the fabrication of nuclear weapons components and the dismantlements of retired weapons. Despite recent announcements that the number of US nuclear warheads will be dramatically slashed, funding for dismantlements is being cut by 7.5% because of "higher priority work in other programs." Clearly, one of these higher priorities is in "Supporting Research and Development" (up 42.7%) which "maintains the development capability to refurbish and design new weapons as required." One of the explicit objectives of this subprogram is to complete design and engineering studies on a new "**Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator**." At the same time, DSW is seeking to preserve nuclear weapons literally forever through its aggressive schedule of alterations and refurbishments to existing weapons.

The second major weapons budget category is "**Campaigns**," described as "multi-year, multi-functional efforts" to preserve nuclear weapons design and production capabilities. As a "performance indicator," Campaigns must include "the capability to design and certify new nuclear warhead types." Perhaps the most important campaign is the **Plutonium Pit Manufacturing and Certification Campaign** at LANL. [Plutonium pits are the "triggers" for modern thermonuclear weapons.] Its budget request is $194.5 million; however, this is not a true picture of total costs. Directly related costs bring total campaign costs to around $400 million in FY 03. Notably, one of the campaign's immediate goals is to complete planning for a $4 billion (?) "**Modern Pit Facility**" (most likely to be located in South Carolina) capable of production rates up to 500 pits per year, comparable to Cold War production rates!

The third major nuclear weapons budget category is **Readiness in Technical Base and Facilities,** which in DOE's words "provides the physical and operational infrastructure at the [nuclear weapons] laboratories, the Nevada Test Site, production sites and other DP [Defense Programs] sites…" This was raised from $1.53 billion last year to $1.69 billion. One notable element this year is an additional $15 million to s**horten "testing readiness"** (the time taken to return to full-scale testing) at the Nevada Test Site. Across the board, the amount for the construction of nuclear weapons facilities this year is increased by 36%. These facilities include, for example, design work for an **advanced plutonium laboratory** at LANL (total cost up to a half billion $$); a new $23 million underground reactor and the $504 million **Microsystems and Engineering Sciences (MESA) Complex** at the Sandia Lab in Albuquerque; and another $282.8 million in construction for the overbudget **National Ignition Facility** at the Lawrence Livermore National Lab in California.

The fourth major budget category for nuclear weapons programs is the **Facilities and Infrastructure Recapitalization Program**, which "is expected to continue for approximately 10 years, with funding planned at $200,000,000 to $500,000,000 per year." This year's 26% increase "reflects the planned growth to achieve restoration, revitalization, and rebuilding of the nuclear weapons complex." In 1970 the U.S. and the other nuclear weapons powers pledged in the NonProliferation Treaty to "enter into serious negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament," not to the perpetual rebuilding of their nuclear weapons complexes.

Cleanup

DOE hinders analysis of the cleanup budget by combining the costs of environmental restoration (cleanup or "ER") and the management of wastes being generated today by the ongoing research and production of nuclear weapons into a single Environmental Management (EM) budget. DOE use to segregate these figures up until 1998. As a matter of accountability it should still be doing so. DOE's FY03 request for its entire EM budget is $6.7 billion. However, in DOE's own words, "only about one-third of the EM program budget today is going towards actual cleanup and risk reduction work." Using this one-third figure, then DOE's FY03 cleanup request is for around $2.23 billion, of which $800 million is dedicated to DOE's new "Cleanup Reform." This requested funding is tantamount to a slush fund at the Department's discretion for "alternative cleanup approaches." In DOE's own words, "the Department will pursue [cleanup] implementing proposals, some of which will require

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DOE Budget continued from p.6

reaching new understandings with State and Federal Regulators." This funding should not be considered true cleanup money, as it appears to be a stratagem to actually weaken cleanup by awarding sites with additional funding that manage to break their legal cleanup agreements with their host states.

DOE declares that this "Cleanup Reform" is "critical to beginning implementation of the recommendations of the **top-to-bottom review**." This so-called review of the DOE cleanup was completed without any citizen participation and played a central role in the preparation of DOE's FY03 Environmental Management budget. Nevertheless, the DOE Secretary has refused to reveal with whom he has met with in the course of this review, even though it was likely with self-interested DOE contractors (a situation analogous to Vice President Cheney meeting with Enron while planning national energy policy). Another alarming sign for citizen review and participation is the review's statement that the "National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for EM projects and programs is often time-consuming and costly without providing the sound analysis and rational alternatives needed to support good decision making." NEPA is a key federal environmental law that mandates that "major federal actions" must undergo public review. It is improper for DOE to attempt to marginalize NEPA when a historic lack of DOE accountability has led to the massive environmental degradation that exists today. To add insult to injury, the review repeatedly laments the lack of a national cleanup strategy while noting that only "a collection of individual site strategies exist." Yet in the mid-1990's DOE tenaciously fought against a NEPA lawsuit brought about by citizens' groups that sought to force DOE to complete a court-ordered national cleanup study. Ultimately DOE settled out of court while successfully dodging its responsibility to complete that national cleanup study.

One of the stated "principles and priorities" that DOE used to prepare its EM budget is to accelerate shipments to the **Waste Isolation Pilot Plant** in southern New Mexico. [WIPP is the first deep underground dump for radioactive wastes from past and continuing nuclear weapons production.] While DOE touts WIPP as the cleanup solution the facility will receive less than 3% of military radioactive wastes from across the country. [DOE explicitly states that it intends to leave the super-majority of radioactive wastes buried in the ground where they are now.] One way that DOE is seeking to accelerate shipments to WIPP is by lowering characterization criteria for certifying the waste that is shipped. Other ways are that DOE is looking to perform characterization after the waste has already been transported (something that is presently prohibited) and to expand surface storage at WIPP. This year's WIPP budget was increased by 5% to $193.2 million and could receive yet more funding under "Cleanup Reform."

The **Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) cleanup program** was slashed from $40.5 million in FY02 to $29.6 million in FY (a 27% cut). The DOE explanation for this decrease is that it "reflects reprioritization due to scope growth at Pantex [outside Amarillo, Texas] and the Sandia National Laboratory" in Albuquerque for cleanup and groundwater contamination concerns. Yet funding for the "Sandia ER Project" is cut from $22 million to $16.7 million (minus 24%) and for the "Pantex Site Remediation Project" from $13.4 million to $10.5 million (minus 22%). Furthermore, DOE funding for the New Mexico Environment Department Oversight Bureau (which oversees cleanup programs at LANL and Sandia) was cut by nearly 25%. DOE's explanation for this is the "decrease reflects reduction in costs for oversight activities," a statement that the Oversight Bureau (which has had to lay staff off) is not likely to agree with.

the case of the vanishing documents

As we noted in our last *Watchdog*, the **Department of Energy** (DOE) has used the terrible events of September 11 to justify the **removal of hundreds of environmental documents from its web sites.** Some of these are legally required documents, such as environmental impact statements. Since December, Nuke Watch has been tracking the accessibility of Department of Energy web sites. We have been working closely with the Project on Government Oversight (POGO) (for more information about POGO see their web site at *www.pogo.org*) to get many of these documents back online and in the public domain once more. Of particular concern is the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) permit, which allows the lab to handle, store, and dispose of hazardous and mixed wastes. LANL's RCRA permit expired in 1999 (but the lab still dumps waste!), and is currently being reviewed by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) for renewal. Nuke Watch was able to get LANL to put its RCRA permit back online. LANL, however, has a long way to go in restoring its electronic library of environmental documents. We will continue to pressure the lab to restore those documents, which will become even more important once the NMED releases a draft of the laboratory's new RCRA permit.

Return Address for this mailing: Southwest Research and Information Center PO Box 4524 Albq. NM 87106
551 Cordova Road #808 Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505-4100 Phone: 505.989.7342 Fax: 505.989.7352

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nuclear watch new mexico

mission statement

The mission of Nuclear Watch of 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 genuinely curb the proliferation nuclear weapons.

Inside this issue: Nuclear Weapons State of the Union, DOE's New Budget, Economic Impact on State, Enlightening Cartoon, Wimpy Cleanup Plans at LANL, PCBs at WIPP?

What To Do!

Yucca Mountain Site Decision: President Bush has approved the Yucca Mountain Site in Nevada as the nation's high level nuclear waste disposal site. The governor of Nevada will exercise his veto power on the decision, thus leaving the final decision to Congress. Call your elected representatives and tell them you don't support the opening of Yucca Mountain.

Budget Cuts: While reading this issue of the Watchdawg, you will have noticed that the wrong DOE programs received more funding and the right programs were slashed. Call your members of Congress and tell them that you don't support the increasing cuts in DOE's cleanup programs.

Plutonium to WIPP; Immobilzation?: Recently the DOE has been making noise about shipping 2 additional tons of plutonium to WIPP. NM Senator Pete Domenici has been very vocal in his opposition to this. Call Senator Domenici and thank him for holding firm on this issue. This plutonium was at one time scheduled for immobilization (put in glass and disposed), but the immobilization program has been stripped of funding. Tell Domenici and your other Congressional delegates that immobilization, the cheapest and safest way to get rid of excess weapon-grade plutonium, must be refunded and vigorously pursued.

Nuke Watch Web Site: Educate yourselves! Our web site has now won 4 awards and that's not just for show. We have numerous research papers, comments, news media clips, and links on all the issues that concern everyone of us. Take 15 minutes a day to read our material and keep up with our work at www.nukewatch.org.

Senator Jeff Bingaman: (202) 224-5521, *Senator Pete Dominici:* (202) 224-6621, *Representative Tom Udall:* (202) 225-6190, *Representative Heather Wilson:* (202) 225-6316, *Representative Joe Skeen:* (202) 225-2365, *Capital Switchboard:* (202) 224-3121.