

nuclear watch new mexico

# WATCHDOG

news that bites back



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## SLASHING THE STOCKPILE, SHRINKING THE COMPLEX

### Our New Report: Concrete Steps toward Global Nuclear Disarmament

Esteemed Readers, do you recall the Bush Administration's desperate attempt to repackage the US nuclear weapons establishment under the name "Complex Transformation"--a thinly veiled attempt to beef up production capability while purporting to shrink the complex? Nuclear Watch and many other public advocacy groups argued that any *real* "transformation" would involve a lot more shrinking...and a lot less nuclear weapons production.

Now we have a new Administration, and a President who is making headlines around the world with his explicit call for compliance with the NonProliferation Treaty and a genuine commitment to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Currently we await the release of a Congressionally required *Nuclear Posture Review* from the new Administration that will set forth the country's nuclear weapons policies. But we're not just waiting; we're acting to spur concrete policy decisions and budget choices congruent with the boldest possible vision for preventing nuclear weapons proliferation.

On April 8, Nuclear Watch and other eminent national and regional groups held a Washington, D.C. press conference to release a groundbreaking new report, "**Transforming the U.S. Strategic Posture and Weapons Complex for Transition to a Nuclear Weapons-Free World.**"

A fact sheet and map on this newsletter's insert offer an overview of the report's recommendations. We encourage you to read the whole report or just its executive summary at [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org).

Our strategy is simple: "**C u ratorship**" of existing weapons as we close sites and cut the stockpile to 500 weapons.

Folks in our region who look at this plan may initially be tempted to ask, "Hey, how come other states get to close their nuclear

weapons plants before we do?" But look more closely and you'll see that the reality of our plan is: no new weapons work at the Labs; bright opportunities for mission diversification; emphasis on cleanup and dismantlement; and a whopping savings of about two-thirds of the nation's nuclear weapons budget.

How many citizens know that they've been footing the bill for a nukes budget half again greater than the height of Cold War spending? Report co-author Christopher Paine of the Natural Resources Defense Council, says "The U.S. government has wasted hundreds of billions in the 20 years since the Cold War ended maintaining nuclear forces and a make-work weapons laboratory complex..." NukeWatch's own Jay Coghlan says: "If we are going to truly reduce our reliance on the stockpile, then the nuclear weapons complex should be reduced accordingly."

For years, this industry's bloated size and appalling cost to American taxpayers were kept aloft by pork dollars that Congress kept flowing to all of the states where Department of Energy facilities are sited. We've seen too much funding for new infrastructure and programs that lacked public support or real strategic value. DOE's weapons branch, the National Nuclear Security Administration, has tirelessly pushed for new-design bombs or for enhanced military capabilities added to existing weapons, thereby undermining efforts to curb proliferation. Other nations have resisted our pressure to back off of new weapons manufacturing because it was all too evident that we were not moving in that direction.

*"...as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act... So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."*

-- President Obama, Prague, Czech Republic, April 5

Putting the complex on a strict diet and ending its production mission will force DOE to tackle the crucial work of cleaning up the big mess it has made all over this country since World War II--and rounding up and containing fissile materials, instead of adding to the world's dangerous backlog.

--Sasha Pyle

# Big “Nuclear Facility” Out of Step with the Times Still No Real Mission for Costly CMRR Building at LANL

While the President of the United States has declared a nuclear weapons-free world a national goal, the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) sticks to obsolete plans to expand its plutonium bomb-making infrastructure. LANL continues to try to build up a dying nuclear weapons industry. The construction of a proposed new \$2 billion-plus “Nuclear Facility” at LANL is not yet funded, but its design alone has cost over \$200 million and is far from complete. This facility, which would support expanded nuclear weapons production, should not be built because it is oversized, over budget, over sold, and simply not needed.

The Chemical and Metallurgical Research Replacement (CMRR) Project is planned for direct support of plutonium pit production and replaces the old Chemical and Metallurgical Research (CMR) Building. Pits are the central cores of nuclear weapons. CMRR's 185,000 square-foot first phase is now nearing completion at a cost of \$164 million.

CMRR's second phase, its “Nuclear Facility,” should be stopped now because:

- Its original justification was to directly support expanded pit production with “materials characterization” and “analytical chemistry” of weapons-grade plutonium. However, the federal government recently decided that pit production at Los Alamos will remain limited to a maximum of 20 per year until completion of the new *Nuclear Posture Review* by the Obama Administration, which is unlikely to expand pit production. Thus any decision to proceed with the CMRR-NF before then is grossly premature.
- Expanded pit production was always about producing new design nuclear weapons, the so-called Reliable Replacement Warheads (RRWs). Congress has decisively rejected RRW for two consecutive years. No RRWs = No Need for CMRR-NF.
- Following RRW's defeat, for all practical purposes pit production is being increasingly constricted even before the *Nuclear Posture Review*. A federal budget memo for FY2010 suggests maintaining pit production levels at current levels. In 2007 LANL produced 11 pits, in 2008 just 6, and is projected to produce just 6 pits in 2009. Obviously, LANL has been producing pits under the 20 per year limit without the CMRR-NF, underlining that the new facility is not needed.
- DOE Headquarters asked LANL to develop an “exit strategy” to get out of the old CMR Building without future use of the new CMRR-NF. We believe this is the path that should be followed; DOE Headquarters acknowledges that it is feasible by virtue of its request.
- The first phase of CMRR will soon be completed, with square footage nearly equal to the remaining operating sections of the old CMR Building. Given the lack of expanded pit production, CMRR phase 1 and the Lab's existing plutonium facility, PF-4, can absorb the old CMR Building's missions, rendering CMRR-NF unnecessary.

- According to an internal Lab document it may be cost-prohibitive to make CMRR-NF fully seismically-safe.
- LANL may have a legitimate need for a new nuclear materials vault for safe and secure storage. If justified, they should build a new plutonium vault on its own merits, de-linked from the CMRR-NF as a whole.

The CMRR-NF controversy is ultimately about future mission diversification (or not) at LANL. Build a new \$2 billion-plus facility whose main purpose is to expand nuclear weapons plutonium pit production and “they will use it.” LANL should be going after a slice of the pie to promote mission diversification rather than further investing in the shrinking nuclear weapons business. Then perhaps the Lab could help better meet today's national security challenges, such as nuclear weapons proliferation, global climate change and energy dependence.

--Scott Kovac

For much more, please read our six-page fact sheet at <http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/NoCMRRNF.pdf>

## WIPP Hype: What's the Agenda?

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, our nation's only underground dump for plutonium-contaminated bomb waste, recently observed its tenth anniversary. This spawned some one-sided articles about its “sterling” safety record and the community support it enjoys in Carlsbad, NM (where it seems any and all jobs are welcomed). Did WIPP's PR department create this happy little story for some all-too-obliging newspapers?

Following the recent failure of Yucca Mountain in Nevada to pass muster, a few articles and editorials speculated that highly radioactive spent fuel rods should come to WIPP--the very nightmare that New Mexicans were assured would never come to pass. Could the new WIPP hype coincide with a secret decision being made? The intractable problem of how to dispose of super-hot power plant waste is the Achilles heel of the much-ballyhooed “renaissance” of the nuclear power industry.

Proper reporting would have mentioned that all the grave original doubts as to the repository's long-term ability to isolate toxic radioactive and chemical wastes from the environment remain unanswered. The facility is designed to collapse on itself; the waste will be forever irretrievable. This means that when groundwater eventually breaches the site and carries the toxic mess to the Pecos River, the Rio Grande and the Gulf of Mexico, no one will be able to do anything about that. The thermal heat generated by spent fuel rods in salt beds will further accelerate this process. So do we really want high-level power plant waste down there too? Our New Mexican descendants deserve better.

--Sasha Pyle

# ***DOE Stimulus in New Mexico: Road to Recovery or Another Lost Weekend?***



Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced \$6 billion in new funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for the Department's Environmental Management (EM) agency to accelerate environmental cleanup work and create jobs. Projects are supposed to focus on accelerating cleanup of soil and groundwater, transportation and disposal of waste, and demolishing former weapons complex facilities.

Not in the final funding was a proposed \$1 billion for nuclear weapons infrastructure. This is in part due to a February letter spearheaded by the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability urging that it be eliminated and calling it premature to make major investments in nukes research and production infrastructure--because the future of nuclear weapons remains undefined.

In some ways, the future of Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is now looking brighter because \$212 million of the \$6 billion for EM is heading its way. The money will be used to complete decontamination and demolition (D&D) of vacant, legacy Technical Area 21 buildings and to fund the cleanup and removal of Material Disposal Area B (MDA B) at TA-21. The TA-21 area is located immediately east-southeast of the Los Alamos town site. At one time it was the Laboratory's main chemical research and plutonium facility, processing plutonium from 1945 until 1978. MDA B was an early radioactive waste disposal area from 1944 to 1948.

These projects were chosen because they met ARRA's requirements for creating jobs, reducing environmental liability, providing opportunity for land reuse, and for being "shovel ready." D&D of TA-21 has been shovel ready for at least 10 years now and the contract for MDA B was originally signed in July 2007. Both of these projects have been delayed due to lack of funding. The \$212M would double LANL's cleanup budget for FY2009.

For reference, the Lab estimates \$3B for total cleanup site wide, which does not include another \$20B for complete removal of waste from the Lab's largest dump, Area G. Governor Richardson endorsed the funding at LANL, but stated, "Let me be clear--this is progress, but we will continue to push for additional funding until all appropriate cleanup and remediation is completed."

Because the risk of fraud increases when billions go out the door quickly, ARRA aims to provide an unprecedented degree of oversight and accountability for how the dollars are spent. The website, Recovery.gov, will be one place for citizens to monitor progress, and LANL has also started a website devoted to this. Project plans are due May 3rd but it is unclear how much input the public will have *before* the funds are spent. Count on NukeWatch to stay actively involved.

Meanwhile, Don Hancock of the Southwest Research and Information Center, NukeWatch, and others are questioning ARRA funds for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), outside of Carlsbad. WIPP is proposed to receive \$178 million to accelerate completion of legacy transuranic waste shipment preparation and shipments. We believe the proposal does not meet criteria and requirements. Many parts of the proposed projects are not "shovel ready," have no contracts in place, and lack regulatory approval. In addition, the projects do not have measurable accomplishments, so the public will have no way to judge the effectiveness of WIPP stimulus funding.

We argue that the proposed WIPP money could be better spent dealing with groundwater contamination problems at Los Alamos, including potentially toxic chromium. Currently, the Lab risks missing state-mandated cleanup milestones, a problem that increased cleanup funding could help alleviate. --Scott Kovac

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## **Shocking News! Grassroots Non-Profits Will Not Receive Federal Stimulus Moola!**

With a new Administration in office, it's an opportune time to map out some real reform.

We've heard a lot about change, but we have to work hard to make the changes we want a reality--especially after decades of big money going to the nuclear weapons industry.

Your watchdogs are hitting the road this month to keep our message loud and clear in the nation's capital.

NukeWatchers Jay Coghlan, Scott Kovac and Sasha Pyle will once again make the annual pilgrimage to "DC Days," the annual gathering of our national coalition, the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (ANA).

This is one of the most effective things we do! ANA works hard all year setting up meetings with members of the House and Senate, EPA, DOE and other regulatory bodies, where we have the opportunity to advocate for the public interest and back it up with a lot of facts and figures.

**Help us get even more traction this year. Send us some stimulus funding!**



  
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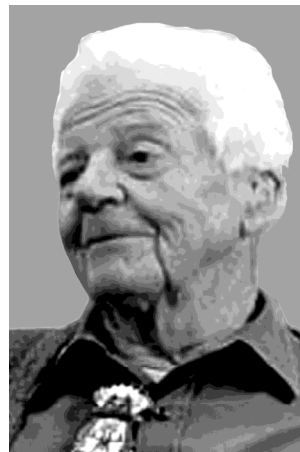
**mission statement**

Through comprehensive research, public education and effective citizen action, **Nuclear Watch New Mexico** seeks to promote safety and environmental protection; diversification away from nuclear weapons programs; greater accountability and cleanup in the nation-wide nuclear weapons complex; and consistent U.S. leadership toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

**In This Issue: A Bold New Plan for Slashing the Stockpile & Shrinking the Weapons Complex;  
Why We Still Don't Need the New CMRR Nuclear Facility at Los Alamos;  
Will Federal Stimulus Money Finally Bring Real Cleanup to New Mexico?  
...and Why YOU Should Send Stimulus Money to NukeWatch!!**

In Memoriam  
Ed Grothus 1923-2009

Edward Bernard Grothus of Los Alamos, NM died on February 12, 2009. A machinist at the Los Alamos Laboratory since 1949, Ed left in 1969 when his conscience could no longer tolerate his role in nuclear bomb development. Since then, he became well-known for speaking out against the nuclear mission of the Lab. He established the Los Alamos Sales Company in 1951 to buy and resell surplus equipment from the Laboratory. In recent years, the operation became known as "The Black Hole" because "everything went in, and not even light could get out." The business is well-known to artists, inventors, tinkerers, set-decorators, and tourists from around the world. His motto became "Semper Fabricate, Numquam Consumite" or "Always Build, Never Destroy." Despite his antiwar and antinuclear stance, he never called for the closure of the Laboratory. He said the Lab should stop making things useful only for killing, but he supported a mission for scientists to efficiently harvest the energy of the sun, the infinite power source. We could not have said it better. May his vision, humanity and sense of humor live on.



**nuclear watch new mexico**

**Staff**

Jay Coghlan Director  
Scott Kovac Operations/Research  
John Witham Communications

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