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news that bites back

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In the Year 2030: a little science, a lot of fiction "Bombplex" undercut by new findings *Or: How long do plutonium pits last...and why should we care?*

In October the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the nuclear weapons agency within the Department of Energy (DOE), formally unveiled "**Complex 2030**," its hoped-for nuclear weapons complex of the future. We're calling it "**Bombplex**." It would design new weapons and resume industrial-scale bomb production -- while the U.S. tells others they can't have weapons of mass destruction.

This announcement begins a legal process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires federal agencies to analyze environmental impacts of proposed major actions. The NNSA now must undertake a "Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement" (PEIS), whose first phase revolves around **the right of citizens to comment on the needed scope of review**. This will be followed by a draft, currently expected around July 2007, on which citizens can also comment. That will lead to a final PEIS, after which NNSA will decide whether or not to create the nuclear future weapons complex it wants. **Citizens must become involved now to head off a possible nuclear arms race resumption, and instead lead the world to nuclear disarmament as mandated by the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty.**

Tending the Stockpile--or Fattening it Up?

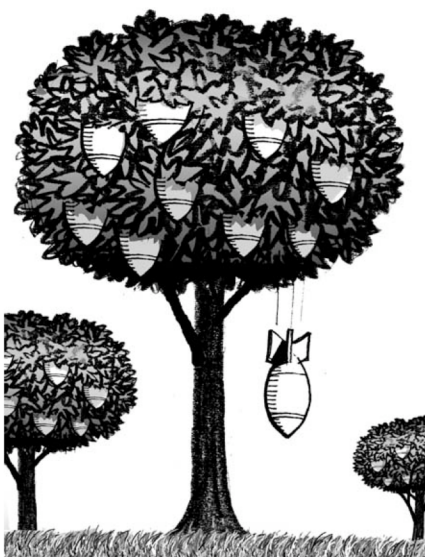
Forced by the threat of citizen litigation, in 1996 DOE completed a "Stockpile Stewardship and Management PEIS" for the consolidation of its post-Cold War nuclear weapons complex. Among other things, it formally sanctioned "interim" production of plutonium pits, the central cores of nuclear weapons, at New Mexico's Los Alamos Lab after the Rocky Flats Plant was shut down by a 1989 FBI raid investigating environmental crimes. Since 1996, NNSA has proposed various "supplements" to the 1996 Stockpile Stewardship and Management PEIS, most notably for a "Modern Pit Facility," designed to produce up to 450 pits per year. The collective anti-nuclear weapons activist community got Congress involved, and the Modern Pit Facility was defeated! NNSA is now initiating this Complex 2030 Supplemental PEIS (or "SEIS") for a minimum production capacity of 125 pits per year at a future "Consolidated Plutonium Center," to be built at one of five candidate sites. **We defeated the Modern Pit Facility, and we can defeat Bombplex!**

NNSA claims the nuclear weapons complex needs to be transformed "into a responsive infrastructure that supports the specific stockpile requirements established by the President and maintains the essential United States nuclear capabilities needed for an uncertain global future." The Bush Administration's 2001 Nuclear Posture Review called for the development of earth-penetrating and lower-yield (hence more "usable") nuclear weapons. That Review also broadened the rationale for the potential use of nuclear weapons. Coupled with the right to pre-emptive war that the Bush Administration arrogated onto itself, this could include nuclear strikes as well -- not ruled out, for example, against alleged Iranian nuclear facilities. **The public has the right to question the present course of U.S. nuclear weapons policies, particularly when those policies have shifted from the classic "deterrence" of the Cold War era to possible nuclear first strikes.**

The New Scoop on Older Plutonium Pits

Concerning claimed technical needs, there are increasing indications that **soon-to-be-released studies will show that the operational lifetimes of plutonium pits are in the range of 100 years**, rather than the NNSA's accepted 45 years. This would strongly undermine the NNSA's claimed need for a minimum production capacity of 125 pits per year. Further, 100-year pit lifetimes would also severely undermine the need for the so-called Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW), which

continued on p.2



Jamie Chase

NNSA calls the “enabler” for Complex 2030 -- which they are aggressively pushing. In our view, new and untested RRW designs are not needed for an already extensively tested and reliable stockpile. Instead, RRW will be used to create the future stockpile that the Nuclear Posture Review unilaterally mandates, without the assent of the American people.

The scope of the Bomplex SEIS as defined by the NNSA **does not give all reasonable alternatives.** The agency’s stated preferred alternative is to produce a minimum of 125 plutonium pits per year. The so-called “no action alternative” will incorporate the currently planned expansion of pit production at Los Alamos from 20 to 50 pits per year, which the “reduced operations alternative” will do as well! These are **false choices between varying degrees of increased nuclear weapons production and new designs.** We advocate -- indeed demand -- that an “Enhanced Global Security Alternative” be considered, the essence of which is responsible custodianship of nuclear weapons while they await dismantling. This alternative would strengthen our national and global security by encouraging all countries toward nuclear disarmament as required by the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty.

The Part We Played Here at NukeWatch

NNSA uses plutonium pit aging to justify the Reliable Replacement Warhead and “Complex 2030,” as the agency seeks to restore production capabilities comparable to those of the Cold War. The ages of nuclear U.S. weapons can be easily documented. Contrasted against the pending studies that will show that the operational lifetimes of plutonium pits are on the order of ~100 years, **it becomes clear that even the oldest**

nuclear weapons in the planned stockpile still have ~70 years of remaining life. So we don’t need to design new weapons and expand bomb production!

NNSA has been conducting “accelerated aging” studies of plutonium pit lifetimes for a decade, and 100’s of billions of taxpayer dollars ride on the outcome. Because of that, Nuclear Watch asked Senator Jeff Bingaman (D.-NM) to introduce legislation that required **independent review.** He successfully did so, and a group of eminent scientists, among whom have been Nobel laureates and original Manhattan Project scientists, were picked to conduct that review. The results are expected very soon, with one member having stated in January 2006:

“Recent developments reinforce the conclusion that plutonium pits and the U.S. stockpile are stable over periods of at least 50 to 60 years and probably much, much longer... Plutonium aging does not force us to a decision point at present... Meanwhile, the technical conclusion is that we do have time for a thorough and well-informed discussion of U.S. nuclear weapons policy.”

That is our position exactly: **there is no need to rush headlong into a renewed nuclear arms race. There is time to deliberate sane nuclear weapons policies without international hypocrisy. We encourage citizens to demand just that at the upcoming scoping hearings for Bombplex 2030!**

--Jay Coghlan

For a detailed analysis of U.S. nuclear weapons ages, please see <http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/WeaponsAge.pdf>. For scheduled Bombplex2030 hearings, see WhatToDo on back.

Post-election: Where to now on US nuclear policies?

It has long been said that watching sausage and legislation being made is not for the squeamish. For legislation the real meat-grinding takes place in congressional committees--specifically for DOE issues in the Senate and House Armed Services Committees (ASC) and Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittees (E&W Approps). So what is the outlook for the Bush Administration’s nuclear policies now that the Democrats have taken nominal control of Congress?

An important factor is that New Mexico’s senior (Republican) senator **Pete Domenici**, global promoter of nuclear programs and ardent booster of the Los Alamos and Sandia Labs, **must relinquish his chairmanship of Senate E&W Approps.** He’ll be replaced by Brian Dorgan (D-ND), who doesn’t have much of a record on nuclear issues. However, Dorgan was one of only 12 senators who voted against Bush’s “India deal” (see next page) as a terrible proliferation precedent.

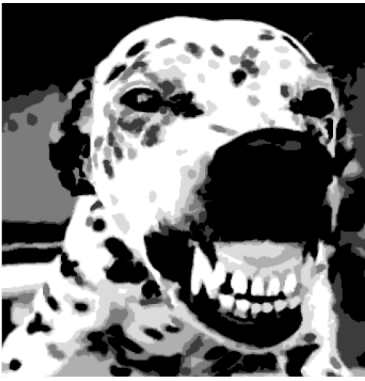
Carl Levin (D-MI), an ardent arms control advocate, will be chair of Senate ASC. As one example of his outlook, he used the term “Arthur Andersen accounting” to describe the vagueness in the Bush/Putin Moscow Treaty between deployed nukes and those in a “responsive reserve” from which weapons could be withdrawn. And finally for Senate matters, **Harry Reid (D-NV) will be Majority Leader**, which could be the political death knell for the trouble-plagued Yucca Mountain high-level radioactive waste dump.

In House Armed Services, **Duncan Hunter (R-CA) will lose chairmanship.** Hunter has strongly opposed a global Test Ban Treaty

and vigorously supported earth-penetrating nuclear weapons and expanded bomb production. In House E&W Approps, moderate **David Hobson (R.-OH) will step down as chair.** Hobson led the fight against earth-penetrators and expanded bomb production, but his replacement Peter Visclosky (D.-IN) is expected generally to do the same.

The makeup of the New Mexican congressional delegation is particularly important; **44% of DOE nuclear weapons money is spent in our state alone.** To win, NM first district Republican **Heather Wilson** had to distance herself from Bush and pose as a moderate, finally winning by a nail-biting **875 votes.** Ironically, she was the first in Congress to openly endorse Bush’s policies of developing nuclear earth-penetrators and mini-nukes. Wilson has also long been regarded as being **groomed by Domenici to succeed him.** It remains to be seen whether the narrowness of her re-election could upset that calculation.

Clearly Democratic control of Congress is no silver bullet for the nuclear extremes of the Bush Administration, and two years to the next election is a political eternity. That said, it’s reasonable to expect at least some moderation, if for no other reason than the Democrats have a federal budget that desperately needs balancing. Fiscal concerns may be particularly important in constraining the so-called global nuclear renaissance that Bush and Domenici have been pushing. But what really matters is that the American public continues to push both political parties for sane policies that encourage nonproliferation by example and real cleanup to protect future generations.



DawgBites quick news items

Unreported in the U.S.: the UK Times reported that six Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, UAE and Saudi Arabia) have notified the International Atomic Energy Agency that they want nuclear energy programs, ostensibly mostly to desalinate seawater. But why, for example, does oil-rich Saudi Arabia need nuclear energy? Perhaps the answer lies in the Bush Administration's failed "axis of evil" policy. Empirically, this policy has meant invading the wrong country over WMDs, and prompting North Korea and likely Iran to acquire nuclear weapons as deterrence against perceived American threats. Now Sunni Arab countries may be pursuing nuclear programs from fear that the Shiite Iranian government may have nukes in the future.

How to fix this? Direct and serious negotiations should be conducted immediately with both North Korea and Iran with the aim of shutting down their nuclear programs without war. Moreover, the Israeli government should be pressured to declare its secret stockpile, and the volatile Middle East irrevocably put on a path to become a nuclear weapons free zone, as has long been proposed. None of this can succeed without solid U.S. leadership by example, contrary to the design and production of new nuclear weapons that our country now plans.

For source article, see: www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,251-2436948.html

• **Speaking of a way bad proliferation example:** By a vote of 85 to 12 the U.S. Senate approved Bush's "India nuclear deal," in which that country will acquire American nuclear technologies. India has consistently refused to sign the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty (NPT), in large part because of what it called the "apartheid" of nuclear weapons states failing to take steps toward their own disarmament while barring others from acquiring the weapons. But unfortunately this new "deal" does not require Indian nuclear weapons facilities to be accountable or inspected. This is apt to have a strongly negative influence on India's archrival. Like India, Pakistan is nuclear-armed and an NPT-non-signatory. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D.-NM) had the courage to vote against this terrible proliferation example, and we thank him.

• **Down to Their Last Strake?** In our last newsletter we reported how the "Divine Strake" nuclear weapons effects test that will blow up 700 tons of ammonium nitrate/fuel oil seemed headed for New Mexico's White Sands Missile Range after citizen opposition stopped it at the Nevada Test Site. Since then, Senator Pete Domenici (R.-NM) has claimed that the Department of Defense told him Divine Strake is headed back to Nevada. With that news, DoD is already encountering resumed and strong opposition from citizens in Nevada and Utah and their congressional delegations.

• **We're suing the Department of Energy over a pattern of unlawful delays in responding to Freedom of Information Act requests.** After nearly nine months of delay, DOE's lawyer verbally advised us five minutes before a scheduled federal court hearing that one of our requests would be fulfilled. From there she went on to argue that our case should be dismissed--which the judge rejected. If successful, our lawsuit could result in an unprecedented court order requiring DOE to end its delays, which often go many months and even years beyond legally required deadlines.

• **Los Alamos Biolab:** In 2003 Nuclear Watch and Tri-Valley CAREs of Livermore, CA, sued DOE over inadequate "environmental assessments" for proposed bioweapons agents research labs that would handle pathogens like anthrax and plague at the Los Alamos and Livermore nuclear weapons labs. As a result, DOE withdrew its first approval for the Los Alamos biolab, but not Livermore's. We then suffered an adverse court decision allowing the California facility to proceed. However, upon appeal the federal court agreed with us that DOE must review the adverse effects of potential terrorist acts. Since early 2004 DOE has struggled to release a more comprehensive "environmental impact statement" (EIS) for the Los Alamos biolab, which will likely be further delayed because of the new need to address terrorist acts. Nevertheless, a draft EIS is expected in early 2007--stay tuned!

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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: New Findings on Plutonium Pit Lifetimes Undercut Both "Bombplex 2030" and "Reliable Replacement Warhead;" Divine Strake Test Evicted from NM; Post-Election Analysis; Exhaustive (sorry) Fact Sheet on Los Alamos Economic Impact; Global News DawgBites

What to do

Tell officials at the Department of Energy what you think of "Bombplex," the avoidable resumption of a nuclear arms race. See overview in this issue and show up at any of the meetings listed below to comment on the scope of the "Environmental Impact Statement for Complex 2030."

Public scoping meetings in New Mexico:

Socorro: Macey Center, NM Tech, 801 Leroy Place, Dec. 4, 6-10 p.m.
Albuquerque: Convention Center, 401 2nd St. NW, Dec. 5, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. & 6-10 p.m.
Los Alamos: Hilltop House, 400 Trinity Drive, Dec. 6, 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
Santa Fe: Genoveva Chavez Community Center, 3221 Rodeo Road, Dec. 6, 6-10 p.m.

Can't come to a meeting?

You still have a chance to speak out. Between now and January 17, 2007, the Department of Energy will accept public comments via e-mail at:

Complex2030@nnsa.doe.gov

Or mail to: Complex 2030 SEIS Document Manager, Office of Transformation, U.S. DOE, NA-10.1, 1000 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20585.

Or, send us the enclosed postcard so that we can keep a record of all comments. We will forward them to DOE.

Go to our website., www.nukewatch.org for more info, news & sample comments.

Write your Congress-people!

They work for you, you put them in office --your voice doesn't stop at the ballot box. Let your representatives know how you feel about how much of your tax money gets spent on nuclear weapons.

Watch our TV shows, Channel 16 in Santa Fe, every Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

And while you're stuffing stockings, remember to throw us dawgs a bone. Your support is needed and appreciated in helping us do this work.



nuclear watch new mexico

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