

nuclear watch new mexico

WATCHDOG

news that bites back



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An Open Letter to President-Elect Barack Obama Congratulations on your election!

Under your leadership, the U.S. Senate should now finally ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Please be aware that the nuclear weapons labs historically have opposed limits on full-scale nuclear weapons testing. The "Stockpile Stewardship Program" was created in 1994 so that they would sign off on a test ban, and has received more than \$90 billion since then. Despite that, the labs now claim that nuclear weapons reliability cannot be guaranteed in the long run without building new designs, the so-called Reliable Replacement Warheads (RRWs).



In August 2007 you declared, "I believe the United States should lead the international effort to deemphasize the role of nuclear weapons around the world. I also believe that our policy towards the Reliable Replacement Warhead affects this leadership position. We can maintain a strong nuclear deterrent to protect our security without rushing to produce a new generation of warheads. I do not support a premature decision to produce the RRW."

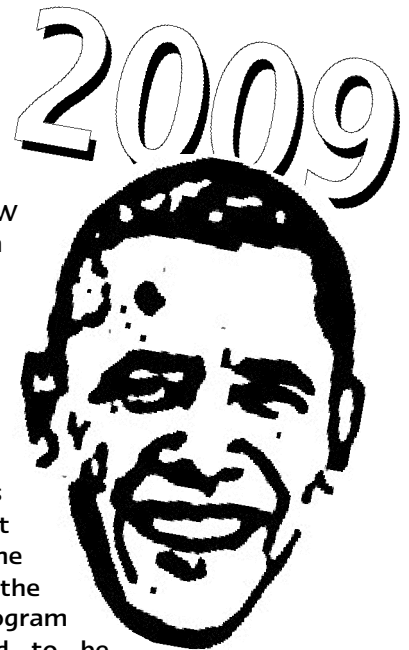
Yet Robert Gates, the man you retained as Defense Secretary, claims the long-term outlook for the reliability of U.S. nuclear weapons is "bleak" without RRW because of inevitable aging effects. He further claims there is "absolutely no way we can maintain a credible deterrent and reduce the number of weapons in our stockpile without resorting to testing or pursuing a modernization program", by which he clearly means RRW. He also claims existing U.S. nuclear weapons are designed on an "assumption of limited shelf life" and that it is impossible to keep extending their operational lifetimes.

Achieving a CTBT is one of your declared nuclear weapons policy goals. Many in Congress have linked Treaty ratification to implementation of the RRW program. It is clear that the labs want RRW in large part for their own institutional survival. But do you really have to give the labs anything beyond what they already have in order to gain the CTBT?

The truth is that existing stockpile evaluation and maintenance programs are the best way to keep the nuclear stockpile safe and reliable.

Please be aware that the laboratories understood long ago that U.S. nuclear weapons have long reliable lifetimes. A 1993 "Stockpile Lifetime Study" by the Sandia National Laboratories declared: "It is clear that, although nuclear weapons age, they do not wear out; they last as long as the nuclear weapons community (DoD and DOE) desires. In fact, we can find no example of a nuclear weapon retirement where age was ever a major factor in the retirement decision." See http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/Sandia_93_StockpileLife.pdf

The Study showed that most defects in U.S. nuclear weapons were caused not by aging but by production flaws that were corrected within the first few years (and RRW will likely introduce its own production defects). It also documented that no defects were discovered through full-scale nuclear weapons tests, but instead were found through routine stockpile evaluation programs. This is extremely significant when one considers that the fundamental rationale for the Stockpile Stewardship Program was that reliability had to be ensured in the absence of full-scale testing. As a triple irony we still have no CTBT, the Stockpile Stewardship Program has received more than \$90 billion to date, but the labs say we must have RRW.



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Dear Mr. President *continued from p.1*

Confidence in stockpile reliability has been further boosted by plutonium pit lifetime studies (pits are the crucial cores or "triggers" upon which nuclear weapons performance most directly depends). In 2006 independent experts concluded that pits have reliable lifetimes of 85 years or more, more than double the labs' previous estimates.

U.S. ratification of the Test Ban Treaty is an essential step toward strengthening the NonProliferation Treaty, which is up for international review in 2010. Strengthening the NPT is in turn an essential step toward achieving your declared goal of a nuclear weapons free world. Our long-term case against RRW: it will undermine national security by trading in known reliable nuclear weapons for untested new designs; thus it will likely lead to future full-scale tests; and it would epitomize hypocrisy to produce new nuclear weapons while advocating a world free of them. In the

short term, any movement or compromise toward RRW is clearly premature, before the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States submits its recommendations and your Administration completes the new Nuclear Posture Review that Congress has mandated.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty makes absolute sense; RRW does not. We strongly urge you to press ahead promptly for a CTBT, but without any RRW-for-CTBT deal.

Thank you for your consideration. And good luck!

Respectfully submitted,



Jay Coghlan, Director
Nuclear Watch New Mexico

We Sue Over the Kansas City Plant

In October Nuclear Watch New Mexico, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Tri-Valley CAREs, and three individual local plaintiffs filed a lawsuit challenging the Energy Department's proposed new Kansas City Plant. The suit charges that DOE's semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), is evading cleanup of the existing Plant while pursuing illegal "third-party" financing for a new half-billion dollar bomb plant eight miles away. America needs to re-tool for green jobs, not dead-end nuclear weapons jobs. NNSA should be cleaning up its weapons complex--not building it up!

The old Plant, located within Kansas City, Missouri, manufactures and/or procures 85% of all nuclear weapons components. It is located in a flood plain at the confluence of Indian Creek and the Blue River, and has to be protected by a floodwall. Fish in the area are so contaminated with PCBs that the State of Missouri warns not to eat them.



The Kansas City municipal government plans to issue bonds to finance the public infrastructure for the new Kansas City Plant. To get the deal rolling it declared 180 acres mostly farmed for soybeans to be blighted. It used this gimmick because Missouri state law authorizes municipalities to address neighborhood (mostly urban) blight by offering tax abatements if "the development of such area or areas is necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals or welfare of the residents of such city." We don't think that owning a nuclear weapons production plant is in the best interests of the morals and welfare of Kansas City residents!

Until the bonds are retired the Kansas City municipal government will own a federal nuclear weapons plant!

Meanwhile, the private developers get a sweet deal--being subsidized by the bonds while acquiring ownership through a 20-year lease-to-purchase granted by the City. City/private financing means the new Plant is not in the NNSA's annual budget requests, and is thus flying largely beneath congressional radar. KCP is also the only one of eight nuclear weapons sites not included in the "Complex Transformation Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement" (a legally required study on downsizing the complex). NNSA simply does not want to consider the potential efficiencies and cost savings of consolidating KCP's non-nuclear components production at other sites.

NNSA plans to move into its shiny new bomb factory by 2012 and has declared the old site cleaned up. All that is necessary is ongoing "Long-Term Stewardship," which because of PCB and industrial solvent contamination includes groundwater pump and treatment of 29 million gallons annually (the old Plant is also being considered for designation as a Superfund site). Kansas City very much hopes for economic redevelopment of the old site, and believes that only "several millions of dollars" will be needed in additional cleanup to enable that. What the municipal government and Missouri and Kansas congressional delegations apparently don't know is that internal KCP documents indicate that cleanup will cost more than \$280 million (including necessary related demolition) that the feds may not honor.



Any delay to the new KCP resulting from our lawsuit could threaten the project because of the deteriorating economic climate and possibly changed policies under the Obama Administration. Plaintiffs are being represented by the firm of Meyer, Glitzenstein and Crystal in the Washington, D.C. federal district court.

Mission Change Yes, Costly Plutonium Facility No!

Los Alamos Lab has been ordered by the Department of Energy's weapons agency, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), to prepare an exit plan to move operations out of an existing plutonium facility before its long-awaited replacement is built. This is a door the Lab has not wanted to open... an option they have resisted considering...one that raises the question of whether the replacement facility is needed at all.

In our current economy, downsizing and consolidating are good ideas. NNSA recently released a final Environmental Impact Statement for its planned "Complex Transformation," purporting to evaluate alternatives for slimming down the nuclear weapons complex into a more efficient enterprise. But NNSA's idea of downsizing includes new buildings that are still over-sized, over budget, and not really needed.

Safety and seismic concerns are cited as justifications for replacing the aging 500,000-square-foot Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building. The first phase of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement (CMRR) Project already nearing completion is the Radiological Laboratory/Utility/Office Building, a 185,000-square-foot space. The second phase of the CMRR Project is to be a 270,000-square-foot "Nuclear Facility" (NF), still being designed. NNSA explicitly states that the CMRR-NF is key to expanding plutonium pit production from the currently sanctioned level of 20 pits per year to 80.



Change is coming!

What could be done with money not spent on nukes and related facilities? The choice of Stephen Chu as Energy Secretary gives us some clues. Chu, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, will be the first scientist to run the Department. He isn't a Navy Admiral, a politician, or a power industry official. Chu comes to the Cabinet from the Lawrence Berkeley Lab in California, where much of his research was on renewable energy. His selection could signal big changes in how the U.S. uses science to tackle the challenge of national energy independence. DOE spends around \$6.6 billion a year on nuclear weapons research and production--compared to about \$4.6 billion on applied energy research and \$4.7 billion on basic science. With tight budgets and new priorities, science could now finally be favored over weapons.

New Mexico's political landscape has also undergone a sea change. Gone is Senator "St. Pete" Domenici, protector of Los Alamos and Sandia Labs' nuclear weapons programs, succeeded by Tom Udall who advocates Lab mission change. Newly-elected 3rd District Congressman Ben Ray Lujan, Jr. has said, "Our national laboratories are already studying both the impending damage and the solutions to global warming. We can expand our laboratories' mission by including research to maximize the potential of renewable energy." Martin Heinrich, the new 1st District Representative, has stated, "Our national labs are not in the business of war, they are in the business of national security...their cutting-edge research is critical to our national security and the local booming renewable energy industry." Perhaps New Mexico's new Congressional delegation can finally direct the Labs away from nuclear weapons, the ultimate tools of war, and into prioritizing new national security needs.

Renewable energy programs are great, but there are other jobs that our national security labs might do even better. Existing LANL efforts in nuclear nonproliferation, global threat reduction, energy efficiency, and environmental research and cleanup (to name a few) should be expanded. How to pay for them? Cut nuclear weapons research and production!

Congratulations to the new Members of New Mexico's Congressional delegation! Let's put them to work for us...denying funds for the unneeded CMRR Nuclear Facility and redirecting that money to today's urgent needs. Tell them what you think! For a sample letter, see: <http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/NoCMRR.pdf>

All this square footage may have seemed necessary to NNSA a few years ago, but there's a new administration with new nuclear policies on the way. Funding for new-design warheads will likely continue to be rejected by Congress, and expanded production was always about producing new so-called Reliable Replacement Warheads. The number of existing warheads in the stockpile will keep decreasing (we hope) under Obama's declared goal of a world eventually free of nuclear weapons. Huge brick-and-mortar costs don't jibe with zero production of new nuclear weapons or deep reductions of existing weapons.

NNSA headquarters may have heard the knock on the door. In an August 2008 memo NNSA's Office of Defense Programs declared its intent to transfer all program activities out of the old CMR as soon as practical. Due to problems at the old building, federal officials asked the Lab to devise an exit plan to get activities out of there entirely in advance of the construction of the CMRR-NF. If LANL can find room for plutonium operations in advance of the new facility, that means they can certainly function without that facility, especially given likely new nuclear weapons policies.

The estimated cost for both CMRR buildings currently stands at \$2.6 billion (four times original estimates). Design and engineering costs alone for these facilities are at least \$350 million and will surely escalate (\$300M has already been spent). In this economy, we can't afford to bail out LANL--when the need for expanded nukes programs and new plutonium facilities has left the building.

--Scott Kovac


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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: "Dear Mr. President"...An Open Letter to Barack Obama
We Sue DOE over the Kansas City Plant; LANL Plans Another Totally Unneeded Facility;
A Compelling Rationale for Your Financial Support of NukeWatch***



*Happy
Holidays
.....
a Season
of Hope*

Every person who wants to see a world free of nuclear weapons has a renewed reason for hope this holiday.

If you have worked for reform in our nation's weapons policies, you know that we were guaranteed a change for the better.

Both major party candidates clearly stated in their campaigns that they planned to reduce our nuclear arsenal and thus set an example for other nations to follow.

We wish the President-Elect and his incoming staff the best of luck as they work for peace and prosperity here and around the world.



nuclear watch new mexico

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There's no time to snooze!

Some good things happened in 2008, in the world of public advocacy in nuclear weapons issues!

If you don't believe us, take a look at the flip side of this page for a list of our '08 accomplishments, some wishes we helped to bring true...and good news we were proud to bring to you.

But--some crucial developments are already on the line in 2009 !!

Again, flip over this page to see what's up.

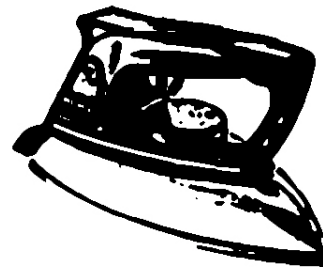
We need to roll up our sleeves and dive back in!

We need your help to keep up the good work!

Send us a check today so we can really build on our efforts and achievements of the last few years. With the brand new administration on its way to Washington, now is our crucial moment to fight for long-overdue nuclear policy reforms that YOU--the public--want and deserve!

And you can make that happen!

2009 can be the year we finally see the big payoff for our hours of dedicated toil in both New Mexico and Washington, D.C., working with lawmakers & government agencies, investigating, researching, writing, testifying at hearings, doggedly showing up at Lab meetings, producing public comments, filing (and winning) lawsuits, and bringing you as much nuclear news as you can stand via the media, our publications, and our award-winning website!



We must press on!

Yes! You've got me all fired up and on your team!

So here's my donation...for cleanup and non-proliferation.

Oh boy, I am so happy to know my contribution is fully tax-deductible.

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- **New “Reliable Replacement Warheads” nixed by Congress 2 years in a row!**
This might not have been possible without the independent study from 2006 that showed plutonium “triggers” can last 100 years or more--a study conducted after Senator Jeff Bingaman introduced legislation calling for it, at our request.
- **Dramatic success fighting industrial-scale production of new nukes!**
Just 4 years ago, the weaponeers wanted to make 450 plutonium pits a year. Congress said nope. Then NNSA asked for the OK to make 125 pits a year. Again denied. This year they tried to expand capability from the current 20 pits a year to 80 at Los Alamos. When Congress again turned down RRW (above) --the excuse for expanded pit production-- we knew someone was listening. We say, stop trying to re-design the weapons complex before the new Administration issues its required “Nuclear Posture Review.” NNSA has announced that now LANL will aim to produce about 10 pits annually, and we’re guessing President Obama won’t find expanded production justified.
- **We work on the nation’s whole nuclear weapons complex, not just NM sites.**
We have a special interest in the Kansas City Plant, which produces or procures 85% of all nuclear weapons components. NNSA wants to let private developers (subsidized by Kansas City municipal bonds) build it a new half-billion-\$ production plant while abandoning full cleanup at the old facility. We filed suit with 6 co-plaintiffs in October to block this!
- **We prevailed in our long-running Freedom of Information Act lawsuit!**
Now NNSA will be required to post timely “Ten Year Site Plans” on the Internet for all 8 of its active weapons sites. We say the public has an urgent need to know these plans that could cost billions and include controversial and provocative programs!
- **We’re negotiating for a new LANL permit kinder to the environment.**
The New Mexico Environment Dept., Los Alamos Lab and regional organizations are negotiating on the new permit, to replace one that expired over 10 years ago and has been extended administratively. We applied a lot of pressure to get this renewal process going. We can’t tell you the details yet, but the new permit will be much stronger on environmental protection--and crucial cleanup!!

AND HERE’S WHAT WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH IN 2009:

Have the long-awaited Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty finally ratified by the U.S. Senate, but without any “deal” struck for the Reliable Replacement Warhead.

Continue to beat down proposals for expanded plutonium pit production at LANL.

Block construction of a new Kansas City Plant; compel total cleanup of the old Plant.

Get a final renewed LANL waste permit that strongly protects the environment and mandates genuine cleanup.

Successfully push mission diversification at LANL: cuts to nuclear weapons research and production; increases to nonproliferation, energy efficiency and cleanup programs.