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NNSA Responds to Lawsuit by Releasing Nuclear Weapons Complex Performance Evaluation Reports

Santa Fe, NM - In response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit filed by Nuclear Watch New Mexico on March 28, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has released the Performance Evaluation Reports for its eight nuclear weapons sites. * These reports are the government's scorecard for awarding tens of millions of dollars to nuclear weapons contractors, and were previously available to the public until 2009. However, since that time the NNSA has withheld them in a general move toward less contractor accountability. We sought to help reverse that wrong direction through our litigation.

These Reports offer unique insight into the way that our nuclear weapons labs and production plants are run, and the profits awarded to the contracting corporations. A few highlights by site are:

Los Alamos National Security (LANS), the limited liability corporation that manages the **Los Alamos National Laboratory** (LANL), is in the process of cutting nearly 600 jobs. Yet it enjoyed a record-breaking profit of \$83.7 million for fiscal year 2011, a 13% increase in one year, and 10 times more than what the University of California (UC) use to be awarded when it was LANL's sole nonprofit manager. Flying in the face of that excessive award, the Report did find that LANS was deficient in its management of the exorbitant Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility, a proposed plutonium facility designed to directly support expanded plutonium pit production. The Obama Administration has "deferred" the Nuclear Facility for at least five years because of cost overruns (now at up to \$6 billion), nearly ten times the original estimate.

Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC, the private contractor managing the **Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory**, did not meet all of its FY 2011 performance milestones in its flagship program, the National Ignition Facility (NIF). The Report notes that "the overall number of shots resulting in useful data collection remains below the rate which has previously been communicated to stakeholders as necessary for assuring success of the National Ignition Campaign." In other words, the \$7 billion NIF is failing to produce the promised results, while the goal of ignition keeps being pushed back, which is of growing congressional concern.

At the **Y-12 Site** near Oak Ridge, TN, design of the Uranium Processing Facility continues to hit snags as plans for site readiness and a preliminary safety report were deemed to be unacceptable. At the same time substantial progress was made in upgrading Building 9212, the facility that the UPF is to replace. This calls into question why the UPF, estimated to cost up to \$7.5 billion, is needed to begin with.

Contrary to the common perception that the nuclear weapons business is winding down, the **Kansas City Plant** delivered over 121,000 components. While preparing to move to a new production plant subsidized by the Kansas City municipal government, the contractor Honeywell “develop[ed] an alternative strategy to avoid listing on the EPA’s National Priorities [Superfund] List... [that] could have impacted the ability to dispose of the [old] KCP once the facility is vacated at the end of FY14.” Groundwater at the old plant is heavily contaminated and there are increasingly controversial worker health concerns.

The **Nevada Test Site** (now renamed the Nevada National Security Site) is of growing importance to the nuclear weapons complex with subcritical, joint actinide shock physics, and high explosive pulse power experiments. In addition, in one year the site received and disposed of 1.77 million cubic feet of low-level radioactive and hazardous wastes from the nuclear weapons complex.

Jay Coghlan, Director of Nuclear Watch NM, commented, “We are of course pleased these reports have been released, but they never should have been withheld to begin with. We are still reviewing them, and have some initial concerns that they may not be full and complete. If that’s the case, we will continue to fight for the full information that American taxpayers are entitled to. We need far greater contractor accountability for the millions of taxpayers’ dollars that corporations receive in profits from nuclear weapons research and production.”

NukeWatch NM’s legal counsel in our FOIA lawsuit is Mr. Jules Zacher of Philadelphia, PA.

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The Performance Evaluation Reports are available at www.nukewatch.org
The Reports for the Sandia Lab and the Pantex Plant are still undergoing review by NNSA and have not yet been released. We will post them as soon as they are available.

The eight NNSA nuclear weapons sites are the Los Alamos National Laboratory in northern New Mexico; the Sandia National Laboratories in NM and CA; the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in CA; the Nevada National Security Site (formerly the Nevada Test Site); and the four production plants: the Kansas City Plant for nonnuclear components; the Savannah River Site near Aiken, SC for the radioactive gas tritium used to “boost” nuclear weapons; the Y-12 Plant near Oak Ridge, TN, for nuclear weapons secondaries (which put the “H” in H-bomb); and the Pantex Plant for final nuclear weapons assembly near Amarillo, TX.

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