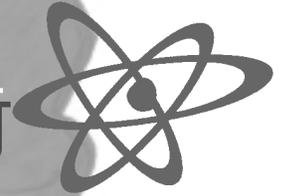


watchdog



float like a butterfly, bite like a dawg

newsletter of **nuclear watch new mexico** volume 2, issue 2 **early fall 2001**

<http://www.nukewatch.org>

STRIKE THE NUCLEAR OPTION OFF THE LIST!

Along with the rest of the nation, *Nuclear Watch of New Mexico* grieves over the suffering and loss of life in New York City and the Pentagon. We fervently hope that there will not be more innocent lives lost, and that the world will somehow evolve towards peace and justice (two ideals that, realistically, can only be pursued in concert).

By the time this reaches our readers it is possible that the US will have already begun retaliatory actions. Any nuclear response to the recent tragic attacks must not occur. Any response must be tempered by a sober analysis of what is ultimately best for our national interests. Notwithstanding the remarks made by the Secretary of Defense that no retaliatory option would be ruled out, there is clearly one that must be.

The use of nuclear weapons would be against our national security interests because:

1) No matter how low their yield, they would certainly cause high civilian casualties and severe environmental effects, which would inflame the world's opinion against us;

2) Their use would greatly impair international co-operation. Terrorism needs to be isolated so that it can be more effectively countered. The US cannot do that alone;

3) The horrific attacks still did not cross the line into nuclear, biological or chemical attacks. A nuclear response could invite retribution with (smuggled?) weapons of mass destruction. Once that cycle is entered into, all national and global security bets are off;

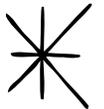
4) In the name of fighting terrorism it would be dead wrong to use the biggest class of terror weapons of all.

It is simply impossible for the US to withdraw into a Fortress America, relying predominantly upon its military prowess to maintain our way of life.

While internal protective security measures need to be undertaken, in the long run more global cooperation is needed. Our enormous nuclear stockpile did not deter the recent terror, and the use of nuclear weapons now would block the level of international cooperation needed to isolate terrorism. The US should make an explicit statement to the world striking the nuclear option off the list of possible retaliatory actions.

Finally, given the new political climate, there may be a temptation on the part of decision-makers to boost the already bloated nuclear weapons programs budget (which is currently receiving funding a full third above the Cold War average). We need to make the world safe from weapons of mass destruction (nuclear weapons principally among them), not forever increase the funding for them.

We close with prayers for peace and justice.



**DAWG
BITE**



The nuclear weapons labs have what are essentially slush funds for weapons research under **Laboratory Directed Research and Development (LDRD)**. A 6% "tax" is assessed against virtually all programs at LANL (thus substantially contributing to high overhead). Under recent "security improvements" information is no longer publicly available, but in the past LDRD projects have been over 90% dedicated to weapons research or related programs (such as nuclear materials). What this means is that even environmental, safety and cleanup programs **subsidize** weapons research! Lab management of LDRD has been the subject of past scathing congressional criticism and in FY2000 it was reduced to 4%. Largely under the influence of Senator Domenici it was restored back to 6%; this means that the lab has approximately \$84 million to use at its discretion for FY 2001 alone.

Crack that WIPP

INEEL Just Can't Get It Right

Here's the short version of a situation that has been going on for several months:

The Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) has been shipping radioactive waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) since WIPP opened. The Department of Energy is under a court imposed deadline won by the State of Idaho to get a certain amount of waste out of their dump by 2002. Therefore, the DOE has been trying to move the waste out of there as fast as they can and WIPP has been trying to accept it as fast as they can.

Well, somewhere in the past eight months the smart guys at INEEL decided that the two machines legally certified to characterize (i.e., analyze) the waste they were shipping to WIPP weren't enough. Someone decided that it would be a good idea to use **another** machine that they had at the lab to start characterizing waste; that way they could speed up their characterization by 33%! Now the problem was that the system they started to use was **not** legally certified to characterize waste for WIPP. This system, the Waste Assay Gamma Spectrometer (WAGS), was used to illegally characterize nearly 800 drums of waste over a period of six months.

Everyone knows the saying: "Loose lips sink ships." Well, that's almost what happened. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) eventually heard **through word of mouth** that INEEL was using some sort of non-certified system to send waste to

WIPP. The EPA verbally ordered the Department of Energy Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) to shut down the shipment route from INEEL until they could sort things out for themselves. What the EPA didn't know was that CBFO had already heard about the problems at INEEL and they had already shut down the shipments from INEEL **for one day**. CBFO, thinking that they had fixed all the problems there could possibly have been in that one day, decided to ignore the verbal order from the EPA and continued to receive shipments from INEEL.

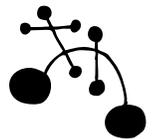
To make a long report short, the EPA investigated what was happening at INEEL. They told them to stop using the WAGS system and told CBFO to stop receiving waste characterized by the WAGS, and not to bury the last of the WAGS waste until after their investigation. This was leading to a possible problem for WIPP because they couldn't keep the waste above ground for very much longer and a comment period for the Federal Register was required before the EPA could make its final decision on the WAGS system. In the end, however, the EPA ruled in favor of the WAGS system, and allowed the WAGS-characterized waste that was above ground at WIPP to be buried. They have also stated that INEEL may continue the use of the WAGS system for their waste stream.

Now the kicker of all of this is that INEEL was the **pilot site** for the regulations for WIPP, when the WIPP permits were being written. CBFO insists that there aren't any

other sites that are performing illegal acts, even though INEEL clearly was acting outside of its legal boundaries, and CBFO accepted it by not shutting down their shipment route. How can anyone possibly trust that CBFO is investigating their sites appropriately if this is the way they respond to illegal acts? In addition to this, the EPA has in many ways rewarded INEEL for its illegal acts by **allowing them to continue** using the WAGS system for their waste stream!

This problem ties directly into the new Class 3 Permit Modification for *On-Site Waste Characterization Confirmation* that CBFO has thrown at the public. If this modification is passed, WIPP will be able to take smaller sites' waste and characterize it at the WIPP site, not at generating sites. On top of that, WIPP will be able to hold waste above ground for a year rather than the 60 days they're allowed right now, and they will have more above-ground storage than ever before! If WIPP can't stay within the legal guidelines now, imagine what could happen within their additional wiggle room, if this permit modification is passed by the New Mexico Environment Department.

If you want a more in-depth explanation of the INEEL/WIPP situation or more information on the permit modification, please go to our award winning web site at www.nukewatch.org and click on our WIPP page link.



Domenici w/ Pet
by Jamie Chase

Yes, we do have some comments...

In July NWNM submitted comments to DOE on its **proposed biological research laboratory at LANL**. We argued that there has been inadequate information made available to the public during the planning process and that there is a track record of safety violations with bio research at LANL. LANL has asserted that a DOE Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) report was erroneous when it found that LANL has no hazard control plan. However, in a phone call to the Inspector General, NWNM was told that the OIG stands by its claims. That office stated to NWNM that LANL has failed to develop plans to safely handle specific organisms. A generic hazard control plan is inadequate for biological research of the kind that LANL conducts, the OIG stated. There will likely be continued safety problems given a lack of DOE operational safety

plans. You can read our comments on the web at <http://www.nukewatch.org> under our *Fact Sheets and Documents* section!

LANL **admits** that there are no DOE regulations specifically related to the shipping and receipt of biological organisms. Instead the lab uses DOE regulations that dictate how radioactive materials are shipped. There is, however, an obvious and striking difference between the two types of materials!

Finally, the Bush administration withdrew its support for the international Biological Weapons Convention at the end of this July. This further reinforces NWNM's belief that building a biological research facility with the capability to study dangerous biological organisms (including those which have been tested in biological weapons) at the nation's most secret nuclear weapons laboratory is a terrible global

precedent. On August 2, NWNM submitted an addendum to its July 10 comments, addressing our concerns that the biological research lab never be used for offensive purposes. Please read the Addendum to our comments at the same web address above.



On a different issue of paramount national and international importance NWNM has prepared a new fact sheet on the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, a bilateral accord which limits ballistic missile defense programs in the US and Russia. This treaty stands in the way of the Bush administration's desire to militarize space under American "full spectrum domination." Read about the ABM Treaty under *Fact Sheets and Documents* at www.nukewatch.org.

Folks, Don't Worry, Everything Is Now Hunky-Dory At The Lab!

In a self-congratulatory press release in August, LANL Director John Brown glowingly announced a new lab logo that is a stylized graphic of an atom. In blue and gold, no less, (the colors of the University of California), as if the lab were just another friendly UC campus! Never mind that as a "nonprofit educational" institution UC has **never** paid gross receipts

taxes to New Mexico (Sandia Labs does), which at 6% of the current \$1.4 billion annual lab budget would be some **real money** (approximately \$84 million) for New Mexico's deteriorating schools and underpaid teachers. [Ironically, the lab assesses an internal 6% tax that largely supports nuclear

weapons research while DOE still subsidizes Los Alamos County schools.] And never mind that, as manager of LANL, UC is a chronic environmental violator. Never mind

that DOE has a policy to blow up plutonium in "dynamic experiments" at LANL, but never to do so in California! Furthermore, never mind that the lab has more than doubled its nuclear weapons

programs budget since 1994, while cleanup is half of what it use to be (and this the year after the Cerro Grande Fire). Finally, never mind that the lab is working aggressively as a production site to help keep nuclear weapons "forever"! Everything is A-Okay cuz the lab has a new logo!



NWNM's parody of the new lab logo

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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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.

*Inside this issue: Our Condolences, The INEEL Mess, LANL s New Logo & More Bugs From LANL!
Insert: Fact Sheet on Plutonium Pit Production*

What To Do!

To Help With the Tragic Events in New York and Washington, D.C.:

To donate blood, call the Red Cross at 1-800-GIVE-LIFE.

To donate money for the victims, call the Red Cross at 1-800-HELP-NOW.

The United Way of New York and The New York Community Trust have established a fund for the victims and their families. To contribute to the September 11th Fund, call 1-800-710-8002.

For more ideas on how to help, go to www.helping.org

And What Else to Do!

Express your views on potential US military actions in response to the recent attacks! Innocent lives should not perish. A potentially broader war that could entangle Pakistan, Israel and even possibly India (all now nuclear weapons powers) must be avoided. The US should lead by explicitly ruling out the use of nuclear weapons! Here at home the push to significantly increase the defense budget for incredibly expensive programs like Star Wars and nuclear weapons "forever" (that can do very little to prevent terrorism) should be debated instead of rammed through. For the good of our country the NM congressional delegation needs to hear the message to think things through!

Sen Domenici: 505.988.6511; 202.224.6621
Sen. Bingaman: 505.988.6647; 202.224.5521 Rep. Tom Udall: 505.984.8950; 202.225.6190

And related to the above, the US and Russia still have some 4,400 missiles armed with nuclear weapons on high alert! We came close to accidental nuclear war in 1995. Contact your congressional delegation to urge them to press for immediate measures to lower the hair-trigger status of nuclear weapons. Join the "Toast Card" Campaign (motto: "In the time it takes to make toast, we could all be toast.") at www.backfromthe.brink.org or call 202.545.1001.

nuclear watch new mexico

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Many thanks to the tireless efforts of Don Hancock and all the people at Southwest Research and Information Center!

