

Nuclear Watch New Mexico

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Pope Frances Calls for Nuclear Weapons Abolition

Santa Fe Catholic Archdiocese Likely Has Largest Presence of Nuclear Weapons in the World

Santa Fe, NM – Today, Pope Francis called for the global abolition of nuclear weapons while paying homage to the victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those two cities were both destroyed by atomic weapons designed and produced by the Los Alamos National Laboratory, located in northern New Mexico's Santa Fe Catholic Archdiocese.

The Holy Father declared:

"With deep conviction I wish once more to declare that the use of atomic energy for purposes of war is today, more than ever, a crime not only against the dignity of human beings but against any possible future for our common home. The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral, as I already said two years ago. We will be judged on this. Future generations will rise to condemn our failure if we spoke of peace but did not act to bring it about among the peoples of the earth. How can we speak of peace even as we build terrifying new weapons of war?"

Two of the U.S.' three nuclear weapons laboratories, the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories, are located within the Santa Fe Catholic Archdiocese. Together the two labs spend \$4 billion per year on core nuclear weapons design, testing and production programs. In addition, up to 2,500 nuclear weapons are estimated to be held in strategic reserve at the Kirtland Underground Munitions Maintenance and Storage Complex, less than two miles south of the Albuquerque International Airport. That complex is probably the largest repository of intact nuclear weapons in the country and perhaps the world.

The Los Alamos Lab is preparing to quadruple the production of plutonium pits, the fissile cores or "triggers" of nuclear weapons. The federal government has declared that expanded plutonium pit production is its highest priority for its \$1.7 trillion "modernization" plan. That plan will completely rebuild the nuclear weapons stockpile with new military capabilities, construct new bomb production plants expected to be operational until ~2080, and build new missiles, subs and bombers to deliver these improved nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

The reputation of the Santa Fe Archdiocese was heavily damaged during the Catholic Church's chronic sexual abuse scandal. In fact, that global scandal actually started in the Santa Fe Archdiocese when it became publicly known in the mid-1980's that it was the dumping ground for pedophile priests from across the country. In June 2019 the Archdiocese filed for bankruptcy, following dozens of lawsuits and an announcement by the New Mexico Attorney General that it would investigate the Church's handling of clergy misconduct.

As the Archdiocese with the likely largest presence of nuclear weapons in the country (if not the world), it now has an opportunity to redeem its moral high ground by following Pope Francis's plea for the global

abolition of nuclear weapons. Catholicism is by far the largest religion in New Mexico, with ~30% of the state's population. Any call by the Archdiocese to follow the Pope's directive to abolish nuclear weapons could have a powerful effect on the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories' ~24,000 employees.

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch New Mexico Director, commented:

"I call on the Santa Fe Archbishop to not only heed the words of Pope Francis in Nagasaki, but to actively preach to his congregants that the continuing possession and so-called modernization of nuclear weapons is immoral. As the Pope said, "Future generations will rise to condemn our failure if we spoke of peace but did not act to bring it about among the peoples of the earth." I respectfully suggest that Santa Fe Archbishop John Wester should act accordingly."

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The text of Pope Francis's speech is available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20191124_messaggio-incontropace-hiroshima.html