



“Deterrence” is the Threat

Western New Mexico University

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“Deterrence” is the threat

Central Mission of Los Alamos National Laboratory



- **2022 Nuclear Posture Review:** “...a continuing commitment to a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent... responsive to the threats we face.”
- **But the Pentagon has always rejected minimal deterrence** while “reiterating the need to maintain counterforce capabilities... not rely[ing] on a counter-value or minimum-deterrence ...” [2024 Nuclear Employment Strategy](#)
- “Counterforce” = nuclear warfighting capabilities.
- This leads to endless modifications and/or new designs, which the Pentagon calls “flexible capabilities” and “a wide range of employment options.”
- This is what is driving the U.S.’ \$1.7 trillion nuclear weapons “modernization” program and expanded plutonium “pit” production at the Los Alamos Lab.

“Deterrence” is the threat

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- **Nuclear war planning is why we have thousands of warheads instead of just a few 100 for “deterrence.”**
- **Nuclear weapons forever:**
 - **Rebuild existing warheads with new military capabilities.**
 - **New design nuclear weapons that can’t be tested or could prompt U.S. to resume testing.**
 - **New nuclear weapons production facilities expected to be operational until ~2080.**

**New heavy bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles, new cruise missiles and new strategic submarines to deliver new warheads.
All exceed budgets at enormous expense.**

There is a long history of accidents and miscalculations.

- 4 H-bombs dropped on coast of Spain and 2 on Goldsboro, NC.
- Cuban Missile Crisis, 1 vote out of 3 prevented Armageddon.
- 1983 “Man Who Saved the World” (sunlight reflecting off clouds).
- **What happens when artificial intelligence sidelines human judgment?**
- **So-called “deterrence,” constantly promoted as deterring threats, is itself the threat!**
- Recommended reading:
 - Command and Control, Eric Schossler
 - The Doomsday Machine, Daniel Ellsberg
 - Nuclear War, Annie Jacobsen
 - New Mexico: America’s Nuclear Weapons Colony, www.nukewatch.org

This second nuclear arms race is arguably more dangerous than the first

- All weapons states are “modernizing” and keeping their nuclear weapons indefinitely, contrary to the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty.
- Multiple nuclear powers with competing interests.
- Increased chance of regional nuclear wars (e.g., India-Pakistan).
- Hypersonic and cyber weapons may not be deterrable and could cripple defenses and/or hijack command of nuclear weapons.
- Artificial intelligence could have unforeseen impacts on the command and control of nuclear weapons.

300 kiloton ICBM warhead on NYC

- Three mile radius blast wave that destroys almost everything.
- One-mile radius lethal radiation.
- Mass fires within a radius of at least 3 miles.
- Over one million dead and 2 million injured in first 24 hours.
- Fallout drifting thousands of square miles downwind.

All-out nuclear war between US and Russia:

- At least 360 million quick deaths.
- Utter collapse of international economic systems.
- No surviving medical infrastructure.
- More than 5 billion people could starve in “nuclear winter.”

Source: [*Nowhere to hide, How a nuclear war would kill you*](#), Bulletin of Atomic Scientists

Why is Nuclear Disarmament Necessary?

- “The indefinite combination of human fallibility and nuclear weapons will destroy nations.”
- “Rationality will not save us. I want to say, and this is very important: at the end we lucked out. **It was luck that prevented nuclear war.**”
- “There is no way to reduce the risk to acceptable levels, other than to first eliminate the hair-trigger alert policy and later to eliminate or nearly eliminate nuclear weapons.”

Robert McNamara, Defense Secretary under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, *“Lessons Learned from the Cuban Missile Crisis”*

Off to the Arms Race: Expanded Plutonium “Pit” Bomb Core Production

- Expanded production of plutonium “pits” is key to nuclear weapons “modernization.” A pit is the radioactive core or “trigger” of modern two-stage thermonuclear weapons.
- A plutonium pit can also be an atomic bomb by itself, as the destruction of Nagasaki showed.
- The U.S. has not had industrial-scale pit production since a 1989 FBI raid investigating environmental crimes shut down the Rocky Flats Plant near Denver.

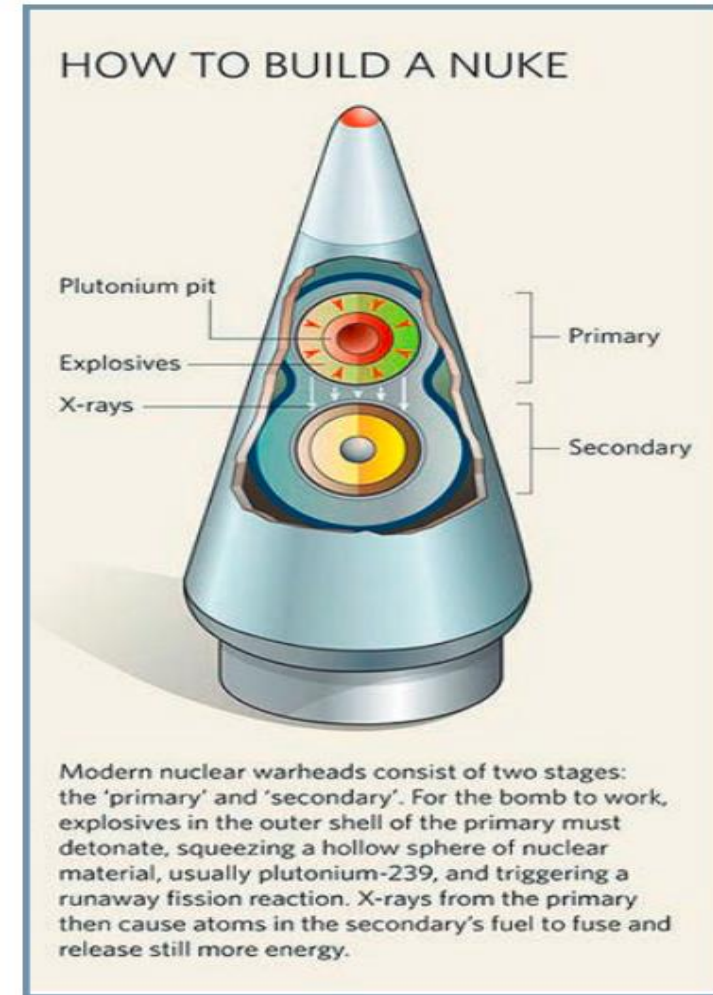


image credit: Nature

Expanded Plutonium Pit Production Is Unnecessary

- **No production is scheduled to maintain the safety and reliability of the *existing* nuclear stockpile.** Instead it is for new-design nuclear weapons.
- A 2006 independent study concluded pits last at least a century. 2012 Livermore Lab: Pu >150 years.
- At least 15,000 existing pits are stored at the Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas.
- Future pits will be modified, possibly raising reliability issues, thereby degrading national security and/or prompting resumed testing.

Comprehensive Cleanup Would Benefit All

- LANL plans to “cap and cover” ~800,000 yds³ of radioactive and toxic wastes, permanently buried in unlined pits and trenches.
- Genuine cleanup would be a real win-win for northern New Mexicans, permanently protecting our environment and water resources while providing hundreds of high paying jobs.



Cleanup should be prioritized,

not unnecessary plutonium “pit” bomb core production!

See <https://nukewatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Plutonium-Pit-Production-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Where we stand now: NEPA, environmental justice and climate change programs gutted

- On first day in office President Trump terminated National Environmental Policy Act regulations.
- Trump withdrew U.S. from Paris climate agreement.
- New head of Environmental Protection Agency says goal is to “...make purchasing cars or heating homes more affordable...”
- Climate change programs gutted.
- On second day in office Trump signed executive order terminating all environmental justice initiatives.
 - New Mexico is 50% Hispanic, 12% Native American.

What you can do

- Small stuff is important: LTEs, op-eds, talk to friends and family.
- Get to Rep. Gabe Vasquez (Strategic Forces, House Armed Services Comm.)
- Oppose Waste Isolation Pilot Plant as dump for new bomb wastes.
- Support Trinity Test Downwinders <https://www.trinitydownwinders.com/>
- Observe Trinity Test and Hiroshima and Nagasaki 80th anniversaries.
- Comment on Los Alamos Lab Site-Wide Environmental Impact by April 10. Suggested comments at www.nukewatch.org
- Get out the vote for November 2026 mid-term elections.