



## **Trump Orders Nuclear Weapons Testing for New Nuclear Arms Race New Plutonium “Pit” Bomb Cores at Los Alamos Lab Could Make It Real**

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***Santa Fe, NM*** – Just minutes before meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump posted on his Truth Social media platform that “Because of other countries testing programs, I have instructed the Department of War to start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis. That process will begin immediately.” House Speaker Mike Johnson soon followed on CNN saying, “I think it is an obvious and logical thing to ensure that our weapons systems work.”

No other countries are currently testing nuclear weapons (the last was by North Korea in 2017). Further, any nuclear weapons tests by the U.S. would be performed by the Department of Energy (whose last test was in 1992), not the Department of War (until recently the Department of Defense). Trump was likely referring to Vladimir Putin’s recent claims of a new nuclear powered cruise missile and a tsunami-causing nuclear-armed torpedo that could threaten America’s coastal cities. In addition, China is dramatically expanding its own fleet of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

But central to all this is the U.S.’ own \$2 trillion “modernization” program that will rebuild every nuclear warhead in the planned stockpile with new military capabilities and produce new-design nuclear weapons as well. This so-called modernization program will also build new nuclear weapons production facilities expected to be operational until ~2080, and buy new missiles, subs, and bombers from the usual rich defense contractors, all to keep nuclear weapons forever.

The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is now spending tens of billions of taxpayers’ dollars to produce new plutonium “pit” bomb cores for a new warhead that is an untested mix of earlier designs. This new W87-1 warhead is for the new Sentinel ICBM, which itself is already more than 80% over budget. Further, the Sentinel may be armed with quick launch “Multiple Independently-targeted Reentry Vehicles” (i.e., multiple warheads), which is regarded as particularly destabilizing by potentially creating a “use them or lose them” scenario that can end civilization overnight.

Pit production at LANL is planned to be followed by simultaneous production of plutonium pit bomb cores at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina for a new sub-launched W93 warhead, the first completely new design nuclear weapon since the end of the Cold War. The Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility for pit production, originally estimated at ~\$4.5 billion, is now approaching \$25 billion in estimated costs.

The underlying point is that new-design plutonium pits for new-design nuclear weapons may create inexorable pressures for resumed nuclear weapons testing by the United States. This would be sure to set off a chain reaction of testing by other nuclear weapons powers, as Putin has repeatedly made clear. The final result is a dramatically accelerating nuclear arms race, arguably more dangerous than the first arms race given multiple nuclear actors, new hypersonic and cyber weapons, and the rise of artificial intelligence.

In addition to these serious proliferation and arms race concerns, nuclear weapons tests have caused grave injury to people the world over. While these new plutonium pits are being produced in New Mexico, our own Trinity Test downwinders (the first victims of nuclear weapons testing) have only recently become eligible for compensation, and only during a limited two year window. Most importantly and little known, most cancer deaths from atmospheric nuclear weapons testing are still yet to come.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, underground nuclear weapons tests since 1962 (when atmospheric testing was banned) have been known to vent harmful radioactivity.

Nuclear Watch New Mexico and its sister organizations, Savannah River Site Watch and Tri-Valley CAREs, successfully sued the Department of Energy's semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency, the National Nuclear Security Administration. We forced NNSA to complete a legally required nation-wide programmatic environmental impact statement on the expanded production of plutonium pit bomb cores, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Trump Administration has taken active steps to gut NEPA. Nevertheless, the NNSA is expected to release a draft Plutonium Pit Production PEIS around March 2026 (contingent upon the reopening of the federal government). Required public hearings will be held at five locations across the country (Livermore, CA; Santa Fe, NM; Kansas City, MO; Aiken, SC; and Washington, DC). This will give concerned citizens a priceless and unique opportunity to formally comment on the expanded production of new plutonium pit bomb cores and related pressures to test nuclear weapons.

Jay Coghlan, Director of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, commented, "Nuclear weapons are the one existential threat that can end civilization overnight, whether by accident, miscalculation, or deranged leadership. The U.S. should be leading the rest of the world by example to achieve the universal, verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons enshrined in the NonProliferation Treaty, pledged to more than half a century ago, and the more recent Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, now signed by a majority of the world's countries. Instead, Trump is ordering nuclear weapons testing. This is profoundly wrong when a new nuclear arms race is not in America's, or anybody's, best national security interests."

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This press release is available online at <https://nukewatch.org/trump-orders-nuclear-weapons-testing/>

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<sup>1</sup> "If radiation exposure from carbon-14 is integrated over infinity, a total of 2.4 million cancer fatalities (between 1.8 and 3.7million, with a 90% level of confidence) were, are, and will be caused by atmospheric nuclear tests. Because most of the exposure is due to carbon-14, the majority of deaths will occur over the next few thousand years." <sup>1</sup> *Radioactive Heaven and Earth*, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (1985 Nobel Peace Prize winner), Dr. Arjun Makhijani, Institute for Environmental and Energy Research, 1991, page 40