



# **“Modernization” Means Nuclear Weapons Forever**

## **Climate Change and Human Health ECHO Presentation: Update on Environmental Nuclear Threats and Current Nuclear Activities in New Mexico**

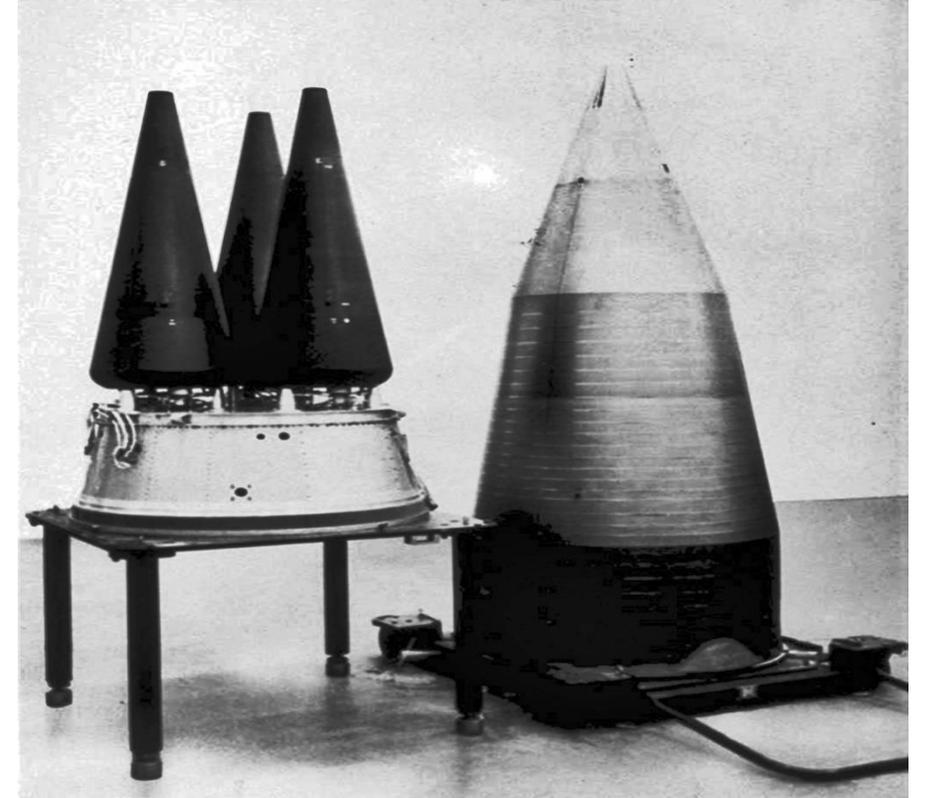
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# Today's \$2 Trillion Nuclear Weapons “Modernization.” What Does it Mean?

- Rebuilt nuclear warheads extended for decades with new military capabilities.
- New-design nuclear weapons.
- New nuclear weapons production facilities expected to be operational until 2080.
- New ICBMs, new cruise missiles, heavy stealth bombers and strategic submarines.
- Meanwhile, taxes are cut for the ultrarich, homelessness explodes and health care is drastically cut. This is national security?



**“Modernization” Means Nuclear Weapons Forever!**



# “Deterrence” is the Threat

- The one-word rationale is always “a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent...” [2022 Nuclear Posture Review](#).
- **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](#)

- This is why Russia and the U.S. have 1,000s of nuclear weapons & a new arms race.
- Nuclear warfighting capabilities are driving the U.S.’ \$2 trillion “modernization” program, particularly plutonium “pit” bomb core production at the Los Alamos Lab.
- “Deterrence” also has a long & dangerous history of accidents and miscalculations.

Recommended reading: Daniel Ellsberg’s *The Doomsday Machine*

Annie Jacobsen’s *Nuclear War*

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

- “Rationality will not save us... this is very important: at the end we lucked out. **It was luck that prevented nuclear war.**” Robert McNamara
- All weapons states are “modernizing” and keeping their nuclear weapons indefinitely, contrary to the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty.
- There are multiple nuclear weapons 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 sideline human judgement in the command and control of nuclear weapons.

# There is a Legal Mandate to Disarm

- The National Nuclear Security Administration is required by Congress to produce plutonium “pit” bomb cores.
- However, the U.S. Constitution declares that “all Treaties made... shall be the supreme Law of the Land.” (Article 6)
- The 1970 NonProliferation Treaty (NPT) requires “negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...”
- The failure to honor the NPT led to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, similar to chemical and biological weapons bans.
- The pending NPT Review Conference in May is expected for the third consecutive time to fail to make any progress whatsoever toward nuclear disarmament.

# Suggested Issues for Pit Production PEIS

- Nuclear Watch was co-plaintiff in a National Environmental Policy Act lawsuit that forced the NNSA to complete a nationwide programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) on plutonium pit production.
- Let's make it a public referendum on the new nuclear arms race! A 2008 Complex Transformation PEIS had ~100,000 submitted public comments.
- Question and puncture the myth of “Deterrence”!!! Argue for minimal deterrence as a first step toward internationally required nuclear disarmament.
- Los Alamos Lab's plutonium facility is 48 years old with no active confinement. The Lab has a chronic history of nuclear safety incidences and contamination.
- The Savannah River Site in South Carolina is redundant. Its pit plant will be the second most expensive building in human history. Could be “Rocky Flats-lite.”
- The solution is no unnecessary plutonium pit production. And none is necessary.

# Why pit production is not needed

- No future production is to maintain the safety and reliability of the existing, extensively tested nuclear weapons stockpile.
- Instead, it is all for new-design nuclear weapons. This could prompt a resumption of full-scale testing with severe proliferation consequences.
- The NNSA has no credible cost estimates for its >\$60 billion program.
- Independent experts have concluded pits last at least 85 years (their average age is now 43). There is no estimated expiration date.
- There are at least 15,000 existing pits at NNSA's Pantex Plant in TX.
- Future rad waste disposal is uncertain at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

# Technical Comment Needed

- The heart of the National Environmental Policy Act is risk analysis.
- NNSA's calculated risks are always absurdly low. Examples from January 2025 draft Los Alamos Lab Site-Wide EIS:
  - One latent cancer fatality from 50 years of routine emissions for 300,000+ people within a 50-mile radius.
  - 3-5 latent cancer fatalities in 300,000+ people from a large seismic-induced fire in LANL's PF-4 plutonium facility.
- Meanwhile, DOE is terminating As Low As Reasonably Achievable and other nuclear safety regulations. The Linear No Threshold model is under attack.
- Nuclear war is the ultimate mass casualty event. The only cure is prevention.
- Expert medical, health physics and seismic comments are needed for the PEIS.

# **LANL at a Crossroads: More Unneeded Nuclear Weapons or Cleanup?**

Recent New Mexico Environment Department enforcement actions:

- The Department of Energy “deferred” cleanup at the Area C waste dump cuz of plutonium pit production. NMED demanded justification to cut thru DOE stalling & get to a public hearing & final cleanup order.
- NMED rebuked DOE for lack of progress in cleanup of massive chromium groundwater contamination, demanded concrete action plans and levied just under \$16 million in civil penalties.
- NMED initiated a new permit process for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant rad waste dump while demanding prioritization of LANL cleanup wastes over other DOE sites and future plutonium pit production wastes.

# **Be active! Good change does not come by itself.**

- The Pit Production PEIS is an imperfect tool. But let's use it to the max!
- Draft PEIS expected in May with 5 public hearings (Livermore, CA; Santa Fe, NM; Kansas City, MO; Aiken, SC; Washington, DC).
- Stay tuned for hybrid workshops on the PEIS by the Union of Concerned Scientists, Tri-Valley CAREs and Nuclear Watch NM (dates TBD).
- This PEIS springs from successful citizen litigation. Public comment is very important! It can build the case for further litigation.
- Actively support NMED in LANL cleanup and WIPP permit modification.
- Keep your eyes on the prize! We can win a world without nuclear weapons if we remain determined and use all available tools.
- Stay tuned to [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org) for more info, hearing dates, etc.