



“Modernization” Means Nuclear Weapons Forever

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

February 25, 2026

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Disclosures

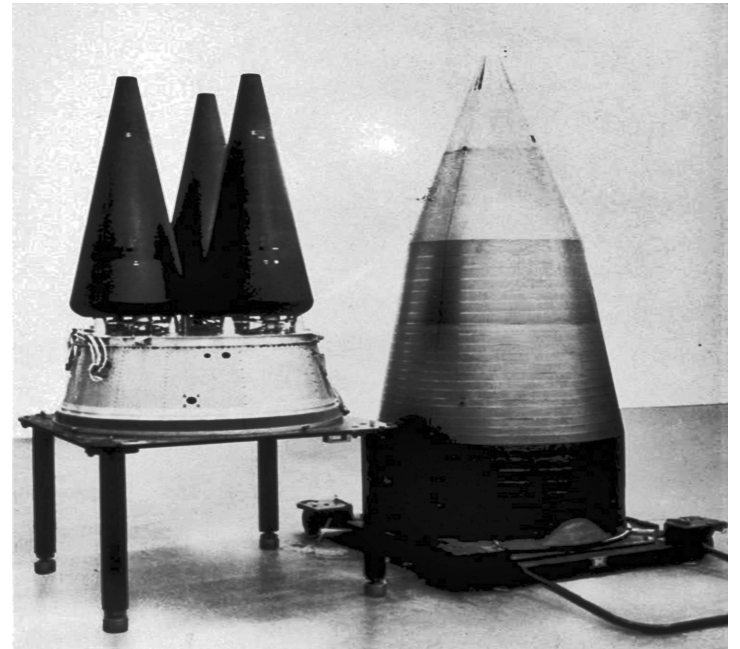
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Objectives

- Help make the American public, especially young people, more aware of the new nuclear arms race that threatens us all.
- Help puncture “deterrence” as the rationale and justification for an enormous nuclear weapons stockpile geared towards fighting a nuclear war, in which nobody can be a winner.
- Encourage citizen activism in the Plutonium Pit Production Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, the result of a successful lawsuit by co-plaintiff Nuclear Watch New Mexico.
- Encourage public support for the New Mexico Environment Dept. in its effort to compel genuine cleanup at the Los Alamos Lab .

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 and get to a public hearing and 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.

For more please see <https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026-02-11-COMMS-NMED-acts-to-hold-DOE-accountable-for-legacy-waste-Final.pdf>

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 for more info, hearing dates, etc.