



## **Los Alamos Lab Banking on Plutonium “Pit” Production and New-Design Nuclear Warheads But Fights Against Cleanup**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**, April 7, 2026

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***Santa Fe, NM*** – The Department of Energy (DOE) has released additional details for the Los Alamos National Laboratory’s fiscal year 2027 budget. Earlier budget documents showed an 83% increase in funding for plutonium “pit” bomb core production, bringing it to \$2.4 billion in FY 2027. An average of \$2.3 billion will be spent in each of the following five years, for a total of \$14 billion over six years. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has directed the Lab to double pit production to at least 60 pits per year, making it more and more a nuclear weapons production site. However, no future pit production is to maintain the safety and reliability of the existing nuclear weapons stockpile. Instead, it is all for new-design nuclear weapons for the new nuclear arms race.

As a direct case in point, a newly released DOE budget document demonstrates that LANL will be funded \$478 million in FY 2027 for the U.S.’ first completely new-design nuclear warhead since the Cold War, the submarine-launched W93. This is despite the recent completion of life extension programs for the U.S.’ two existing sub-launched warheads (the W76 and W88) that gave them new military capabilities, costing around \$12 billion dollars. Nevertheless, the W93 program is moving forward, largely because of lobbying by the United Kingdom.

As LANL becomes more and more a nuclear weapons production site, non-weapons “Science” is being cut nearly in half (\$84.7 million in FY 2026 to \$43 million in FY 2027). Nonproliferation programs are cut from \$377 million in FY 2026 to \$345 million in FY 2027. All funding for renewable energy research has been eliminated, with the exception of \$5.5 million for geothermal.

There is a small 5.7% increase to cleanup at LANL from \$278 million in FY 2026 to \$294 million in FY 2027. But to put this in context, LANL and DOE are bitterly fighting against a draft order from the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to comprehensively clean up an old radioactive and toxic waste dump. Known as “Area C,” it last received wastes in 1974. However, it is within 1,000 yards of PF-4, LANL’s plutonium pit production facility. Therefore, DOE has unilaterally “deferred” cleanup at Area C until it is no longer “associated with active Facility operations.” This means that Area C will never be cleaned up because DOE and LANL plan to produce plutonium pits until at least 2050. NMED has issued an Administrative Compliance Order to compel DOE and LANL to fully explain and justify their “deferment.”

Another major, contentious cleanup issue is LANL’s chromium contamination groundwater plume. It is at least a mile long and a half mile wide and has recently been confirmed to have crossed the San Ildefonso Pueblo boundary. NMED issued an Administrative Compliance Order with nearly \$16 million in penalties, requiring DOE to develop a corrective action plan for

cleanup within 60 days. Instead, LANL and DOE lawyers are contesting NMED's authority to assess penalties to begin with and are invoking a bureaucratic dispute resolution process to run the clock out on the current New Mexico Governor's administration. The DOE and LANL plan for so-called "cleanup" is to "cap and cover" a half million cubic yards of existing radioactive and toxic wastes. This would leave them permanently buried in unlined pits and trenches as a perpetual threat to groundwater.

Jay Coghlan, Director of Nuclear Watch NM, commented, "Los Alamos County gets rich off of weapons of mass destruction while the rest of New Mexico struggles. The Los Alamos Lab is banking its future on plutonium pit bomb core production but won't clean up its own mess. New Mexicans don't need a new nuclear arms race. What we really need is the New Mexico Environment Department strongly protecting our irreplaceable groundwater resources against expanding nuclear weapons production."

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The Department of Energy's newly released FY 2027 "Laboratory Tables" is available at <https://www.energy.gov/documents/doe-fy-2027-laboratory-tables> It is DOE's most succinct and concise budget document and includes all of its sites.

The New Mexico Environment Department's Administrative Compliance Orders are available at <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>

DOE's and LANL's responses to NMED's Administrative Compliance Order on chromium contamination are available at <https://www.energy.gov/em-la/hexavalent-chromium-campaign>

For more on plutonium pit production and cleanup of Area C please see <https://nukewatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Plutonium-Pit-Production-Fact-Sheet.pdf> and <https://nukewatch.org/area-c-fact-sheet/>

This press release is available online at <https://nukewatch.org/lanl-banks-on-plutonium-fights-cleanup/>

*This work is made possible through the generous support of* **PLOUGHSHARES**