

Turning Swords Into Ploughshares in New Mexico

The Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to “transform” its nuclear weapons complex, and to meet legal requirements has released a draft “Complex Transformation Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement” for public comment. In New Mexico, transformation of the complex means expanding the manufacturing capabilities and building new facilities at the *Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL)* to produce more plutonium pit “triggers” for nuclear warheads. At the *Sandia National Laboratory (SNL)* in Albuquerque, DOE proposes to consolidate test facilities for the performance of nuclear weapons in extreme environments (e.g., radiation and temperatures) and consolidate all design and engineering responsibility for non-nuclear weapons component from its sister lab in Livermore, California. Finally, DOE proposes to close its site for flight-testing of nuclear gravity bombs in Nevada, and transfer those activities to the *White Sands Missile Range*.

After receiving more than 33,000 comments about what the scope of the proposal should be, DOE changed its name from “Complex 2030” to “Complex Transformation.” Over 90% of the comments requested analysis of a nuclear weapons complex where the U.S. complies with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). DOE rejected the request, saying “[u]nless and until there are significant changes in national security policy, NNSA is required to design, produce, and maintain the nuclear weapons stockpile pursuant to requirements established by the President and funded by Congress.” p. S-8.

Now that the draft Complex Transformation environmental impact statement is available for public comment, communities around the country are saying:

It is premature to begin this process because the Bush Administration’s 2001 Nuclear Posture Review is cited many, many times as the policy driver for “transformation” of the complex. The FY08 Defense Authorization Act, which became public law in January 2008, requires the formation of a bi-partisan commission appointed by the Armed Services Committees that is required to issue a report by December 1, 2008. The commission is to recommend the number of nuclear weapons needed, the size of the nuclear weapons complex necessary to support that number and assess the role that nonproliferation programs play in national security. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, §1062. http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&doc

Further, the law also requires the incoming president to complete a new Nuclear Posture Review in 2009. The law states: “It is the sense of Congress that the Nuclear Posture Review conducted under this section should be used as a basis for establishing future United States arms control objectives and negotiating positions.” §1070.

It makes no sense for a provocative and very expensive proposal for complex transformation to proceed before a new Nuclear Posture Review is completed. The draft EIS must be withdrawn until then.

Nevertheless, should DOE ill advisedly proceed, it must consider a different alternative. We suggest a “The Weapons Complex that Produces No Bombs: A NPT-Compliant, No Production Alternative.” This alternative would address the:

- * Nuclear waste problem
- * Dismantlement of nuclear weapons
- * Security of the plutonium, uranium and tritium used in nuclear bombs and require their placement under international monitoring and administrative control
- * Production of high explosives and open-air explosions, detonations and burning of these materials
- * Decontamination, decommissioning and environmental restoration of flight test sites for nuclear weapons delivery systems, hydrodynamic test facilities and major environmental test facilities for nuclear weapons

DOE is proposing four alternatives for LANL, all of which impact public health and the environment in New Mexico. Under the Bush Administration’s proposal, LANL will remain the nation’s only producer of plutonium pit “triggers” for nuclear warheads. However, the proposed mission would be expanded from 20 pits per year (ppy) to up to 80. An even more extreme alternative under consideration calls for the production of up to 200 ppy.

At the higher level of pit production, LANL could increase airborne pollutants by 28%. Precious natural resources would be stretched to the limit, as the Lab’s current water rights would be exceeded by 10%. In the event of a facility accident at LANL, the chances of fatalities would also increase.

1. The **No Action Alternative** allows for continuation of the status quo. At LANL, this means producing 20 ppy.
2. The **Distributed Centers of Excellence (DCE)** would take place at two or three separate sites and DOE would continue its plutonium, uranium and weapon assembly/disassembly operations. This alternative includes the construction and operation of a **consolidated plutonium center (CPC)** for manufacturing 125 to 200 ppy.
3. The **Consolidated Centers of Excellence (CCE)** would take place at one or two separate sites and DOE would continue its plutonium, uranium and weapon assembly/disassembly operations. Using one site is called the **consolidated nuclear production center (CNPC)** option. The two-site option is called the **consolidated nuclear centers (CNC)**.
4. The **Capability-Based Alternative** is for “operation of a Complex that would support stockpiles smaller than required to meet anticipated national security needs.” That statement is a huge pre-judgment given the requirements for a new Nuclear Posture Review and bi-partisan review, both of which will address the number of nuclear weapons really needed. Additionally, this alternative assumes that LANL’s plutonium pit production is expanded from 20 to 50 ppy.

Join those who share their vision of a nuclear bomb free future. Go to:

<http://youtube.com/user/ccnsvision2030>

*Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety * Faithful Security: National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger * New Mexico Conference of Churches * Nuclear Watch New Mexico*

For more information: www.nuclearactive.org and www.nukewatch.org

February 26, 2008