

UT and Los Alamos Nat'l Laboratory: Collaborating for MASS DESTRUCTION



For more than 60 years, the University of California has managed Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) for the Department of Energy (DoE). Now, for the first time, the DoE is opening Los Alamos up for competitive bidding. It is widely believed that the University of Texas is a prime contender in the competition. If UT wins the bid, it will become responsible for the best-funded producer of WMDs in the world. UT will also be held liable for Los Alamos' environmental problems, lax security, and government waste.

Los Alamos: Bad for UC, Bad for UT

Los Alamos has brought UC nothing but grief. In scandal after scandal at Los Alamos, UC has shared in the blame. For example, the Department of Energy recently reprimanded UC for "for violations of nuclear safety rules and procedures involving the storage of nuclear waste materials" As the official manager of Los Alamos, UC is responsible for everything that goes wrong at Los Alamos even though the university has little control over day-to-day operations. UT would be in the same situation.

Los Alamos advances weapons of mass destruction

Los Alamos, located in northern New Mexico, is a major contributor to the Department of Energy's (DOE) Stockpile Stewardship Program, which monitors the existing nuclear weapons arsenals and investigates new nuclear weapons designs. Far from just doing routine maintenance, the Stockpile Stewardship Program effectively functions as a way to "improve" and expand the U.S. arsenal, jeopardizing non-proliferation agreements.

LANL is involved in the push for a new nuclear weapons design called the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP). This nuclear weapon, commonly referred to as a nuclear "bunker buster," would be used to penetrate the earth before exploding. In addition to dangerously blurring the line between conventional and nuclear weapons, the Union of Concerned Scientists has stated that the RNEP is technically impossible to build.

LANL is attempting to obtain Biosafety Level 3 permits, which would allow the labs to work with live strains of anthrax, bubonic plague and other deadly agents.

LANL's budget totals about \$2 billion, 75% of which goes towards maintaining or expanding the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Los Alamos threatens academic freedom. Divisions between classified and non-classified research jeopardize collaborative efforts between lab scientists and university faculty. A study conducted by a University of California Committee on Research Policy in 2000 found that, "Even with the best of intentions to maintain an atmosphere of academic freedom in non-classified activities and programs, very few programs and facilities appear to be "outside the fence" (i.e. free of the logistical hurdles imposed by security).

Los Alamos has had serious security problems in the past and even more serious hurdles to climb now. Tests have shown that Los Alamos is vulnerable to terrorist attack. A university is not equipped to handle security nor should be.

UT plans to spend up to \$6 million on the bidding process. During a time of rising tuition and budget cuts, shouldn't the University be using its money on more important matters, such as keeping libraries open, lowering class sizes, and paying staff and faculty decent wages? Furthermore, in 2002, the UT System spent \$850,000 on a failed bid for Sandia National Laboratory.

Are you, your fellow students, your colleagues or your professors supporting research on weapons of mass destruction?

What can YOU do?

- 1 Get in touch with the UT Nuke Free Coalition by going to www.utnukefree.org and signing up for the listserv. Look for a group in your area.
- 2 Speak at a Regents meeting.
- 3 Approach local radio stations about being interviewed as a representative of the UT Nuclear Free campaign.
- 4 Make an announcement in your class about the UT Nuke Free campaign.
- 5 Advocate for the Faculty Council and Student Government on your campus to pass a resolution to disarm and democratize the University of Texas.
- 6 Write and submit an Op-Ed to your campus newspaper.
- 7 Gather signatures on the No Los Alamos petition. Visit www.utnukefree.org to get copies of the petition.
- 8 Join a UT Nuke Free conference call.
- 9 Organize a teach-in, rally, or debate on your campus about the issue. Let the media know ahead of time.
- 10 Write the members of the Los Alamos Task Force. See www.utnukefree.org for email and physical addresses.

Community Contacts!

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Sources: Los Alamos National Laboratory at www.lanl.gov; The Los Alamos Study Group at www.lasg.org; Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety at www.nuclearactive.org, Fiat Pax at www.fiatpax.net, UT Watch at www.utwatch.org