"Fewer Warheads, More Spending" Exposes Contradiction at the Heart of the Nuclear Weapons Budget Debate

Here is an excerpt from Tri-Valley CAREs’ report, written by Dr. Robert Civiak, a physicist and former Budget Examiner for DOE nuclear weapons programs at the White House Office of Management and Budget.

"Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has steadily reduced the number of nuclear weapons in its active stockpile. While we believe the pace of reductions could have been much faster, the number of nuclear weapons in the stockpile of the United States has fallen from about 10,600 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 to about 4,700 today. Nevertheless, funding for maintenance of the stockpile has increased from less than $4.6 billion in FY 2000 to over $7.2 billion in FY 2012 – an increase of 58%.

"For comparison, inflation, as measured by the Gross Domestic Product Price Index, was only 30% over that period. If spending for Nuclear Weapons Activities had increased at the rate of inflation, the FY 2012 level would have been “only” $5.9 billion.

"The contradiction of fewer warheads, but more spending is shown graphically on the cover page of this report [and reproduced below]. President Obama’s budget for FY 2013, which he submitted to Congress on February 13, 2012, would continue the practice of increasing spending on nuclear weapons at twice the rate of inflation. The budget requests $7.577 billion for Nuclear Weapons Activities in FY 2013 — an increase of $363 million, or 5.0%, from the 2012 level.

"Here is another way to look at that number. The budget request equals about $1.7 million for each warhead projected to remain in the stockpile at the end of 2013. This is nearly four times the $423 thousand spent to maintain each warhead in the stockpile in FY 2000.

"The Nuclear Weapons Activities budget is part of the budget for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a semi-independent agency within the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)... The Weapons Activities Budget provides solely for NNSA’s role in maintaining the performance of the warheads themselves and for some small ancillary activities...

"There is no legitimate technical justification for why the United States is spending more money for fewer warheads.

"This report debunks three myths that the NNSA puts forward to justify increasing its budget. We follow that by presenting three political explanations that we believe are the real reasons for the increases. We conclude this report by recommending several areas where the 2013 request can be reduced, without threatening the safety or reliability of U.S. nuclear weapons.

"In sum, we recommend reductions of $1.54 billion from the President’s budget request, which would reduce spending on Nuclear Weapons Activities to $6.04 billion. That would bring spending in FY 2013 back in line with the FY 2000 level after adjusting for inflation."

For our full analysis of the Fiscal Year 2013 budget request, go to www.trivalleycares.org - or contact us and we will mail you a copy on request.
QUESTIONING OBAMA’S NUCLEAR AGENDA

By Marylia Kelley • February 15, 2012, Page A8

While most federal agencies are being placed on an austerity diet, the Obama administration’s 2013 budget for nuclear weapons activities is more than last year’s appropriation and 20 percent higher than President Reagan’s largest nuclear weapons budget at the height of the Cold War, adjusted for inflation. If fully funded, Obama’s budget will be the biggest nuclear weapons budget in our nation’s history.

President Obama firmly declared “America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” in his 2009 Prague address. The world, including me, cheered. But, Mr. President, this is not a budget that implements our solemn commitment.

It’s time for congressional Democrats and Republicans alike to sharpen the budget ax.

Nationwide, the Department of Energy’s budget requests three times more for nuclear weapons activities than energy efficiency and renewables work.

Locally, the budget for the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, one of our nation’s three nuclear weapon research labs, reflects the same unfortunate trend - more money for bombs and less for clean energy research and development. Some 88 percent of the Livermore lab funding request is for managing the research and manufacture of nuclear weapons.

The biggest chunk goes to the National Ignition Facility, a mega-laser that was designed to push the envelope on weapons physics, provide a test bed for simulating a nuclear war fighting environment and develop fusion energy, according to the lab’s institutional plan. It was supposed to achieve thermonuclear ignition in 2003, then in 2010, and now in 2012, though government officials and scientists deem it unlikely. This boondoggle has already cost taxpayers $7 billion. Yet, the budget would lavish an additional $460 million on that failed effort.

The Livermore lab budget seeks to allocate:

• 8 percent to stem global nuclear proliferation,
• 3 percent for science,
• 1 percent for renewable energy research.

This funding profile reveals an outmoded institution, clinging to a Cold War heyday and ill-suited to a leadership role in this century’s economic and political realities. Will Congress shake it up - or continue to throw good money after bad?

Similar questions should be asked at other Department of Energy sites. At Oak Ridge, Tenn., the request to fund an oversized uranium processing facility is more than double last year’s appropriated level, and estimates for its construction top $6 billion. What is required is a smaller, less expensive facility focused on the nation’s unmet need for dismantling uranium components in retired H-bombs. At the Savannah River, S.C., site, the department is poised to spend $7 billion on an ill-conceived plan to put plutonium in fuel rods for use in nuclear power plants, although no companies have agreed to accept them.

One bright spot: The budget zeroes out funding to build another plutonium bomb factory at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and delays the project for five years. However, according to the request, “in place of” the delayed Los Alamos facility, the department has “options to share workload between other plutonium-capable facilities at Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories.” This statement should set off alarm bells throughout the Bay Area.

The Livermore lab’s plutonium facility is uniquely vulnerable. In a test, mock terrorists were able to access the site’s nuclear material and detonate a “radiological device.” Since then, the Department of Energy has been moving plutonium from the Livermore lab to more secure locations. In fact, the budget request touts the removal as an achievement and notes the department will save $52 million next year by lowering the level of Livermore’s security. Does the department plan to simultaneously downgrade Livermore’s security and ship plutonium there from Los Alamos? A congressional investigation is needed before any plutonium is put on the highway to California.

Fortunately, our senators are well placed to tackle this investigation and trim the fat from the Department of Energy budget hog. Sen. Dianne Feinstein chairs the appropriations subcommittee that writes the department’s budget. Sen. Barbara Boxer sits on the environmental committee that monitors pollution at Department of Energy sites, including Livermore. Moreover, several members of the Bay Area’s congressional delegation hold influential committee positions. Let’s make sure they hear from us on these important federal spending and safety issues.

Marylia Kelley is the executive director at Tri-Valley CAREs, a Livermore Lab watchdog organization founded in 1983.
Alerts 4 U

Thursday, April 5

Letter to the Editor writing party
5:30 PM, Tri-Valley CAREs office
2582 Old First St., Livermore
(925) 443-7148 for details

Write a letter to your favorite newspaper in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Our suggested topics include DOE worker safety and the recently released budget request. We will offer a short briefing and handouts on each topic. Or, you may choose to write on something different. Join us.

Thursday, April 19

Tri-Valley CAREs meets
7:30 PM, Livermore main library
1188 So. Livermore Ave.
(925) 443-7148 for details

Join us for this special meeting to hear what your DC Days team learned while meeting with top Obama Administration officials, members of Congress, and key committee staff. We will also discuss next steps here at the grassroots. Other agenda items will include getting our message out to the community, cleanup of toxic wastes at Livermore Lab, spring events – and more. Come with your questions, ideas and desire to make our community and world a better place. New members and old-timers alike are welcome!

Friday, April 6

Good Friday Protest
6:45 AM, music; 7 AM, program
Livermore Laboratory
at Vasco Rd. & Patterson Pass Rd.
(510) 655-1162 or (510) 654-4983

People of all faiths, beliefs and good will are invited. The Good Friday protest at the Livermore nuclear weapons lab is titled, “Occupy Good Friday, Proclaim Good News to the Poor!”

The keynote will be delivered by Nichola Torbett, founding director, Seminary of the Street and member, Interfaith Tent @ Oakland. Carla DeSala will lead a liturgical dance. Marylia Kelley will discuss the nuclear weapons activities taking place behind the gates. The service will include a call to action, procession, stations to visit, and a chance to do legal witness or risk arrest at the gates. A community gathering at about 10 am will be held at Asbury United Methodist Church, 4743 East Ave, Livermore. Refreshments and light breakfast foods will be provided.

Wednesday, May 2

Sick Worker Support Group meets
12:30 PM – 2:30 PM, Livermore library
Community Room A
1188 So. Livermore Ave.
(925) 443-7148 for details

If you or a family member has suffered illness that may be related to on the job exposure to toxic or radioactive material at Livermore or Sandia, Livermore Labs or another Dept. of Energy site, this group is for you. The sick worker support group is facilitated by Tri-Valley CAREs’ Staff Attorney, Scott Yundt. Call or email scott@trivalleycares.org.

"DC DAYS" 2012 — Tri-Valley CAREs will send a delegation to Washington, DC from March 17th through 22nd to over attend more than 80 meetings with the Obama Administration, members of Congress and key committee staff. The Tri-Valley CAREs team will join colleagues from a dozen other states who are participating in the 24th annual Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (ANA) “DC Days.” Together, we will expose high-risk DOE nuclear weapons and nuclear energy projects, which will waste billions in taxpayer funds, damage the environment and undermine prospects for global nonproliferation and disarmament. The Tri-Valley CAREs delegation will also bring its hot-off-the-press report, “Fewer Warheads, More Spending” to share with decision-makers. (For more on the report, see page 1.)

Tracy Event Report

In February, Tri-Valley CAREs held an event in Tracy to discuss the impacts, cleanup and future of the Livermore Lab’s Site 300 High Explosives Testing Range, which is just west of town. About 50 residents, including local High School students, participated in the forum.

Tracy resident Bob Sarvey led off by explaining the successful activism that had arisen to challenge polluting weapons testing at Site 300 over the last 20 years. Bob highlighted the role the community can play in speaking to elected officials and regulatory agencies.

Executive Director Marylia Kelley offered the group information on the Superfund law, the cleanup process, and the specific toxic and radioactive pollutants at Site 300. She described upcoming decisions that need community input. Environmental scientist Peter Strauss focused on the challenges that exist in cleaning up the Building 812 “firing table” at Site 300, where depleted uranium was used in open-air detonations.

The discussion was opened up to the audience. Questions and comments focused on the potential human health and environmental impacts from Site 300. Community members expressed concerns about airborne pollutants as well as the soil and groundwater contamination that resulted in Site 300’s placement on the EPA’s Superfund list.

Community responses demonstrated a keen interest in staying informed about Site 300. Annual meetings were requested. Participants expressed interest in having a tour of Site 300 and Tri-Valley CAREs agreed to contact the Lab to try and set it up. We will follow up via our website, e-mail and this newsletter.

Errata: Our Site 300 factsheet at www.trivalleycares.org has 2 revisions. The first states: At one of the test locations, U-238 contamination in soil exceeds the EPA benchmark by many hundreds of times. The second says: Tritium concentrations have been measured at up to 100 times the “maximum contaminant level” set by state and federal agencies. This corrects a typo.

Tri-Valley CAREs Citizen’s Watch
Print Bites: All the News that Fits to Print

Fukushima commemorated. The ongoing tragedy of the earthquake, tsunami and meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was commemorated locally and around the globe on March 11, 2012, one year after the disaster struck Japan. Several hundred thousand people marched and rallied in dozens of locations against nuclear power. In Germany and France, scores of thousands formed human chains, including a 230 kilometer chain connecting cities in southern France where 10 reactors are located.

In California, at the San Onofre nuclear plant near San Clemente, about 200 gathered. Kyoko Sugasawa, from Sendai, told the crowd, “We mothers are worried that our children are being treated like guinea pigs.” In San Luis Obispo, near Diablo Canyon, Mothers for Peace hosted a commemoration. In the Bay Area, Tri-Valley CAREs and others joined No Nukes Action for a program featuring music, poetry, art, speakers and a video, “Fukushima Never Again.”

CA nuke shutdown. The Unit 3 reactor at the San Onofre nuclear power plant will remain shutdown indefinitely, say federal officials. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has dispatched a team of inspectors to determine why some of the reactor’s tubes became so frail that they could fail and release radioactive water. Some radiation has already escaped, according to officials. The “degraded” tubes were installed in 2010. The inspectors are also examining Unit 2, where identical tubing was installed in 2009. Unit 2 had been offline already for maintenance and refueling. (Unit 1 was dismantled in 1992. It sits onsite encased in a concrete and steel tomb.)

Vandenberg. Near midnight February 24, protesters began to gather at the Vandenberg Air Force Base, near Lompoc, CA. Included were folks from Tri-Valley CAREs, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Nevada Desert Experience, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and others. They were there to protest the test launch of a nuclear-capable ICBM. In the wee hours of the morning, Daniel Ellsberg and 14 others crossed the line at the base and were arrested for keeping the peace.

The not so NIF-ty truth. The CBS news crew had evidently been in town for a long while, interviewing Livermore Lab management who enthused over the alleged wonders of the $7 billion National ignition Facility. They came by the Tri-Valley CAREs office after touring the mega-laser, which they called "cool." The data we provided was at odds with the promotion they had been filming. We walked CBS through the budget, detailed the scientific hurdles that make ignition at NIF unlikely and explained that it is funded for nuclear weapons research, not green energy. Somehow, the Lab had neglected to tell CBS the history of scandals and mismanagement at NIF. Missing too was the information about NIF’s radioactive fuel (a mix of tritium and deuterium) and the plans to add plutonium and other fissile materials to fusion experiments in the mega-laser.

Will CBS news tell the whole story? We sincerely hope so. On April 1, the NIF segment is scheduled to air on the CBS Sunday Morning program. Do check it out and let us know how you think CBS did in telling America about NIF.
Tri-Valley CAREs
Communities Against a Radioactive Environment
2582 Old First Street, Livermore, CA 94550 • (925) 443-7148 • www.trivalleycares.org

March 15, 2012

Dear Tri-Valley CAREs supporter:

If you want to help stop nuclear weapons, now is the time to donate. This month, your Tri-Valley CAREs team is preparing to go to Washington, DC to speak truth to power to members of Congress and the Obama Administration about the grave nuclear dangers and radioactive contaminants we face locally and globally - and the positive alternatives that we can pursue instead.

Your contribution will:

• **Enable** advocacy training and issue briefings so that our youth and other grassroots activists can effectively carry our policy recommendations in the nation’s capital.

• **Unite** your Tri-Valley CAREs team members with scores of activists from nuclear weapons sites across the country to amplify our message and power. And,

• **Publish** a major new report from Tri-Valley CAREs showing how decision-makers can take immediate steps to curb the nuclear weapons budget.

Can I count on your support? Let me tell you a little more about what your Tri-Valley CAREs team will accomplish. The action began with our staff attorney Scott Yundt’s participation on the “DC Days” planning committee. It will continue with an all-day training for activists on Sunday, March 18, that I will help lead.

More than 80 meetings with the Obama Administration and Congress will take place the following week. As I write this, we are preparing to meet with top officials at the White House Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Energy, the Government Accountability Office, the Environmental Protection Agency – and more.

Thanks to you and others, Toshimi Barks and teammates will carry to DC thousands of petitions to ensure adequate funding for cleanup of the toxic wastes that have gotten into the environment at Livermore Lab. Your team will deliver them in meetings with the decision-makers who oversee the Superfund law and determine its funding.

I’m also excited to tell you about the absolutely essential report we will bring to Congress to demonstrate how, where and why to cut the bloated nuclear weapons budget.

Dr. Robert Civiak, a physicist and former Budget Examiner for the Dept. of Energy’s nuclear weapons programs at the White House Office of Management and Budget, has just completed an analysis for us of the Fiscal Year 2013 budget request for nuclear weapons activities. This report lays bare the inconvenient contradiction at the center of the budget request: The nuclear weapons makers want vastly increased funding for a shrinking number of warheads.

*(turn over)*
Your Tri-Valley CAREs team will use Dr. Civiak’s analysis to convince Congress and the Administration to cut the funding for nuclear bombs.

I want to make sure, too, that you receive a copy of this great report. Check the box on the reply card with your donation of any amount, and I will mail you a copy – along with my heartfelt appreciation! We will also have it up on our web site for you soon.

You recognize that all of us at Tri-Valley CAREs are toiling in the shadow of the bomb every single day to stop the nuclear madness. And, often we win! Our “watchdog” efforts have led to a declining ability at Livermore Lab to conduct experiments with deadly plutonium.

Further, our team has worked tirelessly to stop a new plutonium bomb plant at the Los Alamos Lab in NM. As you may have read, our efforts, and those of our allies, have succeeded. This year there is no funding for that bomb plant. It will be delayed at least 5 years, and we will continue to advocate for its total cancellation. Similarly, we were able to stop any more “loan guarantees,” which are a give-away to the nuclear power industry, from appearing in the budget. We make a difference.

And, we have lots of work still to do. Your Tri-Valley CAREs team is going to Congress to halt a new uranium bomb plant at Y-12 in Oak Ridge, TN. We will oppose a plutonium fuel factory at the Savannah River Site in SC where the government plans to make mixed oxide (MOX) fuel for nuclear power reactors. We will stop the production of a new nuclear “Frankenbomb,” called the B61-12, which weapons designers want to create using “mix and match” parts from up to 4 different versions of the B61 bomb.

We will press Congress and the Obama Administration for real cleanup in communities around nuclear weapons sites, demand justice for workers made ill by on the job exposures and promote a “green lab” in Livermore devoted to civilian science and genuine renewable energy research.

Tri-Valley CAREs is also taking action locally. On April 5, you are invited to a letter writing party at our office. On April 6, join us to protest at the gates of Livermore Lab. On April 19, your Tri-Valley CAREs team will report to the community on what we accomplished in Washington, DC. Your financial help now will ensure our work goes forward! THANK YOU.

For peace, justice and a healthy environment,

Marylia Kelley,
Executive Director

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**Tri-Valley CAREs**
2582 Old First St.
Livermore, CA
94550

I am contributing __$50  __$25  __$100  __$1000  __Other

Name__________________________________________
Phone __________________________
Address __________________________________________
City _________________________________
State ___________ Zip __________ Email _________________

☐ Please send me a copy of Dr. Civiak's analysis of the nuclear weapons budget