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PRESS RELEASE

LOS ALAMOS HAS "IMMENSE" PLUTONIUM INVENTORY DISCREPANCY - 150 BOMBS WORTH

EXPLANATION SOUGHT FOR 765 KILOGRAM DIFFERENCE IN WASTE ACCOUNTS;

GROUPS CITE POTENTIAL SECURITY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SAFETY ISSUES;

URGE CONTINUED "STAND DOWN" UNTIL LAB, ENERGY DEPT. DATA ARE RECONCILED

All operations involving plutonium at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) should continue to "stand down" until "an immense discrepancy in the accounts for how much plutonium is in the waste at LANL" is reconciled, according to a [letter from watchdog groups delivered today to LANL Director G. Peter Nanos](#).

According to the letter, "The Department of Energy (DOE) reported a discharge to waste from LANL of 610 kilograms of plutonium; Los Alamos indicates a figure of 1,375 kilograms . . . a discrepancy of 765 kilograms, the equivalent of 150 nuclear weapons. This is unacceptable by any imaginable standards and constitutes a crucial safety, environmental, and security issue."

The letter was sent by the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research (IEER), Nuclear Watch of New Mexico and Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety. Copies were simultaneously delivered to DOE Secretary Spencer Abraham, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson and key members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Calling the accounting discrepancy "huge," it continues, "If the LANL number is anywhere close to correct, then there may be very serious implications regarding the lack of due care in minimizing losses of an extremely expensive, proliferation-sensitive, and dangerous material. On the other hand, if the 1,375

kilograms that is now booked as waste is not, in fact, in the waste, the security implications are obvious." Plutonium is both a core ingredient for modern nuclear weapons and a cancer-causing contaminant for humans.

The LANL plutonium accounting discrepancy was first noted in a [1996 DOE memorandum](#), which the letter signers posted on the internet. An agency working group set up to address the issue at that time never issued a report. "To the best of our knowledge, LANL has yet to explain the large plutonium accounting discrepancy or address its security implications," the signers stated.

"It is completely unacceptable for a discrepancy of 150 bombs worth of plutonium to remain on the books eight years after it was first discovered," the letter to Nanos concluded. "Since you have already stood down LANL on other security and safety issues, we request that you seize this moment and immediately appoint an independent task force to investigate this issue until it is resolved."