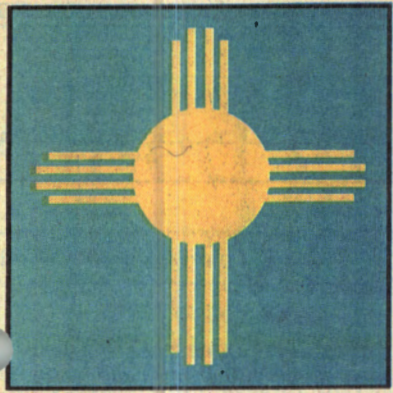


General

FOUNDED IN 1849

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1991



# THE SANTA FE NEW MEXICO



## Fouling the Nest

A New Mexican Special report on  
Los Alamos National Laboratory

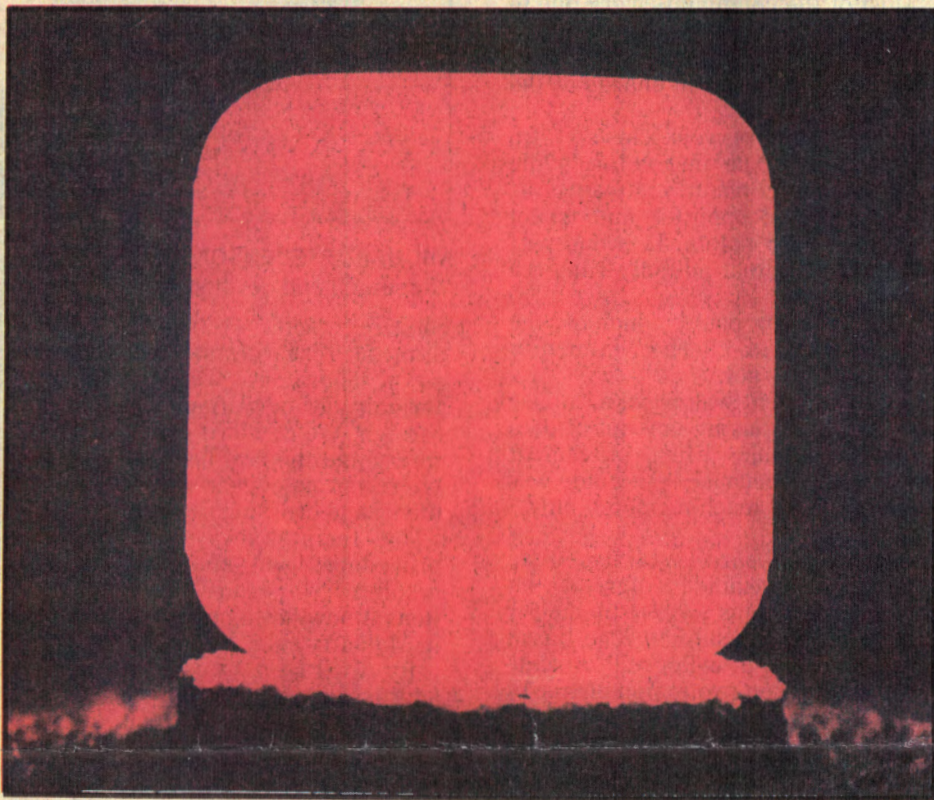
THREE OF THE HOTTEST

## HOT SPOTS

IN LOS ALAMOS

A self-fluorescing plutonium-dioxide pellet, right, glows with its own heat, putting out 62.5 watts of thermal energy. Such pellets power space probes, including the Galileo Jupiter-exploration spacecraft and the Ulysses mission to the Sun.

Courtesy Los Alamos National Laboratory



## Lax rule enforcement norm at 3 lab sites, critics charge

### CMR Building

In October 1981, a worker in the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building at Los Alamos National Laboratory left work without knowing he was contaminated with radioactivity.

The worker spread the contamination to a van he drove in a car pool, his home, a friend's home and a dog.

Eight months later, in June 1982, another worker at the CMR Building injected a plutonium-laden solution into his locker in what he later told the FBI was a demonstration of the facility's lax rules for the handling of special nuclear materials.

The contamination incidents were possible because the workers ignored rules that they monitor themselves for radioactivity when leaving their laboratories.

Today, that self-monitoring still is the rule.

Officials at Los Alamos say inci-

Please see **CMR**, Page A-2

### Omega reactor

Nestled in a deep canyon that divides the town of Los Alamos to the north from Los Alamos National Laboratory to the south is a historic site that doesn't appear on the usual tourist maps.

The Omega West Reactor, a small nuclear reactor used for research, is there at the base of the cliffs of Los Alamos Canyon, a few miles down the road from a well-stocked reservoir and an ice-skating rink.

After creating the world's first sustained nuclear chain reaction at a University of Chicago squash court in 1942, famed scientist Enrico Fermi came to this canyon, known as Omega Site, and set to work helping to build "the water boiler" — an evasive name for the laboratory's first nuclear reactor.

Omega Site was placed in a canyon for a simple reason: So little was

Please see **OMEGA**, Page A-2

### Criticality facility

Few aspects of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons are as frightening as a criticality accident, in which elements of plutonium or uranium are accidentally brought too close together, creating an unplanned chain reaction and releasing large doses of radiation.

The Los Alamos Critical Experiments Facility at Los Alamos National Laboratory is the only place in the country where vital experiments and training can take place to help avoid such accidents.

Not now, though: The facility has been shut for more than a year.

It was closed in November 1989 when a student in one of its classes alleged there had been a host of safety violations.

Los Alamos officials say they have addressed all the issues raised by the student and have been ready to

Please see **CRITICALITY**, Page A-2

## Allies wa use of ch would sh

New Mexican wire services

Iraq said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Tariq Aziz would leave "soon" to take Iraq's answer to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's peace proposal to Moscow, but there were indications the United States and its allies might not wait for the answer before beginning a ground offensive.

U.S. and allied officials said there were reports that Iraqi troops in the field have been supplied with poison gas and told to use it at will. They warned that any significant Iraqi use of chemical weapons against coalition troops would lead to a major escalation of the war and could trigger a contingency plan for a march on Baghdad to hunt down Saddam Hussein.

Already, allied forces are attempting to discourage front-line Iraqi artillery crews from obeying future orders to fire chemical shells, notifying them in leaflets that they would be tracked down individually after the war — much as some guards in Nazi death camps have been brought to justice decades after World War II ended.

Major use of chemical weapons, a violation of international law, would cross a "red line beyond which all previous bets are off," said a senior Bush administration official involved in the final preparations for a ground war.

"It's a red line that would compel the coalition to change its own objectives — adopting, for instance, a march on Baghdad to find Saddam and eliminate his regime," he said of the Iraqi president.

Secretary of State James A. Baker III declared that Iraqi troops "will leave Kuwait soon," but he steered clear of the question of Saddam's postwar future.

House Speaker Thomas S. Foley, meanwhile, said it would be "extremely difficult" for President Bush to refuse an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal — even if that meant leaving Saddam in power.

While the talk continued, Saddam's army remained in Kuwait, and the world waited for Bush to give his own troops the go-ahead for the long-expected ground offensive.

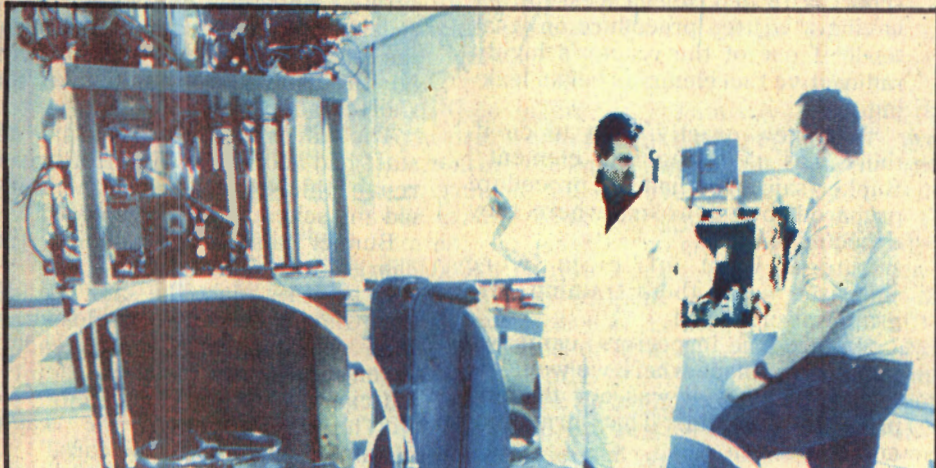
Bush himself had nothing to say on the subject in public. But Baker, speaking at a luncheon for Denmark's Queen Margrethe II, renewed the U.S. demand that Iraq pull out of Kuwait "immedi-

## Albanian pr to form new

The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — The president of Communist Albania, responding to unprecedented protests that toppled monuments to Stalinist founder Enver Hoxha, said Wednesday he would take direct control of a new government.

"I have decided to take the government into my hands and create a new



### THE SERIES

**Sunday:** Overview and security

**Monday:** Cleanup

**Tuesday:** Public safety

**Wednesday:** Worker safety

**Today: Hot spots**

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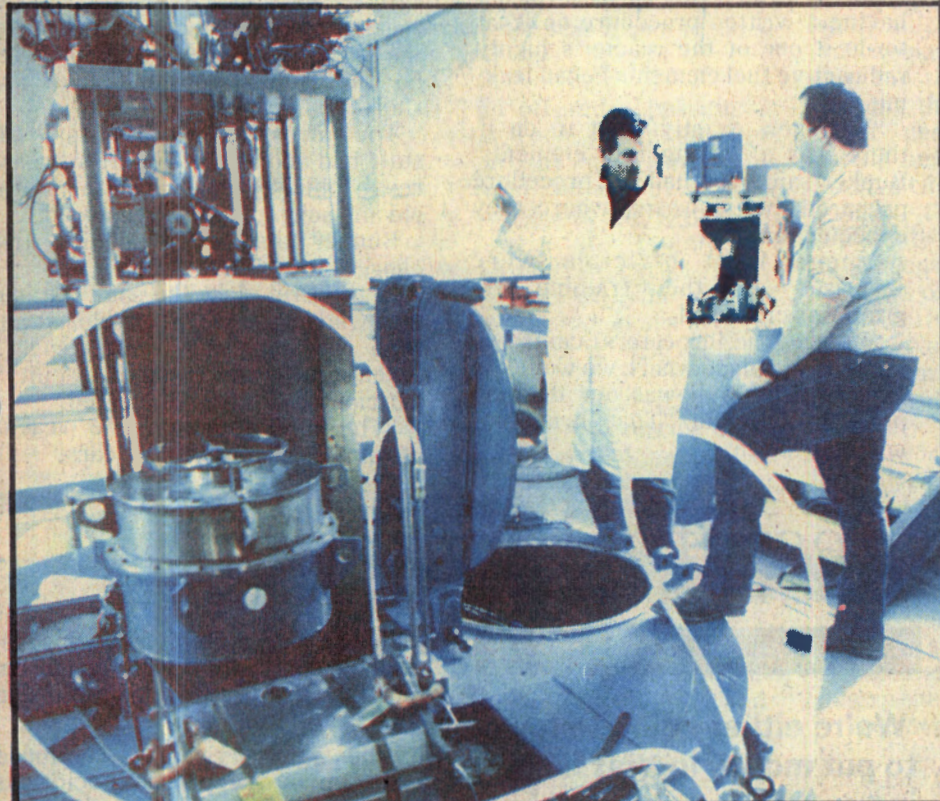
**The Associated Press**

VIENNA, Austria — The president of Communist Albania, responding to unprecedented protests that toppled monuments to Stalinist founder Enver Hoxha, said Wednesday he would take direct control of a new government.

"I have decided to take the government into my hands and create a new government and a new presidential council," President Ramiz Alia said in an announcement broadcast nationwide on state television.

Alia, who succeeded Hoxha after his death in 1985, gave no details of who would be represented on the new council, but said he met Wednesday with leaders of all opposition parties and political organizations.

The move appeared to be an attempt by Alia to distance himself from the unpopular legacy of the communist government and use his personal ap-



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✓ The Los Alamos Critical Experiments Facility, which trains scientists to avoid unplanned chain reactions, was closed more than a year ago after a student in one of its classes alleged a host of safety violations.

**Friday:** Oversight

Technicians, left, at the lab's Omega West Reactor stand near the access hatch to the core. Lab officials say safety is an important concern in the operation of the reactor.

# Court approves AIDS tests





## Fouling the Nest

A New Mexican Special Report on Los Alamos National Laboratory

# CRITICALITY: Student scuttles lab facility

Continued from Page A-1

reopen since last April. The reopening has been delayed by a regulatory morass at the U.S. Department of Energy, which owns LANL, they say.

The closure is ironic, the officials say. The same increased safety concerns at the Energy Department that have kept the facility closed also have also increased the demand for its services.

"The entire (nuclear) community is trying to improve on safety, and lots of facilities are trying to improve their training of people who handle nuclear materials," said John Malanify, deputy group leader for the criticality unit.

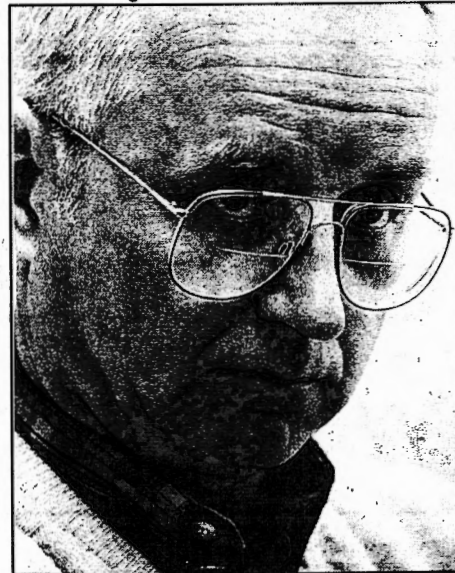
"This is the only place in the country where you can do these student classes, where you can approach criticality with hands-on experience," said the lab's deputy associate director, Michael Stevenson.

There is a criticality facility near Denver, but it is tied up with work relating to problems at the nearby Rocky Flats plant, leaving Los Alamos as "the only remaining general-purpose facility," according to a report by the National Research Council.

The trouble at Los Alamos began in September 1989, when 15 students, all employees of the Department of Energy or federal contractors, attended a two-day criticality class.

During courses taught at the facility, students assist in bringing together plutonium or enriched uranium to slowly approach — but not reach — a state of criticality.

No complaints were registered by



JOHN MALANIFY

"Trying to improve on safety."

any of the students during the class.

Nearly two months later, in November 1989, the Department of Energy's Albuquerque office was notified that one of the students had gone back to his office in Richland, Wash., site of the heavily contaminated Hanford Nuclear Reservation, and filed a report claiming safety infractions during the class.

Los Alamos officials said they could not explain the two-month delay, nor did they know whether the student had been sent to the class by the Energy Department to secretly investigate the facility. Federal officials did not respond to questions about the matter.

Los Alamos management shut the facility the next day because the

allegations "sounded very serious," Malanify said.

Among the student's accusations: Out-of-date procedures were used during criticality experiments; procedures were violated; instructors had a casual attitude about safety; students were not properly monitored for radiation; and protective clothing wasn't worn in potentially contaminated areas.

"I find little real basis in his allegations," Malanify said.

Most of the complaints were due to misunderstandings, he said. For example, the student clearly didn't understand who was in charge of the class, he said.

Lab instructors work closely with the students. The instructor, while knowledgeable about criticality, is not a certified operator and is not responsible for safety. It is the staff of the facility that actually runs the experiments.

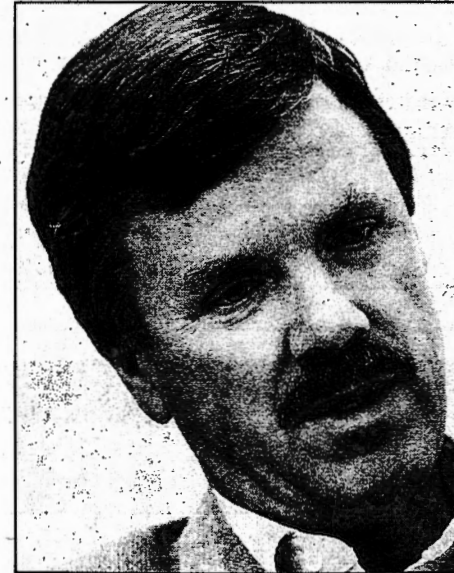
"The student could conclude the instructor is in charge," Malanify said, "But, he's not."

So, the student was shocked to see the instructor using an out-of-date procedure guide, when in fact it didn't matter because "the guide was being used as teaching notes only," Malanify said.

A review board established to investigate the incident agreed that misunderstandings were to blame for many of the accusations. The board "did not find a calloused attitude toward radiation protection or nuclear safety," its report concludes.

However, the board did find "a casual attitude toward procedural formality" and recommended changes such as updating plans and writing new procedures.

"There are good reasons for that,"



MICHAEL STEVENSON

"Research and development"

Stevenson said. "We're used to operating as research and development, as a laboratory, and the idea of formality of operations is sometimes foreign. We're more concerned with safety and the real hazards involved. We're not as concerned with dotting the i's and crossing the t's."

The facility always has had safe procedures and policies, but as a result of the board's recommendations it now has a paper trail to prove it, Malanify said.

By April 1990, "we thought we had addressed things adequately at that point to reopen," Stevenson said.

Lab officials quickly learned, however, that while they had made the decision to close the facility, they could not reopen it without Department of Energy approval.

While the facility was closed, Ener-

gy Secretary James D. Watkins released new rules on reopening a facility, Malanify said.

"It was decided (the department) wanted further reviews" of the facility's readiness to open, he said.

And more reviews, and more reviews.

The facility has prepared reviews for laboratory management, the Los Alamos Energy Department office, the Albuquerque energy office, the Defense Programs Office at federal energy headquarters in Washington and the federal department's Office of Nuclear Safety, Malanify said.

The facility happened to be closed at a time when more notorious closures, such as the one at Rocky Flats, were causing the Energy Department to revamp its rules.

If the closure had happened a year later, "the (Energy Department) would have had the procedures better defined and it wouldn't have taken as long," Stevenson said.

Stevenson said he has not received final word but hopes the final review has been completed and the facility can reopen soon.

The impact of the closure will be felt for some time to come.

"At a minimum, there is some set of potential students having their training delayed by a year or more," Stevenson said. There already is a yearlong backlog of students signed up to begin taking the classes when they begin again.

Even once it reopens, the facility will have to bring its own employees back up to speed before resuming classes for others, Malanify said.

"When we can't operate, it's like a pilot who can't fly," he said. "He can work on the simulator all day long, but ..."

## OMEGA: Age of reactor a concern for doubters

Continued from Page A-1

known about nuclear reactors when work started in 1943 that Los Alamos officials wanted it out of the way should something go wrong.

The feared accident never occurred, not at the water boiler and not at its replacement, the Omega West Reactor.



Of the 169 findings, the laboratory decided 112 required action. About 85 of those have been completed.

Merle Bunker, a former group leader in charge of Omega West until his recent retirement, acted as the laboratory's spokesman on the report.

"These guys were struggling to make negative comments about our

Why?

"Mostly because the guy who looked at our training was a professional trainer himself and he liked to pick away at our training plan," Bunker said.

Omega West agreed to make some changes in its training plan as a result of the investigation. However, "making the training plan considera-



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## Fouli

Los Alamos National Laboratory has been labor on the high years. Every northern I can vaguely understand proximity presents be risks. Some have acc risks and learned to them because of the be multimillion-dollar per roll and the finest minds in our own backy

The lab brings us a tr legacy, both positive. tive. That legacy ran major scientific adv deadly poisons.

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West Reactor. Today, though, questions are being raised about the aging Omega West Reactor's ability to sustain that safety record.

An inspection team from the U.S. Department of Energy, the agency that owns Los Alamos National Laboratory, investigated Omega West in July 1989.

The team concluded that although the facility posed no immediate health threat, "an aging facility, coupled with informality in operations, maintenance and emergency readiness, constitutes an increasing potential for accidents."

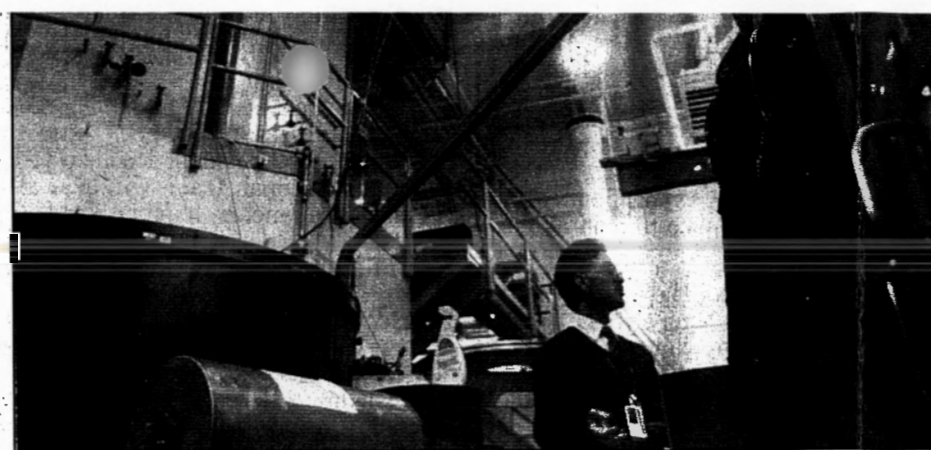
Lab officials dispute that finding. Safety always has been Omega West's top priority, and the inspection team's findings are the result of nitpicking, a reactor official says.

Omega West is one of two small reactors in the state (the other is at the University of New Mexico). It generates eight megawatts of power but no electricity; it is used strictly for research.

The Energy Department report found weaknesses in several areas, including:

■ **Operation.** "[There is] informality in the conduct of operations that is inappropriate for any reactor in today's safety environment but particularly for an aging nuclear complex such as the Omega West Reactor."

■ **Training.** "Instructors are not



Alexander Gancarz, left, one of the leaders of the reactor division, and John Webster, a spokesman for the lab, in the reactor building. The core is housed in the structure to the left.

well versed in teaching techniques, formally developed and reviewed curricula are absent and training records are inadequate for independent evaluation."

■ **Incident reporting.** "The threshold (for determining which incidents must be reported) is set too high. Frequent occurrences, such as reactor or system shutdown due to lightning strikes, have been rationalized out of the reporting system."

■ **Emergency preparedness.** "The facility cadre does not accept the possibility of a serious accident, all of the hazards of fuel-handling operations have not been analyzed and

procedures to respond to associated emergencies have not been developed."

■ **Preventive maintenance.** "Anticipated replacement of the [Omega West Reactor] could result in reluctance to make repairs or replace equipment. This progression could lead to an unacceptable fix-after-break maintenance program."

■ **Contamination safety.** "Even though there is considerable potential for radioactive contamination... the facility is not prepared to handle a serious contamination incident."

The 200-page report lists 169 findings covering 43 different concerns.

## CMR: Self-monitoring still procedure despite incidents

Continued from Page A-1

dents like those in 1981 and 1982 could occur again, but they say improvements have been made in the self-monitoring program, including better training of workers.

"Our awareness certainly has been heightened by those problems" of the past, said Donald Sandstrom, leader of the Materials, Science and Technology Division at LANL.

Just last August, though, a team of investigators from the U.S. Department of Energy found that workers at the CMR Building often monitored themselves too rapidly and incompletely.

Workers in the building are supposed to check themselves for contamination at three different stations before leaving the facility. Additional monitoring is optional at two other stations.

However, unlike at least one other facility at Los Alamos where special nuclear materials are handled, there are no health workers to make sure the employees are checked.

Workers leaving the CMR Building must pass through two door-like

monitors, but those monitors are for detection of special nuclear materials being taken from the facility, not to catch radioactive contamination. Officials, however, say they can detect some contamination.

With 550,000 square feet, the CMR Building makes up about 10 percent of the total square footage of Los Alamos National Laboratory. Analyses of special nuclear materials is just one of the jobs performed by its 300 workers in 150 laboratories.

The building, however, was occupied first in 1952 and as it ages, problems are cropping up.

Congress this budget year sus-

pended funding for a \$385 million project to build a laboratory to take over the work with special nuclear materials and decontaminate and refurbish the CMR Building.

A total of \$10 million already budgeted for the new laboratory was reallocated to pay for improvements to the structure.

"We're either going to have to put money in that building or build a new one," said Ronald Stafford, deputy chief of the health, safety and environment division at LANL.

The \$10 million being spent this budget year on improvements to the building is eight or 10 times what was spent last budget year, lab officials said.

The major area needing upgrading is the building's heating, cooling and ventilation system, officials said. A failure there could shut down operations at the building; work at the lab's plutonium-processing facility also would be slowed because the CMR operations include analysis of certain materials for the plutonium unit.

The problems at CMR have been well documented over the years.

Budget requests by LANL for the

make negative comments about our facility down here, despite the fact that when they were here they saw our (inspection) was the best of the 20 places they had done," Bunker said.

The inspectors don't feel like they're doing their job if they don't find something wrong, he said.

"That's what they're paid for."

Much of the actions undertaken by the laboratory to address the report's concerns relate to "formality of operations," an issue that is of concern laboratory-wide.

By improving formality of operations, the facility will have written procedures, training requirements and documentation to prove that it is safe.

For example, Bunker said, the report criticized Omega West for not having a written procedure on what to do if one of the reactor's highly radioactive fuel elements began leaking.

"We knew exactly what to do if there was a leaking fuel element," Bunker said. "We had the procedure prepared, but it wasn't where they expected to find it."

Omega West officials were surprised when their training program was criticized.

"Before (the inspectors) came, we thought one place where we would do exceptionally well was our training program," he said. "That turned out not to be the case."

**'We're either going to have to put money in that building or build a new one.'**

**Ronald Stafford**

Health division deputy chief

new special nuclear materials laboratory have cited several troubles, including corroded and breached air ducts, inadequate supply of filtered air, marginal building-wide filter systems and corroded glove boxes. The boxes are used by workers in the handling of nuclear material.

Without the new laboratory, LANL officials wrote in the budget documents, "Continued long-term reliable, safe, and secure operations of critical chemistry and metallurgy [research and development] services cannot be ensured. A system failure could pose danger to the workers and force the facility to shut down."

"Many areas in the building are

"making the training plan considerably more formal and comprehensive than the present one would require additional staff, which cannot be justified at this time," the laboratory said in its response to the report.

"We think the training program we have in any case is quite adequate for the size of facility we have," Bunker said. "The (inspectors) that came in to talk to us are used to much larger facilities with many more complexities than we have here."

The report said the fact that the reactor is designed to permit the reactor's operating staff to simply walk away after an emergency shutdown had caused the staff to become complacent about safety.

Bunker said that just isn't the case. "Our first priority down here is safety," he said. "We never run the reactor a minute without taking all the safety procedures and following all the rules. We don't take any shortcuts."

The investigators also said the staff had adopted a "fix-after-break" repair philosophy because the unit is old and scheduled to be replaced.

Bunker also flatly denied that charge.

In the first place, he said, the idea that Omega West will be closed any time soon appears to be dead. A recent reassessment of the facility's anticipated lifetime concluded:

"There's no reason the reactor shouldn't run another 10 years."

radiologically contaminated and beyond economically viable cleanup. In short, the CMR building is at the end of its useful life.

"The safety risk of continued operation of the present facility is becoming unacceptable."

And in another budget document, LANL officials wrote:

"While the safety record in the building has been outstanding, the deteriorated condition of many of the systems no longer ensures their proper functioning under accident conditions."

The federal energy investigators who inspected the building last summer also found safety problems, including air flow problems with glove boxes that could lead to contamination of workers.

The investigators were so concerned with conditions they requested an immediate plan by LANL to deal with them.

Despite those findings, Sandstrom, who oversees the building's operations, said the building has "reliability problems. It doesn't have safety problems."

"It is still a very good building."

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In coming days, four ec will outline what we think to be done, and why. T clude:

■ Cleaning up the me cost of cleaning up the

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From The N

Chicago — The Sioux Indian last night on their way back to Man-Affraid-Of-His-Horse said to like all the other promises of the with heavy hearts. We wanted our people that we have more men."

## Facing a 1 Make care av:

"Well...you always have you health."

That standard line, that usually seem to say to someone who's just experienced a bad run of luck or some financial setback, has unusual irony in application to New Mexico in 1991.

No New Mexican who has followed recent news reports needs to be reminded that our state faces a tight budget, reduced revenue expectations and growing concerns about our ability to meet everyday needs.

While the state's financial health troubling, New Mexicans face another crisis of even more personal and direct concern — our physical health. We know that some priorities — judgments about what we value most and what our state's leadership has to do — must be set.

New Mexico's Democrats, at their elected leadership in the House and Senate, have made commitment to solve an intolerable situation with the introduction of a comprehensive package of health insurance-related measures. Changes are needed. Compare New Mexico to other states in the critical field of health care and health insurance. New Mexico ranks:

■ Last in the number of people who receive prenatal care services;

■ Highest in the percentage of individuals without health insurance (almost twice the national



# OPINION



THE SANTA FE  
**NEW MEXICAN**

The West's Oldest Newspaper  
Founded 1849

Robert M. McKinney, Editor and Publisher  
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## Fouling the nest

**L**os Alamos National Laboratory has been our neighbor on the hill for 48 years. Every northern New Mexican vaguely understands that its proximity presents benefits and risks. Some have accepted the risks and learned to live with them because of the benefits — a multimillion-dollar per year payroll and the finest scientific minds in our own backyard.

The lab brings us a tremendous legacy, both positive and negative. That legacy ranges from major scientific advances to deadly poisons.

When Robert Oppenheimer and the federal government established the lab to develop the atomic bomb, they did not clearly foresee that darker side of the legacy. Some New Mexicans, federal officials and scientists still are unwilling to accept it and would continue on a business-as-usual course.

No one can dispute that Los Alamos and its environs, the magnificent canyons and mesas of the eastern flanks of the Jemez Mountains, home to the American Indians and their descendants for thousands of years, have been altered permanently in just 50 years.

For the last five days in "Fouling the nest," *The New Mexican* has delivered a view of the lab's legacy to future generations, a legacy of nuclear contamination and the challenge to clean it up. The series ends Friday.

Anyone who cares about reclaiming Los Alamos from contamination and about plotting a course for nuclear waste disposal knows that changes must begin now. The same is true of anyone who understands the benefits LANL's research can reap for the future.

In coming days, four editorials will outline what we think needs to be done, and why. They include:

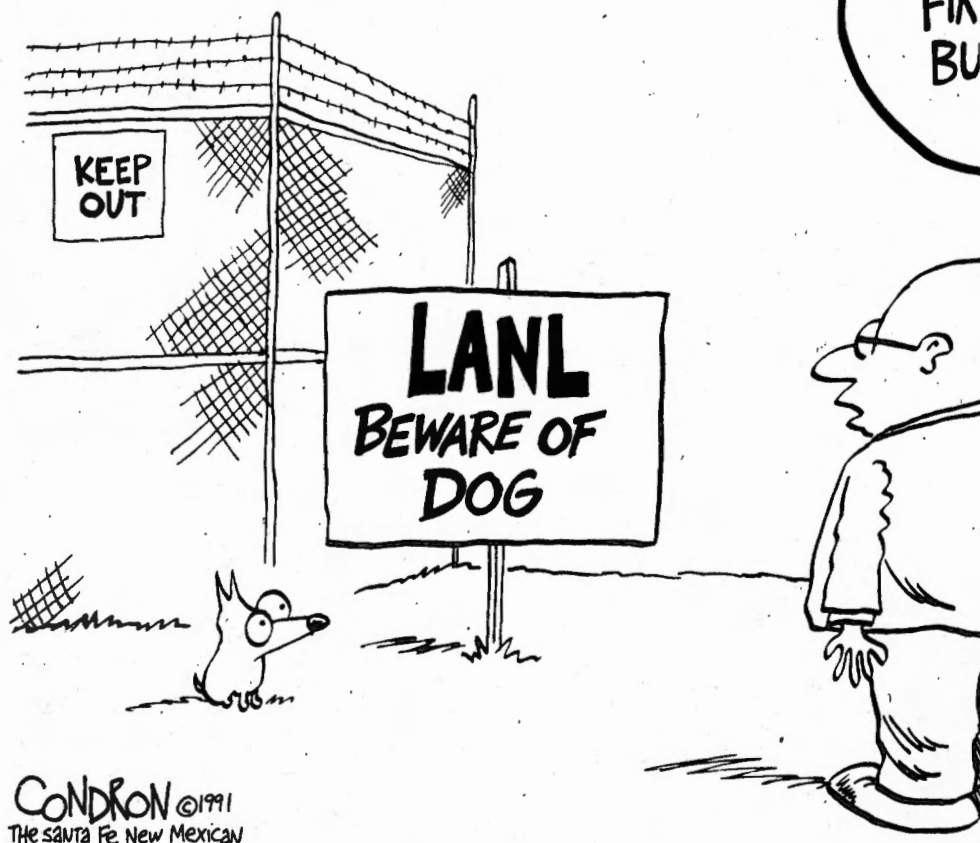
■ Cleaning up the mess: The cost of cleaning up the lab and

area's around it has been conservatively estimated at \$2 billion — \$200 billion for all U.S. weapons facilities, equal to the cost of the federal bailout of S&Ls. Before the lab adds to the nearly 2,000 suspected polluted sites and increases the cost of clean up, federal officials must step in, bring in experts to investigate the problem and fund a clean up. It could take decades, but it must be done.

■ Knowing what is there: How can we believe environmental reports on LANL when the Department of Energy both owns the facility and monitors its environmental effects; it's like the fox guarding the chicken coop. Studies by an independent watchdog agency funded by the federal government are needed to tell the DOE what to do and how to do it. In addition, there are no studies of LANL's impact on the ecology of the canyons and mountainsides that crisscross the area. That work must begin soon.

■ What's next for the lab? LANL's future should be to expand development of nuclear and other energy sources for civilian uses — as power sources to replace fossil fuels. Plutonium processing, which has been a concern among critics of the lab, will have to continue, but purely for LANL's research. In the past the lab has processed plutonium for use in weapons. That must stop.

■ Paying the tab: Like so many problems facing the United States today, cleaning up LANL, improving its security and health reports and developing alternative energy research programs will cost billions of dollars. But that bill represents only a minuscule slice of the larger U.S. debt pie. After 75 years of urbanization and growth, America is at a crossroads. Everything from our schools and cities to our rivers and highways need help — and money. Can the nation even pay the bill? It must.



## Gorbachev wants a return to 1

When President Bush appeared to rebuff Gorbachev's Gulf peace plan, Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh reacted thus: "That plan was addressed to the Iraqi leadership, so he (Bush) rejected a plan which did not belong to him."

It might seem odd that the authors of a peace plan should declare that it has nothing to do with one of the two main combatants. But, in fact, Bessmertnykh was entirely candid and his remark revealing. The Gorbachev peace plan is not at all a peace plan, but a Soviet offer to Saddam to return to the Gulf as his protector and patron.

Decoded, this Soviet offer is the first major act of Cold War II, a Soviet return to the "old thinking" of the Cold War when the Soviets defined their interests as entirely contradictory to those of the United States. The now departed Eduard Shevardnadze had tried to fashion a Soviet foreign policy premised not on a zero-sum game but on a confluence of Soviet and Western interests. The Baghdad gambit is the first major fallout of Shevardnadze's departure and the first reflection in foreign affairs of the takeover of Soviet policy by Communist hard-liners.

What the peace plan says to Saddam is that if he withdraws from Kuwait the Soviets will save him from the consequences. They will guarantee his continued rule and his borders. And, they will guarantee that Iraq suffers no further punishment. That means no reparations, no economic blockade, no arms embargo. In effect this is a pledge that Saddam will not only survive but the Soviets will help him rebuild, even if Soviet resupply means defying the United States.

The plan also promises linkage to the Palestinian issue. That gives Saddam a face-saving victory of sorts, and the Soviets renewed clout with the radical Arabs, whose mutually beneficial alliance with the Soviets, lasting the thirty years between Suez and Shevardnadze, had only recently appeared moribund.

**Charles Krauthammer**

Washington Post



For Moscow's newly-ascendant military and communists this is all very attractive. Post-war Iraq becomes a totally dependent base of operations and re-entry point for Soviet influence in the Middle East. Association with Saddam revives Soviet credentials with radical regimes in the Arab, Islamic, and Third World. Best of all, with the United States having obligingly depleted Iraq's inventory of modern weaponry, Iraq becomes the perfect customer for Soviet industry's only marketable export: arms.

For Saddam, this is even more attractive: The Soviet connection saves him from extinction. The American strategy of forcing unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait is intended to make Saddam fall. An ignominious withdrawal — Iraqis dropping their weapons and abandoning Kuwait, leaving their armor in place — would so disarm and humiliate Saddam as to guarantee his overthrow or, at the least, his marginalization.

Which is why Saddam turns to the Soviets to give him the kind of dignified retreat it fashioned for Egypt and Syria when they found themselves on the losing end of the Yom Kippur War. The elements of Saddam's survival are: an orderly withdrawal from Kuwait, a lifting of the embargo, resupply and rebuilding. All require the Soviets. All are implied in Gorbachev's peace plan.

This outcome is the only one that snatches some victory, and the chance to fight again, from an otherwise hopeless Iraqi situation. Correspondingly, it is the only outcome that denies the United States the clearcut victory it has earned on the battlefield. It is an

### 100 YEARS AGO TODAY

From *The New Mexican*, Feb. 21, 1891:

Chicago — The Sioux Indians who have been to Washington reached this city last night on their way back to Pine Ridge. They are not at all satisfied. Young Man-Afraid-Of-His-Horse said to a reporter: "We have some promises but they are like all the other promises of the Great Father. We are not fooled, and we go home with heavy hearts. We wanted Gen. Miles there, but he did not come. We shall tell our people that we have more promises. They will laugh at us and call us old men."

## Facing a health care fiasco: What should N.M. legisla

### Make care available to all New Mexicans

"Well...you always have your health."

That standard line, that we usually seem to say to someone who's just experienced a bad run

al average...350,000 people);

■ Last in access to health care services;

■ Highest in percent of coun-

and long-range health care needs.

Those 14 bills, which have been endorsed by the Democrat-

**Rep. Ray Sanchez**

House Speaker

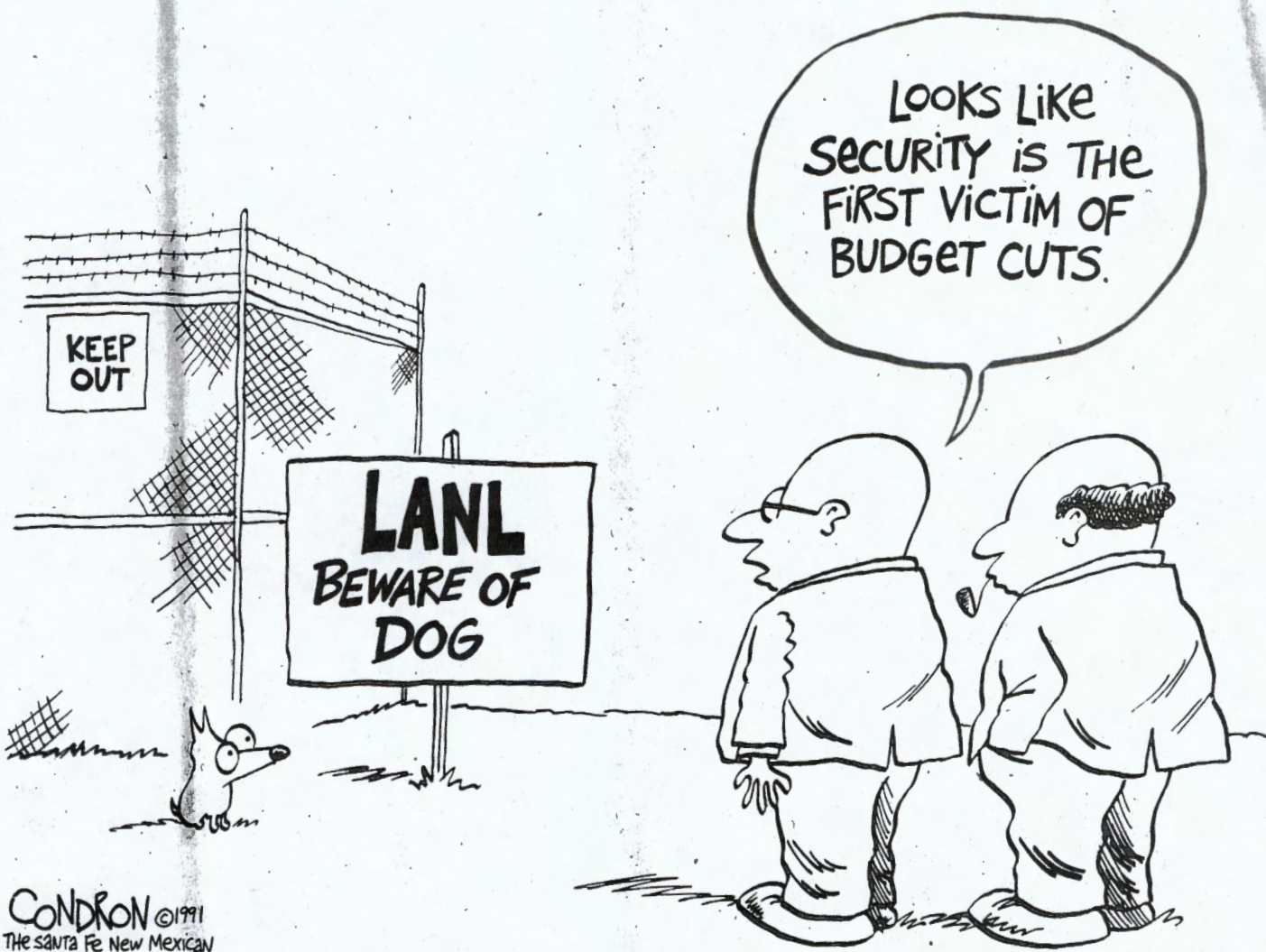


Leave indigenous funds intact

Rv State Statute the Santa



# OPINION



## Gorbachev wants a return to the Cold War

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outcome, therefore, that the U.S. must prevent. We have not spent blood and treasure destroying the Iraqi military machine just to see it rebuilt, for hard currency, by the Soviets. We have not stopped Iraq's advance into the Arabian Peninsula to see it become the Soviets' new base in the Gulf.

What to do? The administration's response seems to be to pre-empt this scenario by pushing for a quick ground war which, by utterly destroying Saddam's army, will put him beyond saving, even by Soviet mischief. If Saddam has nothing to show for his Kuwaiti adventure, not even a remnant of the military to bring home, he cannot survive. And the new rulers, gauging the balance of forces in the region.