



Desert Voices

The Newsletter of Nevada Desert Experience Vol. 9 No. 1 Winter 1996

NUCLEAR TESTING: THE NEXT GENERATION

by Jacqueline Cabasso

Over the next five years, the United States plans to spend billions of dollars to construct and operate an elaborate system of technologically sophisticated laboratory facilities to preserve its capacity to maintain, test, modify, design, and produce nuclear weapons well into the 21st century, even under a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Nuclear weapon science will be advanced through computer simulations coupled with archived data from past tests and new diagnostic information obtained from above-ground laboratory experiments and "zero yield" underground tests.

Many of the new facilities, to be built at the Livermore, Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories and the Nevada Test Site, will be as big as stadiums, filled with state-of-the-art, industrial scale, scientific equipment. Large above-ground and underground non-nuclear explosions involving radioactive and other hazardous materials will be conducted (*hydrody-*

namic tests), as will miniature contained thermonuclear explosions (*inertial confinement fusion*). The data generated by these experiments will be run through the world's fastest supercomputers. (continued on next page)

NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE 1996 APPEAL:

STILL TESTING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

Paul Simon's 1975 song "Still Crazy After All These Years" portrays a man whose life is going nowhere. It reminds us very much of nuclear disarmament, going nowhere, despite mass misconceptions to the contrary. At NDE, our mission has always been to abolish all nuclear weapons and we focussed on ending nuclear weapons testing as a first step toward achievement of that goal. We have long supported the negotiation of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as a way to end testing. It is possible that a CTB will be signed this year. This is a long awaited goal. But the treaty has been so weakened that it leaves us with little to celebrate. In President Clinton's own words, "In the event that I were informed...that a high level of confidence in the safety or reliability of a nuclear weapons type deterrent could no longer be certified, I would be prepared in consultation with Congress, to exercise our "supreme national interests" rights under the CTBT in order to conduct whatever tests might be required." In October of 1995, the Department of Energy signed a 1.5 billion dollar contract with Bechtel Corporation and Lockheed-Martin to operate the test site. Instead of closing the Nevada Test Site when a CTB is negotiated, it has just been infused with 1.5 billion dollars to maintain its readiness for the next five years.

We deplore the waste of this money as we watch social problems die without funding. We condemn the decision to resume "sub-critical" or so-called "no-yield" testing at the Nevada Test Site this year. It is hard to believe that the United States is STILL TESTING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...We must be present to say that testing has always been crazy, but especially now that we have an opportunity to bring about nuclear disarmament. As we approach *Lenten Desert Experience XV*, it is tempting to despair that we're still protesting after all these years! It's tempting to contemplate ending the organization when the CTB is finally signed. Yet we know that we are a long way from nuclear disarmament and even the closing of the Nevada Test Site.

NDE lost two good friends in 1995. Both Franciscan peacemakers, Fr. Geoffrey Bridges, OFM and Terri Mead, SFO, were faithful participants over the years in test site events. Their passion for peace and faithfulness over the long haul continue to inspire us. Faithfulness requires a long-term commitment. We ask you, our NDE family, to stay with us as we not only protest French testing in the South Pacific, but resumed testing right here in Nevada. The anticipation of a CTB has turned people's time, attention and money to other causes. But your donations are essential if NDE is to continue. Your financial support will enable us to work for true nuclear disarmament. We thank you for your generous support and faithfulness after all these years. In peace,

Louie Vitale, OFM and Anne Symens-Bucher

LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE XV
March 1-4, 1996

We remain faithful at the



foot of the nuclear cross

(see poster centerfold)

The goal of these supercomputers, in the words of Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, is to "...unlock the ability to confidently simulate nuclear weapons tests in the laboratory ... preserving a safe, secure, and reliable nuclear deterrent without underground testing." The ultimate objective is to create a "virtual testing and prototyping capability for nuclear weapons."

The rationale for this program, euphemistically called "Stockpile Stewardship and Management" presumes that "...nuclear deterrence will continue to be a cornerstone of the United States' national security policy. Thus, the Department [of Energy's] responsibilities for ensuring the safety and reliability of the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile will also continue for the foreseeable future."

According to the enabling legislation, "Stockpile Stewardship" will "ensure the pres-

ervation of the core intellectual and technical competencies of the United States in nuclear weapons, including weapons design, system integration, and certification." A related "Stockpile Management" program is intended to guarantee the ability to manufacture replacement warheads.

The other nuclear weapon States, in collaboration with the U.S. and each other, are developing their own "computer simulation" programs.

When President Clinton announced his support for a "zero" yield CTBT by 1996, he also endorsed the "Science Based Stockpile Stewardship" program as a means of "maintaining our nuclear deterrent ... without nuclear testing."

The current situation is strikingly reminiscent of 1963, when the U.S., Great Britain, and the Soviet Union negotiated the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), which banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in space, and under water. Then, like now, the Defense Department and

its allies in the Senate insisted as a condition for ratification that the U.S. pursue certain initiatives, referred to as the "four safeguards." These consisted of an extensive underground nuclear weapons testing program, maintenance of "modern nuclear weapons laboratories and programs which will attract and retain 'human scientific resources'," maintaining the capacity to speedily resume atmospheric testing, and improved capacities to monitor the nuclear testing activities of other nations. In the years immediately following the PTBT, the weapons labs were strengthened, U.S. nuclear testing increased, and thirty years later, the U.S. nuclear arsenal far exceeds that of 1963 in sophistication.

Today, with the only other major nuclear power splintered both economically and geopolitically, the labs and the military are making essentially the same arguments they put forth at the height of the Cold War. President Clinton has announced that a CTBT is "conditioned on" the 1963 safeguards, updated and ex-

At Home at the Test Site (for Father Gianni Novelli) by Janet Walkup 10/5/95

It sounds absurd,
but doves nest
in the ruins
of the Nevada Nuclear Test Site.

I saw them fly
in a broad, magnificent valley
where once the sheep grazed.

Now the sage climbs
bomb crater walls.
The earth is pocked
and blemished,
stuffed and torn open,
blasted and emptied,
again and again and again.

I saw the bridge,
its girders curved
holding the shape of
atomic winds from
40 years ago.

I saw too
the "shelters,"
domes of concrete
with rebar thrusting through the
center-
a nightmarish breast.

Low to the ground,
these domes, somehow,
without doors or windows,
light or air,
were supposed to be homes at
ground zero.
All but one were ripped open.

But in the torn breast
a tribe of doves
shelters in the shadow
from the exhausting, ancient Nevada
sun.

The doves rest
upon rusting rebar,

fly in and out,
flutter to rest
unconcerned above the poisoned
earth.

May their freedom
teach us.

May their lively kinship
in a dangerous place
be our guide.

May their love-
simple, tenacious, wordless-
and our endlessly complicated human
love
join forces
against death.

May we,
as they,
make our homes blessed
on our single,
our haunted earth.



panded to include "Safeguards A - F." (See table.)

By allowing for the preservation, indeed, expansion of U.S. nuclear weapons capabilities through underground testing, the 1963 safeguards represented a lost opportunity to stem nuclear proliferation. This suggests that the substitution of a laboratory-based infrastructure for underground testing will recapitulate the profound failure of the PTBT to end the nuclear arms race.

Laboratory testing and other signs of ongoing reliance on nuclear weapons were matters of great controversy at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference, which took place in April-May 1995 at the United Nations in New York. In agreeing to extend the treaty indefinitely, non-nuclear countries expressed their expectation that nuclear States meet their obligations under Article VI of the NPT: "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament..."

The stated U.S. goal of maintaining the "safety" and "reliability" of nuclear weapons for the "foreseeable future" is contrary to the promise of abolition codified in the NPT. While "reliability" refers simply to performance of the weapon (ie: its explosion at the desired yield), "safety" also refers in part to performance (ie: the compatibility of the safety feature with desired yield). High confidence in the precise performance of nuclear weapons is unnecessary for purposes of true deterrence -- the threat of retaliation to prevent another State's first use. When talking about "reliability," the critically important questions, how reliable? and why? are seldom discussed.

Replacing underground nuclear testing with an expanded laboratory infrastructure demonstrates a continued commitment to nuclear weapons as core instruments of national policy. That commitment legitimizes the weapons, which in turn affects other countries' assessment of their desirability. Aggressively main-

(continued on back page)

Table: Comparison of Conditions of the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty and Conditions Proposed for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1995

1963 "Safeguards"

A: Conduct an aggressive underground nuclear test program.

B: Maintain modern nuclear laboratory facilities and programs which will attract and retain "human scientific resources".

C: Maintain the ability to resume atmospheric testing promptly.

D: Improve capability to detect violations and to monitor "Sino-Soviet" nuclear activity.

1995 Proposed "Safeguards"

A: The conduct of a Science Based Stockpile Stewardship program to insure a high level of confidence in the safety and reliability of nuclear weapons in the active stockpile, including the conduct of a broad range of effective and continuing experimental programs.

B: The maintenance of modern nuclear laboratory facility and programs in theoretical and exploratory nuclear technology which will attract, retain, and ensure the continued application of our human scientific resources to those programs on which continued progress in nuclear technology depends.

C: The maintenance of the basic capability to resume nuclear test activities prohibited by the CTBT should the United States cease to be bound to adhere to this treaty.

D: Continuation of a comprehensive research and development program to improve our treaty monitoring capabilities and operations.

E: The continuing development of a broad range of intelligence gathering and analytical capabilities and operations to ensure accurate and comprehensive information on worldwide nuclear arsenals, nuclear weapons development programs, and related nuclear programs.

F: The understanding that if the President of the United States is informed by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Energy (DOE) -- advised by the Nuclear Weapons Council, the Directors of DOE's nuclear weapons laboratories and the Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command -- that a high level of confidence in the safety and reliability of a nuclear weapon type which the two Secretaries consider to be critical to our nuclear deterrent could no longer be certified, the President, in consultation with Congress, would be prepared to withdraw from the CTBT under the standard "supreme national interests" clause in order to conduct whatever testing might be required."



Mark your calendar:

AUGUST DESERT WITNESS will be August 9, 10 & 11

Lent 1996 Calendar: Nevada Desert Experience Events

March 1-4: Lenten Desert Experience XV

March 31: Palm Sunday, Send off for Holy Week Walkers, 9 a.m. Department of Energy headquarters, 2753 S. Highland, Las Vegas.

April 5: Good Friday, Stations of the Cross at the Nuclear Test Site, 2 p.m.

April 6: Holy Saturday Mass at Test Site, 8 p.m.

April 7: Easter Service at the Test-Site, 10:30 a.m., Nevada Desert Experience will take part in the "Circle of Rebirth Ceremony" done by Healing Global Wounds.

Lent 1996 Calendar for other Las Vegas Events

April 1-4: Nuclear Abolition Summit (this summit will be open to all activists and organizations that are interested in working on a coordinated campaign of Nuclear Abolition. Contact: Shundahai Network, P.O. Box 51137, Washington, DC 20091-1137, Phone (202) 588-0912.

April 4-7: Healing Global Wounds at the Test Site. contact: Jennifer Viereck, Healing Global Wounds, P.O. Box 13, Boulder Creek, CA 95006, Phone (408) 338-0147.

April 8: Nuclear Abolition Day of Action. Contact: Shundahai Network, P.O. Box 51137, Washington, DC 20091-1137, Phone (202) 588-0912.

April 8-10: Pace e Bene retreat: "Recognizing the Divine in All: A Nonviolent Way to Face Anger, Fear and Conflict" contact: Pace e Bene, 1420 W. Bartlett, Las Vegas, NV 89106-2226, Phone (702) 648-2281.

HOLY WEEK WALK

Join Br. David Buer, ofm on a walk from the Department of Energy office in Las Vegas to the Nuclear Test Site during Holy Week (March 31- April 5).

To sponsor David or walk with him please call or write us:

Nevada Desert Experience
(702) 646-4814

Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127

(Nuclear Testing, continued from previous page)

taining and developing nuclear weapons design and production capabilities allows the nuclear weapon States to rekindle the arms race at any time, a message that endangers the long-term viability of the nonproliferation regime. If the U.S. is serious about stemming the spread of nuclear weapons, it should take leadership in ending the international nuclear double standard and make abolition of nuclear weapons a top priority. Non-proliferation requires unconditional, irreversible disarmament. Laboratory testing is antithetical to this approach.

In recent remarks to non-governmental organizations gathered at the United Nations, U.S. Ambassador to the CTBT negotiations Stephen Ledogar admitted that motivation to conclude a CTBT among the 38 countries involved in the current negotiations is not the same. According to Ledogar, the majority believes that a test ban will "rapidly" bring about "deterioration and decay" of all existing nuclear stockpiles. In contrast, he said, the nuclear weapon States believe that they can maintain the "safety" and "reliability" of nuclear stockpiles for the "foreseeable future" -- without underground testing. Thus, he concluded: "[M]any participants are working on this endeavor from somewhat different premises."

It is clear that most countries view the CTBT, consistent with its historical purpose, as a means of cutting off nuclear weapons research and development which will lead to the elimination of nuclear arsenals. Regrettably, conclusion of the treaty comes 30 years too late to meet these objectives.

A CTBT is important, both as an environmental measure, and as a symbol of the nuclear weapons States' good faith commitment to the NPT. But it is not the "holy grail," and must not be allowed to become an end in and of itself. A CTBT should mark the beginning of the end of nuclear weapons. "Stockpile Stewardship" should be redefined as passive

caretaking of the existing arsenal under safe conditions, while it awaits disablement and dismantlement, pursuant to our obligation under Article VI of the NPT to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Jacqueline Cabasso is executive director of the Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF), a non-profit, public interest organization in Oakland, California dedicated to a peaceful and nuclear free future. WSLF has challenged nuclear programs at the Livermore and Los Alamos National Laboratories since 1982.

VIDEO TAPES AVAILABLE

A 60 minute video of August Desert Witness 95 is available for \$30.

Also we have copies of Bound by the Wind for \$25.

(both prices include postage)

JUBILEE PLOWSHARES UPDATE

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on August 7, 1995, Steve Kelly, SJ, a Jesuit priest, and Susan Crane, a schoolteacher, entered Lockheed Martin Missiles and Space in Sunnyvale, Ca. and hammered and poured their own blood on Trident D-5II missiles. Following the biblical mandate to "beat swords into plowshares," they called on our government to channel our resources into social programs and away from the production of weapons of mass destruction.

In November, Susan and Steve were found guilty of conspiracy and destruction of Federal property. They will be sentenced on March 13, 1996. Letters of support can be sent to them at: Magdalene House, 528 25th St., Oakland, CA 94612. (510) 839-5251

Nevada Desert Experience

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Nevada Desert Experience welcomes to its Board of Directors June Stark Casey and Chris Montesano. June was one of the speakers at August Desert Witness 1995. Chris is co-founder of the Sheep Ranch Catholic Worker Farm. They made our special ADW 95 candles. Also, Gary Cavalier and Julia Occhiogrosso have assumed co-directorship of NDE and will work out of the Las Vegas office. David Buer, ofm switches to NDE intern work while he prepares for his solemn vows in 1996. The northern California office is now closed, but Bay Area supporters can contact Anne Symens-Bucher at the Franciscan Justice and Peace office (510) 536-3772 in Oakland. The Las Vegas office telephone number remains (702) 646-4814, but the fax number is changed to (702) 631-5538. The e-mail address is: nde@igc.apc.org.

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LENTEN DESERT

We



1982 First Lenten Desert Experience at Test Site



1960 Mothers Strike for Peace at the Test Site

Right:
Sixth
Lenten
Desert
Experience

T EXPERIENCE XV

Remain Faithful





1956 Ammon Hennacy in Las Vegas



Above:

at the Foot of th

They're still testing-- This June 18 the Nevada Test Site will conduct a "low-yield" underground nuclear test as they develop a terrifying new generation of weapons.

We remain faithful--

Join United Methodist Bishop Leontine Kelly, Attorney Andre Lichterman and Father Louie Vitale on March 1-4, 1996 for the fifteenth annual Lenten Desert Experience

Registration and opening ceremonies: Friday (March 1), 4-7 p.m., Christ the King Catholic Community (corner of Tropicana and Torrey Pines, Las Vegas, Nevada)

Saturday (March 2): Lenten Desert Experience XV at Christ the King Catholic Community, 9 a.m.- 9 p.m.

Sunday (March 3): ceremony and action at the Nevada Test Site (Full Schedule for event will be sent)

Monday (March 4): Nuclear Test Site tour provided by Department of Energy, 7 a.m. - 4 p.m.

NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE, P. O. Box 4487, Las Vegas



70 the Baneberry underground nuclear test released radioactivity to the atmosphere

e Nuclear Cross

Please clip and return to: Nevada Desert Experience, P.O. Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127-0487

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

☐ Enclosed is my registration payment of \$30 which includes Lunch and Dinner Saturday

☐ I want to take the Test Site Tour on Monday March 4, 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. (for Test Site Tour you must include full name, Social Security number, Date and place of birth and citizenship. Please send info by Feb. 1)

Full Name _____ SS# _____

Date of Birth _____ Birthplace _____ Citizenship _____

☐ I need sleeping bag space or alternative housing

☐ I need hotel information Information packet will be sent upon registration

Small children and pregnant women are not advised to go to the Test Site.

89127, Phone: (702) 646-4814, Fax: (702) 631-5538, E-mail: nde@igc.apc.org.