

Sandia's \$462.5m future MESA complex



A computer-generated image of what the completed Sandia National Laboratories MESA complex may look like.

Ground breaking has launched Microsystems and Engineering Sciences Applications, the largest project that Sandia has ever undertaken.

An "under-ground-breaking" ceremony held last year celebrated the installation of utility lines. So far, \$200m has been appropriated for engineering design, microelectronic tool upgrades, utilities construction, and work in progress.

Two of three building construction contracts have been awarded for a total of \$83m, with approximately \$58m sub-contracted to New Mexico businesses. By 2008, the three

major facilities are expected to house 648 researchers (including some from industry and academia) in 391,000ft².

The three buildings that comprise the project - a microfabrication facility, a microlaboratory and a weapons integration facility

- are expected to include advanced visualisation labs and 'clean' rooms, with the purpose of helping modernise safety, security and reliability functions of the US nuclear deterrent and contribute to national security missions.

The adjacent construction of an advanced computing facility and a nanotechnology center to be built north of Sandia's Eubank gate, means an unusually capable and inter-related group of scientific facilities will be available for scientists from labs and industry, as well as for the university faculty and students.

New portfolio & increased sales

NTT DoCoMo Inc, the world's second-largest wireless carrier after Vodafone, said today that it earned ¥197bn (\$1.6 bn) in the three months to June, thanks to a new portfolio of handsets with cameras and growing demand for high-speed phone service. DoCoMo's subsidies to manufacturers that develop 3G handsets brought down the retail price, increasing sales. Subscriptions for the service have almost doubled in the last four months, to more than 658,000. A new line of 505i handsets also slowed competitors. DoCoMo's share of Japan's mobile phone market remains

high at 57.5% New handsets helped generate ¥1.25 trillion (\$10.4bn) in revenue during the quarter.

DoCoMo has also been trying to offset the shift from more expensive voice services to cheaper data transmissions.

On average, DoCoMo's customers spent ¥6,140 (\$51.17) monthly on voice services in April-June, a 5.8% decline from the quarter last year. Spending on e-mail, Internet access and other data services grew 16.6% during the period, but these make up less than 25% of the typical monthly bill.

Carlyle cleared to acquire Avio and funds CMOS imaging

The Carlyle Group has been cleared to acquire Fiat Avio adding the manufacture of aero-engine components to the private equity group's roster of defence businesses that include a stake in QinetiQ. It is thought that Carlyle will now push to acquire MTU, the aero-engine division of Daimler-Chrysler. Meantime Carlyle's portfolio investment unit was lead, with Wasserstein Venture Capital in a \$13.5m financing for SmaL Camera Technologies.

"We have made several complementary investments in private imaging sensor companies, and have been actively looking for a compelling investment opportunity in CMOS imaging," said Allan Thygesen, MD at The Carlyle Group. "SmaL stood out based on its innovative and differentiated technology, excellent management and founder team, and strong commercial momentum in multiple markets, consumer electronics, automotive and security."

A road too far!

The US Navy compound semiconductor web site which allows experts to come in and 'bet' on when technical targets will be reached, or when time lines for development must be extended, is ingenious.

Transposing this into a new way to predict events and searching for the 'broadest possible set of new ways to prevent terrorist attacks,' allowing anonymous speculators to bet on forecast terrorist attacks, assassinations and coups in an

'online futures market' seems to take the idea slightly too far. The opportunity to bet on such events was at: www.policyanalysis.org. It is not now available. Traders who registered would have deposited money into an account, similar to a stock account and won or lost based on predicting events. Called the Policy Analysis Market, it intended to register up to 1,000 traders in July, and begin trading in October. The trader numbers

were initially limited to 1,000 possibly expanding to 10,000 by January 2004.

Market focus was to have been on the economic, civil and military futures of Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey and as well as the consequences of US involvement with those nations.

In defending the programme, the Pentagon pointed out that

such futures trading has proved effective in predicting events like oil prices, elections and movie ticket sales.

"Research indicates that markets are extremely efficient, effective and timely aggregators of dispersed and even hidden information," said the Defense Department.

"Futures markets have proven themselves to be good at predicting such things as elections results; they are often better than expert opinions."