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## **Binational laboratory planned along border**

Expect some major new brainpower to be applied to the problems and opportunities in the fast-growing New Mexico-Chihuahua border area.

Last week, Sandia National Laboratories officials from Albuquerque disclosed plans for the first-of-its-kind binational laboratory that will straddle the U.S.-Mexico boarder.

Santa Teresa in southern Doña Ana County has been selected by Sandia as the site for this fascinating project, along with the planned community of San Jeronimo that will be developed in Mexico across the international line from the U.S. port of entry.

If the national lab's approach works out, other applications could be tried elsewhere along the 2,000-mile-long border between the nations.

According to an Associated Press report out of Albuquerque last week, the proposed binational lab would bring "the best and brightest" scientists from both countries to Santa Teresa to create ideas to solve environmental, health and economic problems on the border.

That's a tall order, and a multiplicity of government and private organizations already are working in those fields. However, the "brainpower" of the scientists would be employed to bring practical solutions to border problems, according to Gerold Yonas, lead scientist for Sandia's Advanced Concepts Group and the man who came up with the idea of the binational laboratory.

The concept is "bringing the brains to the problem instead of the problem to the brains," Yonas said.

The Sandia scientists are not going it alone on the idea. A partner already is the U.S. Department of Energy's Carlsbad office (which works on the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant there), which also is interested in border activities. Another partner is the United States-Mexico Foundation for Scientists.

The practical, scientific approach will be applied to some lofty goals, such as using the lab's technology to generate business development that could impact global markets and help lift border communities out of poverty. The concept of the deep thinkers of the federal lab is that economic disparity is a root cause of conflict and that the antidote is sustained economic development, the AP reports in a story about the plan.

Much is yet to be announced about the binational lab's funding and how it will relate to the border community at large, but this should be a fascinating experiment with some large stakes: the financial well-being of the burgeoning population along the border.