

a. What is significant about the discovery of this particular batch of plutonium?

It is one of the earliest batches of plutonium ever processed, and the techniques employed to determine its origins provide a glimpse of the kind of detective work that might be used against atomic terrorism.

b. How did scientists determine the original source of the plutonium?

Through isotopic analysis, reactor simulations and other techniques, Dr. Schwantes and his team determined when the plutonium was separated and which reactor provided the fuel.

c. What is meant by the phrase "nuclear forensics?"

It is a science used to study the aftermath of a nuclear terrorist attack, and to find out where it came from.

d. What was the Hanford Nuclear Reservation's role in World War II?

Fuel from Hanford was used to produce plutonium for the first test bomb, detonated in New Mexico in July 1945, and for the bomb that was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, a month later.

e. Where will this sample of plutonium likely end up?

In some government facility, or in a box in a warehouse until the end of time.