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**DOE Nuclear Weapons Budget Up 10%, Equals Cold War Record  
Huge Startup for Nuclear Cruise Missile Warhead  
\$4 Billion Slated for LANL Plutonium Pit Production Facilities  
Cleanup and Dismantlement Funding Flat**

**Santa Fe, NM** – Today, the Obama Administration released its proposed federal budget for fiscal year 2016, which starts October 1, 2015.

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is the semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency within the Department of Energy, and has perennially been on the Government Accountability Office's High Risk List for wasting taxpayers' money. Despite that, the Obama Administration is giving NNSA nuclear weapons programs a 10.5% jump in funding to \$8.85 billion. (1) This is statistically equal to the Cold War high point in 1985 under President Reagan's military buildup. (2) Moreover, the NNSA's nuclear weapons budget is slated to rise to \$9.8 billion by 2020, nearly double that of the Cold War average. All of this is the beginning of the planned one trillion dollar modernization of U.S. nuclear weapons forces over the next 30 years.

The large increases in NNSA budgets are due to 1) aggressive "Life Extension Programs" that seek to indefinitely preserve existing nuclear weapons while giving them new military capabilities; and 2) new production plants for these rebuilt nuclear weapons, expected to be operational until ~2075. As an example of the former, the current \$12 billion B61 Life Extension Program will create the world's first nuclear "smart" bomb, and will soon begin production at existing facilities.

NNSA's FY 2016 budget launches a whole new Life Extension Program for a nuclear warhead for a new air-launched cruise missile. (3) Requested FY 2016 funding is \$195 million, a 20-fold increase from \$9 million for conceptual studies in FY 2015. This program is slated to rise to \$459 million in annual appropriations by FY 2020. The nuclear warhead has been scheduled before Pentagon development of the new air-launched cruise missile itself, in effect putting the cart before the horse. This costly program is arguably redundant as well, given that rebuilt B61 nuclear bombs will be delivered on future super-stealthy fighters advertised as capable of penetrating any adversary's air defenses. Finally, a nuclear-armed cruise missile is destabilizing from an arms control perspective because they can fly below radar, delivering the proverbial bolt from the blue.

On the flip side of production, the Obama Administration's funding request for dismantlements is \$48 million, less than 4% of the funding for all Life Extension

Programs to rebuild nuclear weapons. Obama's request itself is an improvement from last year, when the Administration asked for only \$30 million, a 45% cut compared to the year before. Congress refused to go along with that, earmarking \$50 million for dismantlements in FY 2015. Besides providing a good example to the rest of the world, nuclear weapons dismantlements deliver real savings to the American taxpayer by eliminating otherwise permanent security costs.

Concerning new production facilities, NNSA is asking for a 28% increase to \$430 million for the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) near Oak Ridge, TN. The UPF is to produce up to 80 "secondaries" each year, the components that give weapons thermonuclear capabilities capable of killing millions. The previous "big box" design for the UPF was canceled after out-of-control costs rose as high as \$19 billion by one Pentagon estimate. UPF also had a half-billion dollar design mistake for which no one has been held accountable, in which all planned equipment could not fit within the building's footprint. Because of all this, the UPF's mission has been downscoped to production only, eliminating dismantlements, in order to help contain costs, currently capped at \$6.5 billion. Again, dismantlements seem dispensable to the Obama Administration.

NNSA also plans to begin spending \$2 billion to upgrade existing facilities for the expanded production of the plutonium pit cores of nuclear weapons at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), beginning with \$155.6 million in FY 2016. The controversial CMRR "Nuclear Facility" is formally canceled. In its place, up to \$675 million is planned to be spent on additional equipment for the already built Radiological Laboratory to quadruple the amount of plutonium that can be handled there, and up to \$1.4 billion to upgrade PF-4, LANL's existing main plutonium facility.

In addition, "The third step of the plutonium strategy extends the lifetime of PF-4 and supports increases in pit production capacity beyond 30 pits per year by proposing to build new modular facilities and move selected processes into new space... The NNSA is planning to construct not less than two modular structures that will achieve full operating capability not later than 2027." Although still far from final design, those modular facilities will likely cost a billion dollars each. Given the usual cost overruns, eventual costs may meet or exceed the CMRR's estimated cost of \$6.5 billion when it included the Nuclear Facility.

In New Mexico-related news, the DOE budget request for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) is decreased by \$76 million to \$248 million. Of that, \$87 million is for "base activities" while WIPP is shut down because of a radiation release in February 2104. The rest of funding is for "Recovery Activities" to resume underground disposal by March 2016 of radioactive wastes that were already stored above ground at WIPP when the accident happened. Meanwhile, plutonium-contaminated wastes across the country already prepared for shipment to WIPP will have to wait. Total costs to reopen WIPP remain unknown.

Inflation-adjusted funding for cleanup across the nation-wide nuclear weapons complex remains flat at \$5.5 billion, even though estimated cleanup costs of the massive widespread contamination continue to climb. The funding request for

cleanup at Los Alamos Lab is flat at \$185 million. It includes repackaging radioactive waste drums stored at LANL that are similar to the one that ruptured and contaminated WIPP. It will also fund investigation and corrective measures for the large chromium plume in our groundwater aquifer, with an emphasis on preventing it from crossing the boundary of neighboring San Ildefonso Pueblo. Current contamination maps show the plume stopping at exactly the boundary, which is nearly impossible.

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch New Mexico Director, commented, “Thousands of nuclear weapons rebuilt at enormous costs won’t protect us from ISIS, a dirty bomb in Manhattan, Ebola or climate change. NNSA’s nuclear weapons programs should be cut to help pay for the expansion of nonproliferation programs that actually enhance national security, cleanup programs that protect the environment while creating jobs, and dismantlement programs that get rid of nuclear weapons forever and save taxpayers money.”

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Notes:

(1) As topline numbers, NNSA’s budget category “Total Weapons Activities” increase from \$8.23 billion in FY 2015 to \$8.85 billion in FY 2016, or 7.5%. However, the true increase is masked by the fact that two counterproliferation programs formerly within NNSA’s “Total Weapons Activities” are moved to Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation. Once that is factored in the real increase for NNSA’s nuclear weapons programs is 10.5%

(2) The FY 2016 DOE nuclear weapons request is calculated as statistically equal to the Cold War record using data from *Atomic Audit*, Brookings Institute, 1998, Stephen Schwartz editor, Table A-2. It gives 5.494 billion in 1996 dollars as the cost for DOE nuclear weapons research, production and testing programs in 1985, the height of the Cold War military build up under Ronald Reagan. Adjusted for inflation that is \$8.99 billion in 2015 dollars.

(3) Called the Long-Range Stand-Off weapon in the budget because heavy bombers can launch the nuclear-armed cruise missiles at a great distance from their intended targets.

The NNSA’s FY 2016 Congressional Budget Request is available at [http://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2015/02/f19/FY2016BudgetVolume1%20\\_1.pdf](http://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2015/02/f19/FY2016BudgetVolume1%20_1.pdf)