

Requested Nuclear Weapons \$\$ Equal All-Time Historic High Nuclear Earth-Penetrators Up 270% Cleanup Funds Held Hostage

Focus on New Mexico

In late January the Congressional Budget Office predicted deficits of \$477 and \$362 billion in Fiscal Years 2004 & 2005 respectively, with a \$1.9 trillion cumulative deficit through 2014. The federal budget, released on February 2 by the Bush Administration, may accelerate these deficits while simultaneously cutting needed domestic programs. Nevertheless, **the Department of Energy has requested a level of funding for its core research, development, testing and production programs for nuclear weapons¹ that equals the all-time historic high set in 1985 under President Reagan's military buildup.²** This is long after the end of the Cold War, with no comparable nuclear weapons adversaries challenging the U.S., and with nuclear weapons of little, if any, value in the "war against terrorism." Moreover, the DOE plans to further raise its funding requests for nuclear weapons programs to \$7.5 billion by FY 2009, approaching nearly double the historic Cold War average of \$4.15 billion. In total, the NNSA plans to spend \$35.51 billion on nuclear weapons from FY 2005 to FY 2009.

DOE's nuclear weapons programs are administered under its semi-autonomous National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). The NNSA's request of \$6.57 billion in FY 2005 for "Total Weapon's Activities" is 5.4% above FY 2004 appropriations, which were already 9.1% above FY 2003 appropriations. As the NNSA states "The FY 2005 budget continues to emphasize programs in the **Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)** released by the Administration in January 2002. The NPR laid out the direction for America's nuclear forces for the next decade." The NPR expanded the list of potential nuclear targets from two countries to seven, called for the development of new nuclear weapons, the reinstatement of industrial-scale plutonium pit production levels and a possible return to full-scale testing.

Under the general guidance of the Nuclear Posture Review the NNSA is requesting in FY 2005:

- \$9 million for "**Advanced Concepts**" (50% above FY 2004 appropriations), which are largely understood to include the development of new "mini-nukes."³ The NNSA plans to spend \$82.37 million on Advanced Concepts from FY 2005 to FY 2009;
- \$27.56 million for the controversial **Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator** (270% above FY 2004 appropriations). The NNSA wants to spend \$484.73 million on RNEP from FY 2005 to FY 2009. "In FY 2005, subsystems tests and a full system test of the proposed design will be completed." The NNSA plans to begin engineering for actual production in FY 2009;
- \$336.47 million for "an interim [plutonium] pit manufacturing capability of 10 - 20 pits per year" at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (13.4% above FY 2004 appropriations). Included in this funding is \$29.80 million for design of the **Modern Pit Facility (MPF)** (175% above FY 2004 appropriations), which will be capable of producing 450 or more pits per year. This is in conflict with the recently announced halt to the release of the facility's final environmental impact statement. Further, it flies in the face of congressional opposition that cut the NNSA's

MPF funding request by more than 50% in FY 2004. In total, the NNSA plans to spend \$1.28 billion on plutonium pit production from FY 2005 to FY 2009.

Of the \$6.57 billion for nation-wide “Total Weapons Activities” in FY 2005 \$2.8 billion (or 43%) will be spent in New Mexico alone. Seventy percent of FY 2005 DOE funding in New Mexico will be for core nuclear weapons programs. Funding for nuclear weapons programs at the **Los Alamos National Laboratory** (LANL) is requested at \$1.4 billion (9% above FY 2004 appropriations) and for the **Sandia National Laboratories** at \$1.17 billion (4% under FY 2004 appropriations, mostly due to the winding down of various construction projects).⁴

There are three major budget categories requested under the NNSA’s FY 2005 Total Weapons Activities: “Directed Stockpile Work” at \$1.4 billion (6% above FY 2004 appropriations); “Campaigns” at \$2.39 billion (0% change); and “Readiness in Technical Base and Facilities” at \$1.47 billion (4.5% under FY 2004 appropriations).

Directed Stockpile Work is the fabrication and production activities whose main priority is “Life Extension Programs” that seek to indefinitely preserve and improve U.S. nuclear weapons through refurbishments or possible new designs. Toward that end an aggressive schedule of refurbishments is being executed for three⁵ out of the eight nuclear weapons types that are slated to remain in the “enduring stockpile,”⁶ plus the maintenance of “readiness” for a ninth warhead.⁷ The NNSA’s aggressive plans for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator and Advanced Concepts are also under Directed Stockpile Work.

Campaigns are “multi-year, multi-functional efforts... [that] provide specialized knowledge and technical support to the directed stockpile work on the nuclear weapons stockpile.” As already mentioned, the NNSA is requesting \$336.47 million for the “**Pit Manufacturing and Certification Campaign.**” In addition to the previously stated campaign mission of limited production of W88 pits the goal now is to also “establish technologies for the production of W87 and B61-7 pits.”

Under the “Primary Assessments Campaign” the NNSA is requesting \$30 million (17% above FY 2004 appropriations) to **shorten the time required to resume full-scale testing** at the Nevada Test Site from the current lead time of 24 - 36 months to 18 months.

Another campaign is “Advanced Radiography,” requested at \$62.37 million (12% above FY 2004 appropriations). Of note is the NNSA statement that “In FY 2005 - 2006, the focus of this activity is on the commissioning of the **Dual Axis Radiographic Hydrotest (DARHT) Facility** including the development of solutions to high voltage breakdown problems on the 2nd axis discovered during early commissioning experiments.” DARHT, declared by DOE to be absolutely essential to its Stockpile Stewardship Program, conceptually started in the 1980’s as an \$80 million dollar project, but has now cost \$270 million or more. Last year LANL had claimed that DARHT was on schedule and on budget.

The third main budget category, **Readiness in Technical Base and Facilities**, “provides the physical and operational infrastructure at the eight NNSA sites, [which are the] three national laboratories, four production sites, and the Nevada Test Site.” A few examples of projects that this category funds are:

- The **Chemical and Metallurgical Research Facility Replacement Project** at LANL, total estimated costs range from \$500 - 955 million (the NNSA states that “Updated estimates will be provided in the FY 2006 request”). \$24 million is requested for FY 2005 (241% above FY 2004 appropriations) for design of nuclear labs and the construction of an initial “Radiological Laboratory/Utility/Office Building” starting in the 3rd quarter of FY 2005. The Replacement Facility essentially will be new advanced analytical chemistry and material characterization labs in direct support of ongoing plutonium pit production.

•The **Microsystems And Engineering Sciences Application Facility (MESA)**, at Sandia; total project cost of \$518.5 million, completion scheduled for 2010. This is the second largest project currently under construction in the nuclear weapons complex after the National Ignition Facility in California. The purpose of MESA is to incorporate emerging nanotechnologies into nuclear weapons components and ultimately warheads. Sandia calls MESA “the cornerstone of 21st century weapons development.” The NNSA is requesting \$48.65 million in FY 2005, which is a 43.7% decrease. However, this is after Senator Pete Domenici engineered appropriations that added \$25.2 and \$38 million to the NNSA’s FY 2004 and FY 2003 requests.

•The **TA-18 Mission Relocation Project** is notable in that no funding is requested. LANL’s Technical Area-18 sites “criticality experiments” and large stocks of highly enriched uranium. DOE decided in a December 2002 Record of Decision to move the highly enriched uranium to the Nevada Test Site because TA-18 sits in a flood plain and has failed mock terrorist scenarios. The lack of a funding request no doubt dictates that despite these grave concerns the highly enriched uranium will remain vulnerable at TA-18 for the indefinite future.

Conclusion: At the same time that the Bush Administration has already exercised its new self-proclaimed right to wage pre-emptive war against suspected WMD programs it has requested funding for nuclear weapons programs equaling an all-time historic high. Further, the Administration appears poised to pursue the development and eventual production of both “mini-nukes” and nuclear bunker-busters. In the face of dubious national security benefits, the return of long-range deficits and serious cuts to needed domestic programs, clearly the national treasury could be better directed toward far more useful purposes. Finally, there remains an obligation under the NonProliferation Treaty for all nuclear weapons powers to disarm, an obligation to which the Bush Administration obviously pays little heed when it comes to all countries, including the U.S.

Los Alamos National Laboratory Cleanup

While nuclear weapons budgets continue to rise at a staggering rate, cleanup budgets for many of the sites severely contaminated by past nuclear weapons research and production continue to be inadequate. In recent years DOE has attempted to coerce the states which host these contaminated sites to agree to lesser cleanup standards by offering large sums of money for so-called “accelerated cleanup” through internally formulated Performance Management Plans (PMPs). The DOE’s intent under the PMPs is to force the states into accepting “cap and cover” and institutional controls (such as fences) in lieu of real cleanup, thereby allowing DOE to leave the vast majority of its waste in the ground. DOE has refused to release PMP funds for LANL cleanup because New Mexico, won’t accept DOE’s lowered standard of cleanup and apparent willingness to endanger the environment and public health. Further, DOE and the University of California (LANL’s manager) have filed six different lawsuits against New Mexico because the State is attempting to begin to mandate cleanup on its own terms through an enforceable Corrective Action Order.

DOE is being disingenuous to Congress in its budget requests as to what is being reported as prior year spending. An egregious example of this is DOE’s claim that LANL’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 cleanup spending was \$70.9 million and its FY05 request is \$79.7 million, thereby portraying an increase in cleanup funding. In reality, however, out of that \$70.9 million DOE claims to have spent in FY04, approximately \$45 million was for “accelerated cleanup” and is now being held hostage by DOE. Furthermore, DOE’s FY05 request once again includes PMP money of around \$45 million, money that may never come to Los Alamos for cleanup.

In addition to its lack of financial commitment to the cleanup process at LANL, most of the work DOE plans to do within the FY05 budget are mere studies and characterizations, not actual cleanup. For years LANL has been

performing analyses and doing minor environmental remediation with the estimated \$700 million that has been appropriated by Congress. While analyses and remediation are required to determine what cleanup should be, NukeWatch expects more from DOE and LANL. Project milestones for FY05 are nearly identical to, and in some situations less, than those named as far back as the FY02 budget. At the same time that it is disingenuously reporting to Congress the actual funds spent for cleanup, DOE continues to stall real cleanup, just as it has in the past. While DOE will claim that this is the most money it has ever spent on cleanup efforts, when the withheld money is taken into account the bottom line is yet another year of diminishing budgets.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) gained a rather large 11% increase from its \$208 million budget last year to \$231.6 million this year. The reason? Even as it plans to leave most wastes buried at its various sites the DOE touts WIPP as the flagship of its nation-wide “cleanup.” DOE plans to increase the number of shipments and introduce new and hotter types of radioactive wastes such as remote handled transuranic (currently WIPP can only accept contact handled transuranic wastes). In addition, a larger and single-walled waste shipping package (inherently more risky than double-walled) called the TRUPACT-III is being proposed for tractor-trailer and possible rail transportation. All of this means more money for WIPP and more potential to endanger the environment and human health through DOE’s repeated efforts to change the facility’s mission. On the last note, after having lost in court, DOE is seeking to have a substantial portion of the nation’s high-level radioactive defense wastes legislatively reclassified as transuranic so that they can be disposed of at WIPP.

¹ Now known as DOE’s “Stockpile Stewardship Program.”

² All budget figures are in constant 2003 dollars. The DOE’s comparable 1985 appropriation of \$3,992,100,000 is taken from Atomic Audit, Steve Schwartz editor, Brookings Institution, 1996. This is adjusted to \$6,819,220,000 in 2003 dollars by using the Federal Reserve Bank calculator at <http://minneapolisfed.org/research/data/us/calc/>. The FY 2005 NNSA budget request for “Total Weapons Activities” is \$6,568,453,000. The request for NNSA Administration is \$333,700,000, which pro rated by 73% (the percentage of nuclear weapons programs vs. other NNSA programs) is \$243,600,000. Added together the NNSA total nuclear weapons costs are \$6,812,053,000, a mere \$7 million under the 1985 appropriation. A pro rated addition of administration costs at the DOE Secretary level would likely put the FY 2005 request just over the 1985 appropriation.

³ The FY 2005 NNSA budget request supplies no detailed description of Advanced Concepts. However, after vigorous debate in November 2003 Congress overturned the decade-old ban on research and development on nuclear weapons designs with a yield of less than five kilotons. In less than two weeks the NNSA Administrator wrote to the three nuclear weapons lab directors “We should not fail to take advantage of this opportunity” (see the “Litton Brooks memo” at <http://www.nuke-watch.org/importantdocs/resources/Linton.pdf>).

⁴ A fraction of Sandia’s nuclear weapons budget will spent at its satellite facilities in California, Nevada, and Hawaii.

⁵ Specifically the B61, W76 and W80. Funding for refurbishments for the W87 has been zeroed out for FY 2005, but the warhead is still being aggressively maintained.

⁶ In addition to those in the footnote above, the W62, W78, B83, W87 and W88. For individual descriptions of these warheads please see <http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/weap.html>.

⁷ The W84, which is a ground-launched cruise missile warhead with various yields between 10 and 50 kilotons. Even though it now has no certified delivery vehicle, DOE is apparently mounting an increasing effort to keep the W84 in readiness for unknown future purposes.