

NNSA Misleading While Pushing Costly Nuclear Weapons Strategy

An Analysis of its FY 2015 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan

Executive Summary: The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) recently released its FY 2015 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan (SSMP), in which it continues to push its “3+2 strategy” for a future nuclear weapons stockpile. NNSA proposes three “interoperable” warheads for land and submarine-based ballistic missiles, plus two air-delivered weapons, the refurbished B61-12 bomb and a new cruise missile warhead. These five heavily modified weapons would be created through Life Extension Programs for existing nuclear weapons. NNSA’s introduction of its 3+2 strategy in its FY 2014 Plan caused considerable sticker shock. In its latest plan NNSA reworks the numbers to make its 3+2 strategy appear more fiscally palatable.

To begin with, NNSA’s 3+2 strategy is ill-advised because:

- It is very expensive, robbing funding from needed nonproliferation, dismantlement, nuclear safety and cleanup programs.
- The U.S. Navy does not support interoperable warheads.
- Life Extension Programs (LEPs) may adversely affect stockpile reliability by introducing major changes to existing nuclear weapons that are currently known to be highly reliable.

NNSA’s FY 2015 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan is misleading because it claims that the 3+2 strategy is “generally affordable and more executable than the program proposed in the FY 2014 SSMP.” To create that impression, the new Plan:

- Delays projects and their costs, which almost always results in higher total costs.
- Lowers budget estimates while claiming undocumented improved cost modeling, when NNSA has an abysmal record in cost estimates.
- Claims \$7.5 – 9.5 billion in savings for NOT doing a LEP that was never planned.
- Omits costs of directly related programs, which may exceed the costs of the LEPs themselves.
- Depicts costs as gradually tapering off, while failing to disclose that even more expensive follow-on LEPs are planned 20 years after the first round of LEPs.

According to a recent DOE Inspector General audit report, NNSA and the nuclear weapons labs have failed to diligently keep original weapon design information, which hollows out their claims of ensuring stockpile reliability. The antidote to the exorbitant, potentially harmful 3+2 strategy is genuine stewardship or “curatorship” of the nuclear weapons stockpile, which would preserve original designs as much as possible. This would free up money for needed nonproliferation, dismantlement, nuclear safety and cleanup programs, and better align with international efforts to reduce the global threat of nuclear weapons.

NNSA’s case for its 3+2 strategy is hollow. Congress should direct the nuclear weapons complex to get back to the basics of ensuring stockpile safety and reliability.



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Our full analysis of NNSA’s FY 2015 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan is available at <http://nukewatch.org/importantdocs/resources/FY2015-SSMP-analysis.pdf>

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