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Trump's Budget Dramatically Increases Nuclear Weapons Work

Santa Fe, NM – In keeping with the Trump Administration's recent controversial Nuclear Posture Review, today's just released FY 2019 federal budget dramatically ramps up nuclear weapons research and production.

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the Department of Energy's semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency, is receiving a \$2.2 billion overall boost to \$15.1 billion, a 17% increase above the FY 2018 enacted level. Of that, a full \$11 billion is for the budget category (Nuclear) "Weapons Activities", 18% above the FY 2018 level.

Digging deeper under Weapons Activities, "Directed Stockpile Work" is increased from \$3.3 billion to \$4.7 billion, or 41%. Directed Stockpile Work is the hands on, nut and bolts operations that include extending the service lives of existing nuclear weapons for up to 60 years, while also endowing them with new military capabilities.

In addition, NNSA budget documents show "Weapons Activities (Reimbursable)" (parentheses in the original), adding another \$1.76 billion to NNSA's Nuclear Weapons Activities, for a total of \$12.78 billion. It is not made clear where that additional money comes from, but most likely is from the Defense Department, as it has been in the past.

Of concern to the American taxpayer, DOE and NNSA nuclear weapons programs have been on the Government Accountability Office's High Risk List for project mismanagement and fraud, waste and abuse since its inception in 1990.

Meanwhile, NNSA Nonproliferation Programs are budgeted at \$1.86 billion, only 16% the size of the nuclear weapons budget. Further, the State Department is being cut by \$10.4 billion to \$28.3 billion (a 29% cut), while many senior diplomatic positions are left unfilled (such as the U.S. ambassador to South Korea), even as the possibility of peace on the Korean peninsula is breaking out.

The NNSA budget also reiterates the executive branch's intent to terminate the Mixed Oxide (MOX) program, designed to "burn" military plutonium in commercial reactors. That program would introduce plutonium to the global market, contrary to its stated intent as a nonproliferation program. It has also been a debacle in terms of cost overruns, blown schedules and lack of contractor accountability, kept alive only by South Carolina congressional political pork interests.

However, the MOX program's slow demise puts yet more pressure on New Mexico to become the nation's radioactive waste dumping ground, with up to 35 tons of military plutonium potentially headed for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (which already lacks capacity for currently

scheduled wastes). In addition, the Trump budget increases funding for so-called interim storage of spent nuclear fuel rods, the nation's deadliest high-level radioactive wastes. There are two separate proposals for "interim" storage of 100 tons of spent nuclear fuel in either southern New Mexico or just on the other side of the border with Texas.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) received an increase to \$397 million, \$106 million above the FY 2018 level. This starts the expansion of WIPP with a new ventilation shaft that has silently morphed from replacing the old contaminated exhaust shaft into being an additional intake shaft. Plans are underway for a new filter building, which will replace the capabilities lost due to the 2014 radiological release caused by an improperly prepared radioactive waste drum from the Los Alamos Lab. That closed WIPP for nearly three years, costing the American taxpayer at least \$1.5 billion to reopen. The planned new intake shaft will greatly increase WIPP's capabilities, allowing for expansion to take more of the nation's radioactive wastes.

The cleanup request for Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) stays flat at \$192 million. This basis for this is DOE's woefully low lifecycle cost estimate for LANL cleanup, which in turned is predicated upon the New Mexico Environment Department's revised cleanup Consent Order. Under Governor Susana Martinez, the revised Consent Order allows DOE and LANL to fund so-called cleanup at levels they choose, rather than needed cleanup driving the funding. The Los Alamos Lab explicitly plans to leave permanently buried 200,000 cubic yards of radioactive and hazardous wastes in unlined pits and trenches, above our groundwater and three miles uphill from the Rio Grande. Once those wastes are "capped and covered", LANL plans to claim that "cleanup" is completed.

Finally, under Trump's budget, the Department of *Energy* cuts sustainable transportation, renewable energy and energy efficiency by 33% and zeroes out weatherization programs.

Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch commented,

The Trump budget prepares for nuclear war, in which even Ronald Reagan said there can't be any winners. It finances a new Cold War arms race with Russia and indirectly increases the chances of a nuclear war with North Korea. It sets back nonproliferation and cleanup programs, and further hollows out our country by diverting yet more huge sums of money to the usual fat cat nuclear weapons contractors. Come November, voters should vote their conscience over how the federal government under Trump prioritizes their tax dollars for good or ill.

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Nuclear Watch New Mexico will provide more budget information on our web site <https://www.nukewatch.org> and blog <https://www.nukewatch.org/watchblog/> as it becomes available. The available budget documents are still not detailed enough for new issues and programs that we are keenly interested in, such as new, more usable mininukes and expanded plutonium pit production at LANL.