



A national network of organizations working to address issues of nuclear weapons production and waste cleanup

MEDIA ADVISORY: WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S FY 2021 NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND CLEANUP BUDGET REQUEST

February 6, 2020

For use with DOE's scheduled budget release on Monday, February 10, 2020

For more information, key contacts are listed below.

According to media reports, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency within the Department of Energy (DOE), has persuaded President Trump to increase its weapons budget by more than 20% in one year. NNSA Administrator Lisa Gordon-Hagerty has claimed that a failure to give her agency that huge increase would amount to “unilateral disarmament” despite the U.S. having thousands of nuclear warheads ready to launch on a moment’s notice.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, a 33-year-old network of groups from communities downwind and downstream of U.S. nuclear weapons sites, strongly opposes this unnecessary and dangerous spending that promotes a new global nuclear arms race. In addition, Trump’s FY 2021 budget request is expected to cut or hold flat cleanup, nonproliferation, dismantlement and renewable energy programs that meet real national needs to pay for more unneeded nuclear weapons. To compound all this, DOE’s nuclear weapons and environmental management programs have been on the Government Accountability Office’s “High Risk List” for project mismanagement and waste of taxpayers’ dollars for 27 consecutive years.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (ANA) and its member groups will be analyzing the following critical issues. For details, contact the ANA leaders listed at the end of this Advisory.

- Will NNSA’s “top line” budget request jump to \$20 billion, as per media reports? If so, that topline number would be up from \$16.5 billion in FY 2020, \$15.2 billion in FY 2019 and \$14.7 billion in FY 2018 (a 36% increase in three years).
- Will that expected \$3.5 billion increase for FY 2021 be mostly or entirely for nuclear weapons programs under “Weapons Activities,” particularly for new nuclear warheads under “Life Extension Programs” and expanded production of plutonium “pit” bomb cores for those new warheads? [Note: The other three NNSA budget categories are Federal Salaries and Expenses, Nonproliferation and Naval Propulsion.]
- Will the FY 2021 budget start another new-design nuclear warhead, such as the vaguely-named “Next Navy Warhead Life Extension Program” that NNSA introduced in its FY 2020 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan? If so, what is the true need for this new-design warhead?
- How much greater will requested funding be for the W87-1 above the \$363 million projected last year for FY 2021? Does the NNSA budget disclose the role, cost and reliability risks of its novel-design plutonium pit? [Note: The W87-1 is NNSA’s proposed replacement for the Air Force’s

existing W78 ICBM warhead. \$112 million was appropriated for the W87-1 in FY 2020 and \$53 million in FY 2019.]

- Will requested funding for the W80-4, the new warhead for a new “Long-Range Stand Off” air-launched cruise missile, top \$1 billion for FY 2021? [Note: \$898.5 million was appropriated in FY 2020 for the W80-4 and \$645.8 million in FY 2019.]
- Expanded plutonium pit production is NNSA’s declared #1 priority. Will funding in its "Plutonium Sustainment" account jump from \$710 billion in FY 2020 to \$1 billion or more in FY 2021? Will most of that increase fast track the new Plutonium Bomb Plant at the Savannah River Site (SRS) in South Carolina to make 50 or more plutonium pits per year? What portion will be for upgrades to the Los Alamos National Laboratory’s aging plutonium facility so the Lab can produce more than 30 pits per year?
- Is the rationale for expanded plutonium pit production changing from being a “hedge” against technical and geopolitical surprise to replacing all pits in all ~4,000 active and reserve nuclear weapons over the next 50 years? Why is expanded plutonium pit production needed to begin with when the U.S. already has more than 15,000 pits in storage and independent experts have found that pits last at least a century?
- NNSA directed \$410 million in FY 2020 to “repurpose” the MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility at SRS into a Plutonium Bomb Plant following cancellation of the boondoggle MOX program. Will NNSA continue to fund termination costs of the MOX project? Will Congress investigate the fraud and mismanagement of 8 billion taxpayer dollars that led to the cancellation of the MOX program?
- Will NNSA increase funding to nearly \$1 billion in FY 2021 for the Uranium Processing Facility at the Y-12 Plant near Oak Ridge, TN despite the revelation that its enriched uranium program (of which the UPF is a key part) will indefinitely rely upon two older facilities previously slated for closure that do not meet environmental and seismic standards? Are operating costs for those two old facilities included or not in NNSA’s budget cap of \$6.5 billion for the UPF?
- Will NNSA’s dramatic budget increase seek adequate funds to address excess *high risk* buildings in Oak Ridge, Livermore and other nuclear weapons sites, or will officials continue to ignore the “ever increasing risk” (the DOE Inspector General’s description) to workers and the public until it’s too late?
- Will the Budget Request comply with the law (National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2020, Sec. 4409) and include for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 annual estimates of the costs of meeting legal cleanup milestones at each DOE site? DOE has never provided such cost estimates, which would demonstrate that the budget request is many tens of millions of dollars short of what is required by legal agreements with host states.
- Will DOE include the lifecycle cost estimate to clean up its nuclear sites? Chronic underfunding of DOE environmental programs leads to ever-increasing lifecycle clean-up costs — from \$341.6 billion in FY 2016 to \$388.2 billion in FY 2018 to \$413.9 billion in FY 2019 to providing no lifecycle costs in FY 2020.
- Does the budget include any money for Yucca Mountain? For each of the last three years the Trump budget has included funding for this technically flawed site that is strongly opposed by the public and Nevada officials and for which Congress has refused to appropriate funds.
- Does the budget again include funding for "Consolidated Interim Storage" for commercial irradiated fuel (AKA lethal high-level radioactive wastes)? Previous Trump budgets have included that money even though DOE funding of private storage sites is prohibited by federal law and Congress refuses to appropriate the funds.

- How much funding is provided for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)? [Note: \$100 million appropriated in FY 2020.] Such funds are a bailout to the failing nuclear energy industry since SMRs are not technically or financially viable.

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The annual Department of Energy Congressional Budget Requests are typically available on the scheduled release date by 1:00 pm EST at <https://www.energy.gov/cfo/listings/budget-justification-supporting-documents>

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