



## **NNSA's Nuclear Weapons Programs Slated for 53% Increase**

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***Santa Fe, NM*** – Topline budget figures for the Department of Energy (DOE) have been released under the headline of “Unleashing a Golden Era of Energy Dominance and Energy Innovation and Protecting the Nation.” But as a baseline, 65% of the Department’s proposed \$46 billion budget is earmarked for its semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). In turn, more than 80% of NNSA’s proposed FY 2026 funding is for its nuclear weapons research and production programs, with a 25% funding increase over FY 2025.

But that is not all. The Trump Administration is adding another \$4.8 billion from so-called “reconciliation” funding, bringing NNSA’s “Total Weapons Activities” to just under \$30 billion. Taken together, this is a 53% increase above FY 2025 for NNSA’s nuclear weapons research and production programs. To help pay for this, nonproliferation and cleanup programs are being cut by 5%, science by 14%, cybersecurity and emergency response by 25%, and energy efficiency and renewable energy programs by 74%.

According to DOE’s “[Budget in Brief](#)”:

“The FY 2026 Budget Request [for NNSA’s nuclear weapons programs] funds execution of six simultaneous warhead modernization programs, including the warhead for the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N) and the B61-13 variant, while coordinating with DoD to plan for future systems; [and] continue restoring and refurbishing production capability, including the capability to produce 80 pits per year as close to 2030 as possible...”

What this means is six “Life Extension Programs” or “Modifications” that are extending the service lives of existing nuclear weapons by decades while giving them new military capabilities. This includes a new nuclear warhead for a new Sea-Launched Cruise Missile, a class of nuclear weapons that George H. Bush retired at the end of the Cold War. It also includes a new ~300 kiloton variant of the B61 gravity bomb (the Hiroshima bomb was ~16 kiloton). In contrast, warhead dismantlements are at their lowest rate since the end of the Cold War.

In addition, it means the pending production of the first new design nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War. First on deck is the W87-1 warhead for the new, budget-busting Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile. The second new design is the sub-launched W93 warhead, which is primarily for the United Kingdom. Key to their production is the expanded manufacturing of plutonium pits, the fissile cores of nuclear weapons. According to congressional testimony, the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) will produce W87-1 pits and the Savannah River Site (SRS) W93 pits.

The Los Alamos Lab currently claims that it will demonstrate the “capability” to produce at least 30 pits per year by 2028, delayed from the statutory requirement to physically produce 30 pits in 2026. SRS’ plutonium pit facility is on track to cost ~\$20 billion (the new World Trade Center cost less than \$5 billion). Production of at least 50 pits per year at SRS is unlikely any time before 2035, which could prompt LANL into “surge” production of more pits. The independent Government Accountability Office has repeatedly stated that NNSA does not have credible cost estimates for pit production, its most expensive program ever. The DOE and NNSA and its predecessors have been on the GAO’s “High Risk List” for project mismanagement and waste of taxpayers’ dollars since 1991.

Further, the need for expanded plutonium pit production to begin with is not clear. In 2006 independent experts concluded that pits last at least a century (their average age is now around 42). NNSA has avoided new pit life studies since then. There are already at least 15,000 existing pits stored at the agency’s Pantex Plant near Amarillo, TX. In addition, new design nuclear weapons cannot be full scale tested because of the international testing moratorium, thereby perhaps eroding confidence in the stockpile. Or new designs could prompt the US to resume testing which would have severe international proliferation consequences.

The House of Representatives recently passed the huge budget reconciliation bill that adds money to the NNSA’s Total Weapons Activities. If passed by the Senate as well, so-called reconciliation could cut more than \$800 billion from Medicaid and terminate environmental justice and climate change initiatives. Military spending would increase to around \$1 trillion per year while domestic programs are crippled. Finally, as much as \$4 trillion in tax cuts for the ultra-rich could be put into place.

Jay Coghlan, Director of Nuclear Watch, commented, “More nuclear weapons won’t give us more security as our nation is being hollowed out. We are approaching the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the atomic bombings. It is way past time for the nuclear weapons powers to honor their obligations under the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty to negotiate verifiable nuclear disarmament instead of keeping nuclear weapons forever.”

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Sources:

DOE’s FY 2026 “Budget in Brief” at <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/doe-fy-2026-bib-v4.pdf>

DOE’s FY 2026 “Appropriation Summary” at <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/doe-fy-2026-budget-approps-summary-v1.pdf>

Release of the full FY 2026 budget justification is not yet scheduled. By law the annual Congressional Budget Requests are due the first Monday every February.

Nuclear Watch New Mexico was a co-plaintiff in a lawsuit that forced the NNSA to complete a nationwide programmatic environmental impact statement on expanded plutonium pit production. The public has an opportunity to submit “scoping” comments on issues that should be included. Comments should be emailed to [PitPEIS@nnsa.doe.gov](mailto:PitPEIS@nnsa.doe.gov) by July 14. For more please see [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org)

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