



Savannah River Site Watch

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Columbia, South Carolina

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DOE Budget Document Reveals Massive, Unrealistic Funding Request for Plutonium Bomb Plant at SRS

Budget Request for Environmental Management, State & Laboratory Tables Yield Some Details

Columbia, South Carolina – New budget-request documents released by the U.S. Department of Energy over the weekend confirm efforts by the U.S. Department of Energy to obtain a massive and unrealistic funding increase for the proposed but unjustified Plutonium Bomb Plant (PBP) at the Savannah River Site.

In the South Carolina table (on page 66/86 of the [State Tables](#)), the request for “Savannah River Plutonium Modernization” is \$441.9 million and for the Plutonium Bomb Plant, which DOE calls the “Plutonium Processing Facility” in an effort to obscure its nuclear weapons role, the request is \$241.9 million. A line-item for “Production Modernization” is \$533.7 million and it’s unclear for what activities that large amount of funding is sought.

As part of a “Stockpile Management” account at Los Alamos National Laboratory, the request for “Savannah River Plutonium Modernization” is \$685.7 and for “Los Alamos Plutonium Modernization” an amount of \$226 million is shown. (See page 48/86, for New Mexico, in “[State Tables Preliminary](#),” linked here and below.) It thus appears that some of the money designated for SRS pit projects would be spent at Los Alamos.

“Given the various project funding accounts at SRS and Los Alamos and DOE’s slight of hand, it’s hard to determine the actual funding for activities associated with planning for the Plutonium Bomb Plant at SRS, but it appears that the funding request has taken a huge and unjustified jump,” said Tom Clements, director of the public interest group Savannah River Site Watch. “It’s clear that DOE is rushing to try and lock in large amounts of funding for the Plutonium Bomb Plant despite lack of need for it and no demonstrated ability to convert the ill-constructed MOX building into a nuclear bomb factory,” added Clements. “This funding request to fast-track the Plutonium Bomb Plant, if allowed by Congress to move forward, would set the costly and complicated project on a path to failure given DOE’s repeated inability to pull off such complicated, poorly planned projects,” added Clements.

It is unknown if the release of the National Nuclear Security Administration budget request, usually designated volume 1, will clarify the obfuscation in documents just released. It is not known when that volume will be released but it could be before Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette testifies to the House Energy & Water Development Subcommittee (of Appropriations) on February 27. (See hearing website here: <https://appropriations.house.gov/events/hearings/departments-of-energy-budget-request-for-fy2021>)

It appears that “Nuclear Material Removal,” likely for plutonium removal from SRS, is \$350 million and for “Material Disposition,” evidently for plutonium downblending, the request is \$500 million. (See page 86/116 in the [Laboratory Tables](#).)

In the Fiscal Year 2020 budget, the Plutonium Sustainment account got \$712 million and planning for the Plutonium Bomb Plant at SRS received \$410 million. Based on the information released over the weekend, it appears that as plutonium pit production is designated for far more funding in Fiscal Year 2021 that it will simulate close examination by Congress.

NNSA is rushing headlong to convert the ill-constructed MOX plant at SRS in a plutonium pit facility, to produce 50 or more pits per year by 2030, despite warnings that the project holds great risks from a scheduling and cost perspectives. Congress urgently needs to investigate the \$8-billion MOX debacle for fraud, waste abuse and mismanagement by NNSA and contractors before any reuse of the facility is discussed, according to SRS Watch’s Clements.

“It has become clearer that DOE intends to replace all plutonium pits in all old and new nuclear weapons, nearly 4000 in total, despite no need for maintenance of such a sizeable stockpile or for the new weapons being proposed,” said Clements. “It does not appear that DOE fully revealed intentions to Congress that it intends to maintain the current size of the stockpile through the end of this century, which may well cause the entire pit issued to be reexamined by the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees,” added Clements.

The total request for SRS appears to be about \$2.86 billion, which reflects the “gross level” of “budget authority.” (See page 2/116 in laboratory tables.)

The inadequate narrative and budget-request amounts in the Environmental Management budget request (volume 5) is thin on details. There is a discussion of the status of the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) at SRS, which is facing start-up challenges, operation of high-level waste management and the aging H-Canyon reprocessing plant but specific numbers on many projects are hard to parse out. In a line-item labeled “Savannah River Community and Regulatory Support” - see page 225 in Vol. 5 - it appears that payment in lieu of taxes to local SRS counties may have been eliminated.

Notes:

DOE Chief Financial Officer Fiscal Year 2021 budget justification website:

<https://www.energy.gov/cfo/downloads/fy-2021-budget-justification>

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

[FY2021 Budget Fact Sheet](#)

[FY2021 Budget in Brief](#)

[FY2021 Summary Table by Appropriation](#)

[FY2021 Summary Table by Organization](#)

[FY2021 Laboratory Table](#)

[FY2021 State Table](#)

[FY2021 Volume 3 Part 1](#) [Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, etc.]

[FY2021 Volume 4](#)

[FY2021 Volume 5](#) [Environmental Management]