



Savannah River Site Watch

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Columbia, South Carolina

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DOE's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2021 Blows up Debt and Heightens Risk of New Nuclear Arms Race; Nuclear Weapons Funding Gets Large Increase, including for Plutonium Bomb Plant at SRS

DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration's \$19.8 Billion Far Above \$16.5 Billion in FY 2020

Columbia, South Carolina – The U.S. Department of Energy today sent its budget request for Fiscal Year 2021 to Congress. The massive and unjustified increase in DOE's nuclear weapons budget will fuel a new nuclear arms race, needlessly enrich private contractors and increase the debt. The request begs for rejection by Congress, according to the public interest organization Savannah River Site Watch.

A [fact sheet](#) released by the Office and Management and Budget (OMB) confirms the huge request for nuclear weapons related activities: "For the Department of Energy, the Budget provides \$19.8 billion for the National Nuclear Security Administration, of which \$15.6 billion is for nuclear weapons programs." For the overall DOE budget, the White House says: "The 2021 Budget requests \$35.4 billion for DOE, an 8.1-percent decrease from the 2020 enacted level of \$38.5 billion. "

A large part of the increase for DOE's nuclear weapons department - the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) - is to support new and unjustified facilities to replace all the plutonium "pits" in all old and new-design weapons at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina and Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico. NNSA evidently wants to keep about 4000 nuclear weapons through the end of the century and make new pits for all of them. NNSA and DOD are busy designing and deploying new weapons, a money making enterprise for contractors, despite growing risks of a new nuclear arms race and disarmament requirements of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

When details are released – beginning at 3:30 p.m. EST today and possibly on following days? - funding for the proposed **Plutonium Bomb Plant (PBP) at the DOE's Savannah River Site** in South Carolina will likely be included in the "plutonium sustainment" account, which is expected to jump from a funding level of \$710 million in FY 2020. Planning for the PBP got \$410 million in FY 2020 funding, finalized in December 2019. NNSA aims to fabricate 50+ pits/year at SRS by 2030, an unreachable goal, and 30+

pits/year at Los Alamos, laughably billed as the “Plutonium Center of Excellence,” which has had extensive problems in recent years handling plutonium.

The Plutonium Bomb Plant would be located in partially finished plutonium fuel (MOX) facility, which is fraught with design and construction problems. NNSA has made no case that the MOX plant could be used for pit production and refuses to support investigations into fraud, waste abuse and mismanagement concerning the \$8 billion wasted on the MOX debacle. It does not appear the budget will fund investigations into MOX. Funding for the pit project at SRS would be for political purposes in order to fill the gap caused by termination of the MOX project.

“We will continue to fight the proposed Plutonium Bomb Plant at SRS and work to convince Congress that it is unnecessary and that it must be deauthorized and funding revoked,” said Tom Clements, director of SRS Watch. “New pit production proposed for SRS and Los Alamos, initially for a single, unneeded new nuclear warhead, is causing havoc with the DOE budget and must not be pursued. DOE must pull back from new pit production and must first thoroughly review pit lifetime and examine reuse of over 15,000 pits now in storage at DOE’s Pantex site,” added Clements.

The budget request revealed today is simply a DOE wish list by the White House and many aspects of it will be altered or rejected by Congress in the appropriations and authorization process - leading to Energy & Water appropriations in the Appropriations Committees and the National Defense Authorization Act by Armed Services Committees.

Concerning plutonium disposition and MOX termination, the White House summary states:

*“Nonproliferation Construction.—*The budget supports the transition to the dilute and dispose strategy to fulfill the United States' commitment to dispose of 34 metric tons of surplus U.S. weapon-grade plutonium and remove plutonium from the state of South Carolina. The request supports the continuation of preliminary design for the Surplus Plutonium Disposition (SPD) project, as well as long-lead procurements. With available prior year balances, termination activities for the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication project will be completed in FY 2021.”

Defense Environmental Cleanup would take a big cut, from \$6.3 billion in FY20 to a request of \$5.1 Billion in FY21. But SRS would get an increase, to \$1.53 billion, from \$1.46 billion for FY 2021.

The White House summary states what the main funding would be for SRS clean-up issues: *“Savannah River Site.—*Funds the safe stabilization, treatment, and disposition of legacy nuclear materials, spent nuclear fuel, and waste at the Savannah River site. Key activities include operating the Defense Waste Processing Facility, which is solidifying the high activity liquid waste contained in underground storage tanks, and the testing and cold commissioning of the Salt Waste Processing Facility, which will separate various tank waste components and treat and dispose the low activity liquid waste stream.”

The Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) has run far over its original budget - \$ 900 million vs current \$2.3 billion - and is far behind its 2103 start date. It is unknown if it can start at the most recently advertised date of March 2020. (For cost overrun, see “Project Dashboard” for January 2020: <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2020/01/f70/January%202020%20Project%20Dashboard.pdf>)

SRS Watch, which focuses on issues at the Savannah River Site near Aiken, SC, is a member of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (ANA), an umbrella organization of public interest groups located near DOE sites across the country.

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Notes:

1. White House – budget request overview:

https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/doe_fy21.pdf

Some details: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/appendix_fy21.pdf

2. U.S. Department of Energy’s Chief financial Officer – detailed budget request postings to likely be here:

<https://www.energy.gov/cfo/office-chief-financial-officer>

<https://www.energy.gov/cfo/listings/budget-justification-supporting-documents>

Overview released initially, at 2 p.m. on Feb. 10, 2020:

<https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2020/02/f71/DEPARTMENT%20OF%20ENERGY%20FY%202021%20BUDGET%20REQUEST%20FACT%20SHEET.pdf>

3. Alliance for Nuclear Accountability/SRS Watch media advisory, February 6, 2020: “WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY’S FY 2021 NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND CLEANUP BUDGET REQUEST”: <https://srswatch.org/doe-budget-request-on-feb-10-2020-to-blow-up-the-budget-stimulate-nuclear-arms-race-push-back-certain-on-srsplutonium-bomb-plant/>

4. SRS Watch: <https://srswatch.org/> & <https://www.facebook.com/SavannahRiverSiteWatch>
& <https://twitter.com/srswatch>