

## Stark Priority for New Nukes in the Budget Request

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Posted by Joseph Rodgers



The Department of Energy (DOE) released some of the “topline” dollar figures for its Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 budget request on February 10. That’s the day that all agencies of the federal government were scheduled to make their budget numbers public.

However, the DOE’s full budget request is delayed, and so it will not be released for a few days - or weeks - according to the agency. **Here is what we know now.**

The Department of Energy is requesting \$35.4 billion for FY2021, which begins on October 1 of this year. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a semi-autonomous department within the DOE, is requesting the majority (55%) of the Department of Energy’s total budget, or \$19.8 billion. The NNSA’s request is about 20% higher than last year’s request, and over 50% higher than its budget when President Trump took office in 2016.

Meanwhile, the DOE’s Defense Environmental Cleanup budget request for FY21 is reduced by about 20%, meaning that toxic and radioactive pollution will be left in place and allowed to spread at nuclear weapons locations across the nation. The full amount requested this year by DOE falls below \$5.1 billion.

These numbers are astounding, and represent the current administration’s priorities. Accelerating a new global arms race in the name of “security” is the number one aim of this budget request.

Much of the NNSA’s increases will go towards “modernizing” nuclear warheads, establishing plutonium pit production facilities, and continuing the uranium processing facility.

The NNSA is currently “modernizing” five nuclear warheads, the B61-12 gravity bomb, the W88 which sits atop the Trident Sea Launched Ballistic Missile, the W80-4, a Livermore design that will sit atop the new Long-Range Standoff Cruise Missile, and two fully **brand new** warheads.

The first new warhead design, the W87-1, will sit atop the replacement to the Minuteman Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, which is temporarily called the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent.

The topline budget for FY2021 also indicated that the NNSA is pursuing an additional new warhead, which the agency titled the W93. The W93 is intended to sit atop the replacement Trident Sea Launched Ballistic Missile. (Last year, the NNSA estimated that it would request \$2,387,206,000 in 2021. However, the specific amount requested for FY21 is not yet public. Will it be the same? Larger, due to the “topline” dollar increase?)

The NNSA plans to produce at least 80 plutonium pits per year at two facilities by 2030. The NNSA intends to have the Los Alamos National Laboratory produce 30 or more pits per year and the Savannah River Site produce 50 or more pits per year. This would be an entirely new mission at the Savannah River Site, which has never produced plutonium pits before. Last year, NNSA estimated that it would request \$976,813,000 in FY2021 for “plutonium sustainment”, which is mostly plutonium pit production. Tri-Valley CAREs will bring you the actual number in the FY21 request when it is released by the agency. Will it be the same? Or, larger?

The Uranium Processing Facility will also receive a chunk of the budget. The NNSA wants to produce uranium bomb cores at Y-12 in Oak Ridge, Tennessee to build new nuclear weapons. Last year, NNSA estimated that it would request \$750,000,000 in FY2021 for the Uranium Processing Facility. Here, too, the actual number for FY21 has not been released publicly.

While nuclear weapons funding is receiving drastic increases, the Department of Energy is requesting less money for programs that are truly vital to national security. We already noted funding cuts to DOE’s Defense Environmental Cleanup. To dig down within the DOE NNSA budget a bit further, it is notable that Nonproliferation funding, perennially too low, is being reduced by 7% in the FY21 request. Again, the administration’s priorities are being demonstrated here in stark relief.

Tri-Valley CAREs will release the important, specific details when the official budget request is rolled out in its entirety. This will include information about the amounts allocated to each warhead, as well as additional information about NNSA’s plans to enhance subcritical nuclear testing underground in Nevada.

***Stay tuned!***