

Overview of Fiscal Year 2006 Department of Energy Budget Request

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U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman's Fiscal Year 2006 (FY 06) budget request represents an overall decrease in funding in an effort to curb the rising deficit. While the total DOE budget decreased roughly 2 percent from last year's budget, funding for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) saw a rise of \$233 million, reflecting the status of nuclear programs and nonproliferation in national security strategy. There are several key funding requests which warrant closer observation.

Life Extension / Reliable Replacement Warhead

The administration's funding request for weapons activities is 0.7 percent above FY 05. The bulk of this funding goes to direct stockpile work which includes life extension programs for the B61, W76 and W80 warheads, and the so-called "Reliable Replacement Warhead" (RRW). The funding request for life extension programs for the B61, W76, and W80 warheads totals \$348 million, which is a decrease of 4 percent from last year's funding level. DOE projects in the Future-Years Nuclear Security Program (FYNSP) that the Life Extension program will top \$1.5 billion. RRW replaces the capabilities enhancement mission of the amorphous Advanced Concepts Initiative, for which Congress zeroed out funding last year. Though touted as research to refurbish, replace, and generally ensure the reliability of existing warheads, NNSA envisions the program culminating in "the full-scale engineering development" of new prototype warheads, which would require congressional approval.¹ DOE requested \$9.4 million for the program in FY 06, but plans on funds to increase to approximately \$29 million in FY 10 and will have a total of \$97 million in the FYNSP. With such a large funding request and minimal congressional oversight, arms control advocates worry the RRW program will become a backdoor for new weapons programs. New warheads would tempt DOE to conduct test explosions and break the voluntary U.S. testing moratorium, which has held for over a decade.

Non-proliferation

The total budget request for defense nuclear nonproliferation increased by a dramatic 15.1 percent. The bulk of this money goes to eliminating weapons-grade plutonium production in Russia. Construction of the plutonium-disposing Mixed-Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility to replace two plutonium reactors in Seversk has been stalled for several years due to U.S.-Russian liability negotiations. DOE cites a ramp up of construction activities for their 200 percent funding increase request. Funding for research and development to detect radioactive materials increased significantly, as well as the Megaports Program, whose goal is to equip the world's major ports with radiation detection equipment. Also of note is the increase in funding to the Global Threat Reduction Initiative (from \$93.8 million in FY 2005 to \$98 million in FY 2006). NNSA

envisions this program as a sort of contingency fund for cases like Libya where nonproliferation and dismantlement funding is suddenly and urgently required.

CTBTO cuts

Despite increasing nonproliferation funding, the administration is reducing its support for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, whose International Monitoring System would detect clandestine underground nuclear tests. The administration requested \$14.35 million. This represents a reduction of 25 percent in the U.S. annual contribution to the organization. Dues and currency shortfalls have already hurt CTBTO's budget, forcing it to cancel some scheduled programs.²

Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator

The Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator or "bunker buster" reappears as a \$4 million earmark in the FY 06 budget after the chairman of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, Rep. David Hobson, R-Ohio, led the charge in Congress' cancellation of funding last year. With a total request of \$8.5 million (in conjunction with a \$4.5 million request in the Air Force budget), the administration intends to proceed with the "study," which includes drop testing to assess digging capabilities of the bomb casing. Over the next two years, the Bush administration plans to spend \$26 million to complete the study on the bunker buster. Unlike last year's DOE funding request, which projected RNEP funds for the next five years to total approximately half a billion dollars, the FY 06 request shows only through FY 07. This has caused some members of Congress, like Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., to suspect the administration is attempting to slip the RNEP by Congress "without fully disclosing" its cost.³ Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., and other House Democrats have criticized the administration's plans for RNEP. Tauscher called the request, "A waste of money on a weapon commanders in the field have not asked for, is of highly questionable utility, and may trigger a new global nuclear arms race."⁴

Nevada Test Site Readiness / MPF

Finally, the administration continues to request funds for programs designed to enhance testing and weapons production capabilities. The administration continues to seek funding for increasing the state of test readiness to an 18-month posture, though the actual funding request for Nevada Test Site Readiness dropped slightly from last year. The current U.S. test readiness posture remains under 36 months; observers fear increasing test readiness indicates a move toward holding a nuclear test. NNSA requested \$7.68 million in funding for the Modern Pit Facility (MPF), a slight increase from the \$7 million appropriated by Congress last year. Congress received the program to build a new plutonium production plant coolly and cut NNSA's FY 05 request by over 70 percent. Misconceptions about the decay rate of the U.S. plutonium supply and existing production capacity seem to be fueling plans for the MPF.⁵ The administration envisions a capacity to produce around 125 pits per year at the MPF, which is alarming considering the size of the existing U.S. weapons and plutonium pit stockpile.

Budget Request by category:

(Figures in millions of dollars)

	FY 05 Appropriation	FY 06 Request	FY 06 vs. FY 05	
Weapons Activities:	6,583	6,630	+46.78	+0.7%
Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation:	1,442	1,637	+215.13	+15.1%
Naval Reactors:	801	786	-15.44	-1.9%
Office of the Administrator:	357	343	-13.18	-3.7%
Total, NNSA	9,164	9,397	+233	+2.5%

Budget Request by program:

(Figures in millions of dollars)

	FY 04	FY 05	FY 06 (Request)	FY 05 vs. FY 06	
Life Extension Programs	341.6	363.1	348.3	-14.76	- 4.1%
Advanced Concepts	6	0	0	+0	0.0%
Reliable Replacement Warheads	0	8.93	9.4	+0.42	+4.7%
RNEP	7.41	0	4	+4	+100%
Test Readiness	24.74	26.78	25	-1.78	-6.7%
Pit Manufacturing and Certification	263	263	249	-14.26	-5.4%
Modern Pit Facility	11.55	6.95	7.69	+0.74	+10.7%
Nonproliferation and Verification R&D	228.2	224.0	272.2	+48.26	+21.5%
Proliferation Detection	-	106.5	152.4	+45.9	+43.1%
Megaports	-	15.0	73.9	+58.9	+392.6%
Elimination of Weapons Grade Plutonium	79.0	44.0	132.0	+88.0	+200%
Global Threat Reduction Initiative	67.1	93.8	98.0	+4.2	+4.5%
Emerging Threats	-	11.0	5.0	-6.0	-54.5%

¹ John R. Harvey, director of policy planning at NNSA quoted in William J. Broad, "U.S. Redesigning Atomic Weapons," *New York Times*, Feb. 7, 2005.

² Jeffrey Lewis, "Bush Slashes CTBTO Contribution (Dumb Austerity Measure 1)," *Arms Control Wonk Weblog*, Feb. 8, 2005. <http://www.armscontrolwonk.com/index.php?id=430>

³ Michael Bruno, "SASC Members Argue Over Need For Nuclear Bunker-Buster," *Aerospace Daily & Defense Report*, Feb. 16, 2005.

⁴ Walter Pincus, "Bush Request to Fund Nuclear Study Revives Debate," *Washington Post*, Feb. 9, 2005.

⁵ For more information on the decay rate of the U.S. plutonium supply please see the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability's Fact Sheet, "U.S. Nuclear Weapon Pits are Not Falling Apart; Key Quotes on Plutonium Pit Aging," <http://ananuclear.org/pitquotes.html>

Madelyn Gee
CDI Research Assistant
mgee@cdi.org

www.cdi.org