

New budget increases money for nukes, analyst says

Joshua J. McElwee | Feb. 3, 2010 NCR Today

At a time when President Obama has said the United States is pruning its nuclear weapons stockpile, the director of one of the nation's most active nuclear weapons watch groups said yesterday that Obama's new budget drastically increases funding for nuclear weapons production.

"The budget that was released just yesterday is a big, big step backwards," said Jay Coghlan, the executive director of Nuclear Watch of New Mexico. "Just this coming year, it's raising the nuclear weapons budget for the Department of Energy ten percent. But most particularly, it's quadrupling, in some cases, the funding for new production facilities."

Coghlan, who lives near the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and has been a nuclear weapons analyst for years, was speaking to Amy Goodman on the independent radio program *Democracy Now!*. You can listen to the full conversation, or read the transcript, [here](#) [1].

The increase in the budget for nuclear weapons is part of a trade-off scheme by Obama to secure U.S. Senate ratification of a new arms reduction treaty with Russia, Coghlan said.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START, that limited the U.S. and Russia from deploying more than 6,000 nuclear warheads expired Dec. 5, 2009. Negotiations are currently underway for a replacement treaty, but any such effort will require U.S. Senate approval.

With forty (soon to be forty-one) Republicans in the Senate, Obama is trying to use the new money for nuclear weapons projects to gain their support for the replacement treaty, Coghlan said.

Here's an excerpt from the transcript on this point:

AMY GOODMAN: All forty Republican senators, as well as Joseph Lieberman, implied in a letter to Obama last month that they would block ratification of the new treaty with Russia unless he funds a, quote, "modern" warhead and new facilities at the Los Alamos National Lab, where you're near right now in New Mexico, and the Y-12 plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Jay?

JAY COGHLAN: You're absolutely right. They're playing muscle, and they're rolling Obama and Biden. The Democrats are now surrendering. The executive administration is now surrendering to that demand. Of course, at the time, a month ago, as you said, it was forty Republicans that wrote to Obama, essentially demanded a modern warhead and modernization. Now, of course, it's forty-one Republicans plus Lieberman.

Now, I've got to have some sympathy for the administration. They're truly between a rock and a hard place. And we're just three months out from a review conference for the cornerstone of the global nonproliferation regime, that being the Non-Proliferation Treaty, that's going to begin on May 3rd. And within the framework of this treaty, first signed in 1970 by the US and the other weapons powers, first of

all, there's a pledge to eventually disarm. But how are we?how is the US now going to walk in with a straight face, walk into the UN, and claim that it's leading towards a world free of nuclear weapons, when in fact we are starting up a plutonium facility in Los Alamos, a uranium facility in Tennessee, but also a major new production plant in Kansas City for all of the non-nuclear components that go into a weapon?

So, basically, the US is revitalizing its nuclear weapons production base. And again, the laboratories, mark my words, and as the Republicans already wrote, they're calling for or attempting to demand a, quote, 'modern' warhead, that means new designs.

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