

June 29, 2021

Dear Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

The United States does not need a new nuclear sea launched cruise missile (SLCM-N).

Spending \$15 million on this system now, before the Biden administration has even started its Nuclear Posture Review and when the Navy may cancel the program next year is wasteful, destabilizing, and just another example of a broken defense acquisition process.

These weapons are relics of a Cold War nuclear warfighting plan to use nuclear weapons not as a strategic deterrent, but to augment conventional forces in battlefield roles. This concept did not make sense then and makes even less sense now. In fact, it flies in the face of the joint statement issued by Presidents Biden and Putin this summer, when they echoed the words of Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”

Three decades have passed since the United States last deployed nuclear cruise missiles at sea. President George H.W. Bush directed the nuclear Tomahawk Land Attack Missile to be taken off patrol in 1991 at the end of the Cold War.

Prior to the Trump administration, two Democratic and two Republican administrations had agreed that we no longer needed to deploy nuclear armed cruise missiles on conventional Navy ships, deeming them redundant, destabilizing, and detracting from higher priority conventional missions. President Biden himself called this weapon in 2019 a “[bad idea](#)” and he [replied to a 2020 Council for a Livable World questionnaire](#) saying that the United States did not need new nuclear weapons. The [2020 Democratic Platform](#) said that “the Trump Administration’s proposal to build new nuclear weapons is unnecessary, wasteful, and indefensible.”

Yet, there is currently \$15.2 million requested in the fiscal year 2022 budget to begin development of this Trump-era weapon, including \$5.2 million in Navy funding for the missile itself and \$10 million in National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) funding for the W80-4 warhead alteration for the SLCM-N. This money is a waste of U.S. taxpayer dollars.

This summer, Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Harker [directed the service](#) to plan to defund the system in fiscal year 2023 and there have been other [reports](#) that the Navy is not happy with the proposal, privately telling lawmakers that “the introduction of nuclear cruise missiles to the fleet would present both budgetary and logistical headaches for the service.” Such burdens could include returning nuclear weapons to states and bases that haven’t housed them in 30 years, retraining and certification of attack submarine or destroyer crews to maintain and secure nuclear weapons, or adding unnecessary time to deployments to have ships travel to nuclear storage facilities to be armed with non-mission critical munitions. This could also cause significant problems for our allies in the Pacific, who will not allow vessels armed with nuclear weapons to visit their ports or train with their units.

Furthermore, when it comes to deterring China, Pentagon officials have repeatedly [made clear](#) their view that the greatest threat posed in the Indo-Pacific region is the erosion of conventional—not strategic—deterrence. Adding a nuclear cruise missile to platforms that regularly deploy conventional cruise missiles will not boost conventional power, since the nuclear cruise missiles would replace conventional ones, but it would increase the chance of a conflict escalating into a nuclear one as both conventional and nuclear cruise missiles share an essentially indistinguishable radar signature.

Again, we believe that spending anything on this system, before the Biden administration has even started its Nuclear Posture Review and when the Navy may well cancel the program next year, is wasteful, dangerous and contrary to our national interest.

Cutting this program's funding now would be good for the nation, our national security and prevent a major waste of taxpayer dollars.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Survival
Arms Control Association
Atlanta Grandmothers for Peace
Basel Peace Office
Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists Social Justice Committee
Beyond Nuclear
Beyond the Bomb
Campaign for Peace, Disarmament & Common Security
Carlsbad Mennonite Church
Center on Conscience and War
Citizens' Environmental Coalition
Citizens' Resistance at Fermi Two (CRAFT)
CODEPINK
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
Council for a Livable World
Democratic Socialists of America San Francisco, CA Chapter - Ecosocialist Committee
Don't Waste Arizona
Earth Care
Ecological Options Network
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW)
Environmentalists Against War
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Foreign Policy for America
Global Security Institute
Global Zero
Green State Solutions
Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice
Haydenville Congregational Church - Peace and Justice Committee

Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition
Mid-Missouri Peaceworks
Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment
Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force
New Energy Economy
New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
Nuclear Watch New Mexico
Nuclear Watch South
Nukewatch
Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA)
On Behalf Of Planet Earth
Parents Against the Santa Susana Field Lab
Partnership for Earth Spirituality
Peace Action
Peace Action Maine
Peace Action of Wisconsin
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles
Ploughshares Fund
Portsmouth/Pikeston Residents for Environmental Safety and Security (PRESS)
Progressive Democrats of America
Psychologists for Social Responsibility
RootsAction.org
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
SEED Coalition
Snake River Alliance
Success Capital Organisation
Sunflower Alliance
Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy
Tri-Valley CAREs (Communities Against a Radioactive Environment)
Union of Concerned Scientists
Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance
Veterans For Peace - Baltimore, MD Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter
Washington Against Nuclear Weapons Coalition
Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs
Whatcom Peace & Justice Center
Win Without War
Women's Action For New Directions (WAND)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - Milwaukee
World BEYOND War
YUCCA (Youth United for Climate Crisis Action)