

PROFITEERS OF ARMAGEDDON: PRODUCERS OF THE NEXT GENERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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AT A GLANCE

The Pentagon and the Department of Energy are ramping up a three-decades-long plan to build a new generation of nuclear-armed bombers, submarines and missiles, along with new warheads to go with them.¹ The price tag for operating existing weapons and building new ones could reach a staggering \$2 trillion.² The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has estimated that, in the next decade alone, the cost of nuclear weapons deployment, development, and procurement could reach \$634 billion.³ The major beneficiaries of these expenditures will be the prime contractors for new nuclear delivery vehicles and the operators of the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) nuclear weapons complex.

The nuclear weapons budget has already begun to climb over the past few years, from \$37.2 billion in FY2020 to \$43 billion in the Biden administration's proposed budget for FY2022. The figure for FY2022 includes \$27.7 billion for nuclear activities at the Department

1. The Department of Energy's (DOE) work on nuclear weapons is done via the semi-autonomous National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a DOE agency, <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/national-nuclear-security-administration>.

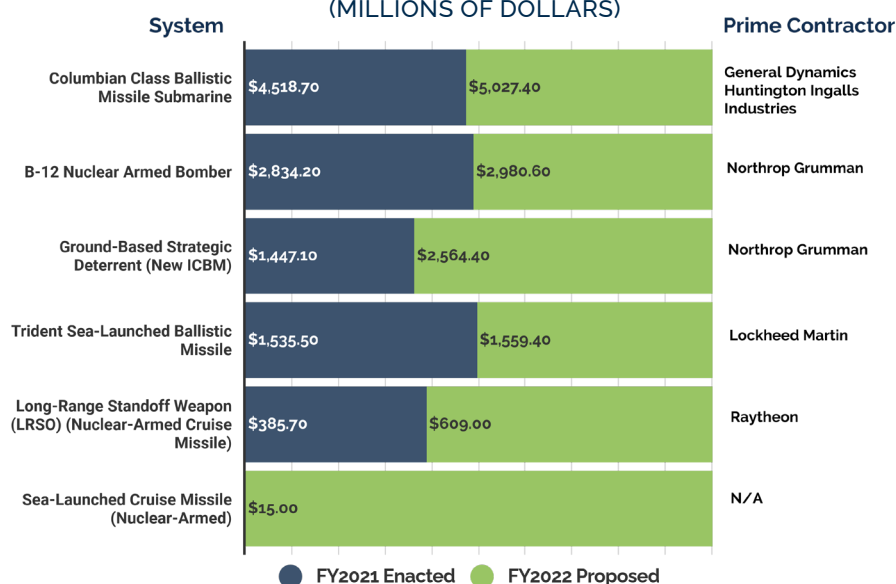
2. Kingston Reif and Alicia Sanders-Zakre, "U.S. Nuclear Excess: Understanding the Costs, Risks, and Alternatives," Arms Control Association, April 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/reports/2019/USnuclearexcess>.

3. Congressional Budget Office, "Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2021 to 2030," May 2021, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57240>.

of Defense and \$15.5 billion at the NNSA.⁴ This figure will grow dramatically as the nuclear weapons modernization plan ramps up over the next decade and beyond. For example, the CBO estimates that the major elements of the Pentagon's nuclear modernization plan will cost tens of billions each over the next decade, including \$145 billion for ballistic missile submarines, \$82 billion for the new Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), and \$53 billion for the new nuclear-armed bomber.⁵ And the costs will not end there. For example, the estimated lifetime cost of building and operating the new ICBM is \$264 billion.⁶

The FY2022 Pentagon budget proposal includes billions of dollars for new nuclear delivery vehicles (See Graph 1)⁷, with a handful of prime contractors as the primary beneficiaries. While the prime contractors are the initial recipients of the funding for these systems, the funds trickle down to subcontractors across the country. For example, Northrop Grumman has identified major suppliers for its new ICBM, referred to in Pentagon jargon as the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD), in 32 states.⁸ Northrop Grumman's twelve largest subcontractors include some of the nation's most prominent defense companies, including Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, L3Harris, Aerojet Rocketdyne, Honeywell, Bechtel, and the Collins Aerospace division of Raytheon Technologies.⁹

GRAPH 1: SPENDING ON NUCLEAR DELIVERY VEHICLES
FY2021 ENACTED AND FY2022 PROPOSED
(MILLIONS OF DOLLARS)



4. Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation, "Fiscal Year 2022 Defense Budget Briefing Book," June 1, 2021, <https://armscontrolcenter.org/fiscal-year-2022-defense-budget-request-briefing-book/>.

5. Ibid.

6. Anthony Capaccio, "New U.S. ICBMs Could Cost Up to \$264 Billion Over Decades," Bloomberg News, October 3, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-10-03/new-u-s-icbms-could-cost-up-to-264-billion-over-decades>.

7. U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Comptroller, "Program Acquisition Costs by Weapon System, Fiscal Year 2022," May 2021, https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2022/FY2022_Weapons.pdf

8. "Northrop Grumman GBSD Team Map," on the Northrop Grumman web site at <https://www.northropgrumman.com/wp-content/uploads/Approved-NG20-1485-200812-GBSD-Nationwide-Team-Map.pdf>.

9. Marcus Weisgerber, "Northrop Announces Suppliers for New ICBM. Boeing is Not on the List.," Defense One, September 16, 2019, <https://www.defenseone.com/business/2019/09/northrop-icbm/159886/>.

The other major recipients of nuclear weapons-related funding are the firms and universities that run the eight major facilities of the NNSA's nuclear warhead complex (see Table 1)¹⁰. Major contractors include Honeywell, which runs the Kansas City National Security Campus and is a major part of the consortia that run the Nevada National Security Site and Sandia National Laboratories, and Bechtel, which plays a role in running the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the Y-12 National Security Complex, and the Pantex Plant. Honeywell and Bechtel are also subcontractors to Northrop Grumman on the development of the new ICBM (see above). The University of California is involved in managing both the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore nuclear weapons laboratories. And Johns Hopkins University recently received a contract worth up to \$530 million for "research and development services in support of the nuclear enterprise."¹¹

TABLE 1: MAJOR U.S. NUCLEAR WARHEAD FACILITIES

Facility and Location	Facility Function
Los Alamos National Laboratory (New Mexico)	Nuclear warhead development; production of plutonium "pits" (triggers for nuclear warheads)
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (California)	Nuclear warhead development
Sandia National Laboratories (New Mexico and California)	Nuclear warhead development and engineering
Kansas City National Security Campus (Missouri)	Production of non-nuclear components of nuclear warheads
Nevada National Security Site	Stockpile stewardship (testing and assuring reliability of nuclear warheads)
Y-12 National Security Complex (Tennessee)	Produces enriched uranium components for nuclear warheads
Savannah River Site (South Carolina)	Produces tritium for nuclear warheads; designated future site of plutonium pit production facility
Pantex Plant (Texas)	Final nuclear weapons assembly for warhead life extension programs and pending new-designs

10. Facility web sites, accessible at "National Nuclear Security Administration: Locations," <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/locations>.

11. Nicholas Martin, "Johns Hopkins University Secures \$530 Million USAF Contract for Nuclear Tech R&D Services," GovConWire, July 13, 2021, <https://www.govconwire.com/2021/07/air-force-awards-johns-hopkins-university-530m-nuclear-weapon-randd-contract/#:~:text=Johns%20Hopkins%20University%20Secures%20%24530M%20USAF%20Contract%20for%20Nuclear%20Tech%20R%26D%20Services,-Nichols%20Martin&text=Johns%20Hopkins%20University%20will%20provide,%2Dyear%2C%20%24530%20million%20contract>.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE: CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS AND LOBBYING EXPENDITURES BY MAJOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS CONTRACTORS

The producers of major nuclear delivery vehicles and key operators of the NNSA's nuclear weapons complex spend millions of dollars on campaign contributions and lobbying efforts every year. While not all of this spending is devoted to lobbying on nuclear weapons programs, these expenditures are indicative of the political clout they can bring to bear on Congress as needed to sustain and expand the budgets for their nuclear weapons-related programs. The major contractors identified in this issue brief made a total of over \$119 million in campaign contributions from 2012 to 2020, including over \$31 million in the 2020 election cycle alone. The companies spent \$57.9 million on lobbying in 2020 and employed 380 lobbyist among them. (See Table 2).¹²

Over two-thirds of these 380 lobbyists passed through the “revolving door” from top positions in Congress, the Pentagon, and the Department of Energy to work for nuclear weapons contractors as executives or board members.¹³ And it should be noted that the revolving door swings both ways – three of the past five secretaries of defense worked as lobbyists or board members of major nuclear weapons contractors before taking up their positions in the Pentagon: James Mattis (General Dynamics); Mark Esper (Raytheon); and Lloyd Austin (Raytheon).

TABLE 2: LOBBYING EXPENDITURES AND LOBBYISTS EMPLOYED BY MAJOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS CONTRACTORS, 2020

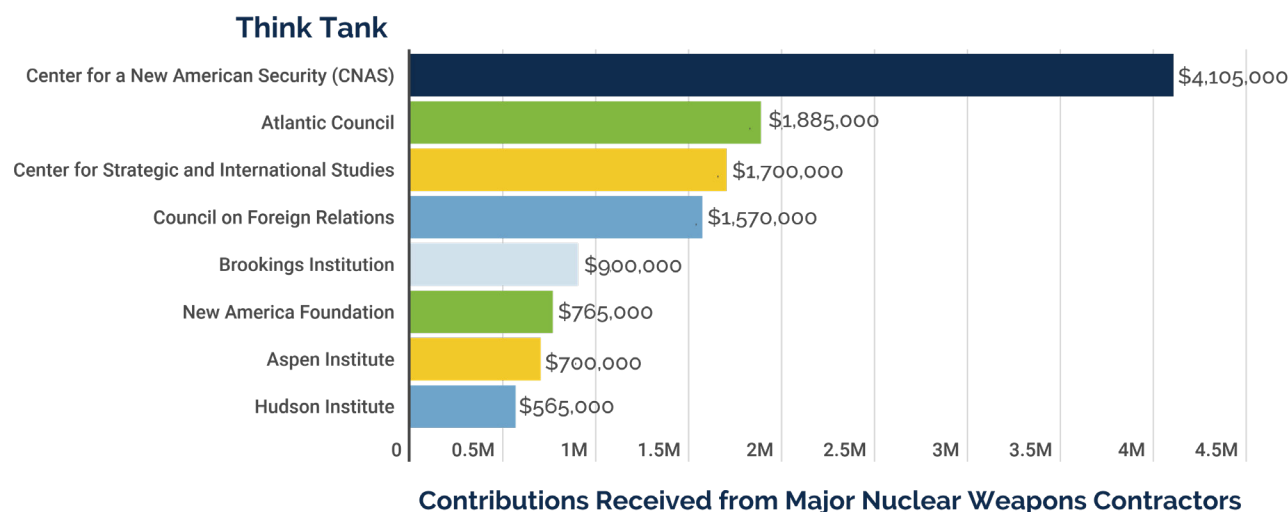
Company	Lobbying Expenditures	Number of Lobbyists
Lockheed Martin	\$12,900,000	70
Northrop Grumman	\$12,100,000	51
Raytheon Technologies	\$11,900,000	90
General Dynamics	\$10,900,000	79
Honeywell	\$4,700,000	37
Huntington Ingalls	\$4,500,000	40
Bechtel	\$750,000	13
TOTAL	\$57,900,000	380

12. Campaign spending and lobbying expenditures compiled from the Center for Responsive Politics “Open Secrets” database, <https://www.opensecrets.org/>; companies included in the tally were Bechtel, General Dynamics, Honeywell, Huntington Ingalls, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon Technologies.

13. Data from lobbying profiles in the Center for Responsive Politics “Open Secrets” database, <https://www.opensecrets.org/>.

Nuclear weapons contractors have also invested millions of dollars in supporting think tanks that opine on nuclear weapons policy and nuclear modernization. Think tanks receiving over \$100,000 from nuclear weapons contractors between 2014 and 2020 include the Atlantic Council, the Brookings Institution, the Center for a New American Security, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Heritage Foundation, the Hudson Institute, and the New America Foundation (see Graph 2)¹⁴.

GRAPH 2: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THINK TANKS BY MAJOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS PRODUCERS, 2014 TO 2020¹⁵



THE ULTIMATE LOBBYING TACTIC: PLAYING THE JOBS CARD

The ultimate argument used by contractors and congressional delegations to promote nuclear weapons programs is that they create large numbers of jobs in key states and districts. These claims are routinely exaggerated and ignore the far greater number of jobs that can be created through alternative investments. For example, Northrop Grumman has claimed that the development phase of the new ICBM will create 10,000 jobs in 32 states.¹⁶ But the bulk of the jobs will be concentrated in only a few locations, with modest employment impacts in most of the states identified by the company as benefitting from the program. In addition, 10,000 jobs represent less than one one-hundredth of one percent — 0.0001% — of the national workforce of 160 million people. Investing the \$2.6 billion allocated for the new ICBM in the FY2022 budget in infrastructure, green energy, or health

14. Ben Freeman, "U.S. Government and Defense Contractor Funding of America's Top 50 Think Tanks," Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative, Center for International Policy, October 2020, and associated database; and International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), "Complicit: 2020 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending," June 2021.

15. Contractors included for purposes of calculating contributions to think tanks were Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon Technologies, Honeywell, Huntington Ingalls, and Bechtel.

16. See Northrop Grumman GBSD team map, op. cit.

care would create anywhere from 7,500 to 19,000 more jobs than spending on the new ICBM.¹⁷

DANGEROUS, UNNECESSARY. AND UNAFFORDABLE

Continued lobbying for the Pentagon and Department of Energy's nuclear modernization plan ignores the fact that building a new generation of nuclear weapons at this time will make the world a more dangerous place and increase the risk of nuclear war while fueling the new arms race. This is particularly true with respect to ICBMs, which former Secretary of Defense William Perry has described as "some of the most dangerous weapons in the world" because the president would have only a matter of minutes to decide whether to launch them on warning of an attack, greatly increasing the risks of an accidental nuclear war based on a false alarm.¹⁸ The organization Global Zero has outlined an alternative nuclear posture that would eliminate ICBMs, reduce the numbers of bombers and ballistic missile submarines, and implement a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons as part of a "deterrence-only" strategy that would reduce the danger of a nuclear conflict.¹⁹ The only way to be truly safe from nuclear weapons is to eliminate them altogether, as called for in the United Nations' Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which went into effect in January 2021 and currently has 86 signatories and 54 states that have ratified the treaty.²⁰ So far none of the nuclear weapons powers have signed onto the treaty, but pressing them to do so should be a central component of efforts to rein in nuclear dangers.

It's long past time that we stopped allowing special interest lobbying and corporate profits stand in the way of a more sensible nuclear policy.

17. Figures calculated based on job estimates in Heidi Peltier, "Job Opportunity Cost of War," Costs of War Project, Brown University, May 24, 2017, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2017/Job%20Opportunity%20Cost%20of%20War%20-%20HGP%20-%20FINAL.pdf>.

18. William J. Perry, "Why It's Safe to Scrap America's ICBMs," New York Times, September 30, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/30/opinion/why-its-safe-to-scrap-americas-icbms.html>.

19. Bruce G. Blair, Jessica Sleight, and Emma Claire Foley, "The End of Nuclear Warfighting: Moving to a Deterrence-Only Posture," Global Zero, in collaboration with the Project on Science and Global Security, Princeton University, September 2018, <https://www.globalzero.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ANPR-Final.pdf>.

20. United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," accessed July 7, 2021, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>.