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## Nuclear agency releases strategic plan for next decade

By Martin Matishak *Global Security Newswire* May 20, 2011

The U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration has published a new outline for implementing President Obama's nonproliferation agenda and for modernizing the country's nuclear enterprise.

The [2011 strategic plan](#) essentially sums up how the nuclear agency, a semiautonomous branch of the Energy Department, will work over the coming decade to implement the president's nuclear-security goals, according to NNSA Administrator Thomas D'Agostino.

"The plan's job is to communicate ... where we're going," D'Agostino told reporters during a Wednesday afternoon conference call.

The agency's last strategic plan was published in 2004.

The newly minted 20-page document identifies the administrator's key goals, including reducing nuclear dangers; managing the nation's atomic arsenal; updating NNSA infrastructure; and improving its personnel and the nuclear enterprise as a whole.

D'Agostino said that the plan encapsulates information he and other agency officials have previously shared through congressional testimony and other venues.

"We have for ... the first time in a long time a national consensus that nuclear security is something that the country cares about and likely will care about for many years into the future," he said. "It's very important ... to have a single document that [people] can read in a sitting that describes, in both broad and certain specific areas, where the whole organization is going."

Nuclear security usually refers to, among other things, the prevention of the illegal transfer of fissile materials or other malicious acts involving these materials.

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The White House in February requested that the nuclear agency receive about \$11.8 billion in the next budget year to maintain the country's nuclear stockpile and conduct nonproliferation activities around the globe.

That figure is a nearly \$2 billion increase over the enacted level for the 2010 budget cycle and represents a more than 5 percent hike from the \$11.2 billion the administration sought for this budget year. That request was mostly maintained, although the agency only received a \$190 million infusion for its nonproliferation programs, rather than the more than \$500 million sought by the administration.

Fiscal 2012 begins on October 1.

The strategic plan reaffirms the agency's commitment to the president's intention to remove or lock down the global stores of loose nuclear material within four years.

It also restates the administration's goal to help develop and implement best practices for nuclear security through the establishment of centers of excellence that would evaluate a country's equipment and security personnel, as well as provide training to those assigned to protect sensitive materials. Facilities are slated to begin operations in China, Japan, and South Korea in 2012.

The agency pledged in the document to continue to strengthen domestic and international efforts to detect and prevent the illicit trafficking of nuclear weapons and technologies through the detection and monitoring of potential clandestine atomic programs and illegal diversion of fissile materials.

The branch would also contribute to developing a new international framework for civil nuclear-energy programs that ultimately could include an international nuclear-fuel bank and possible fuel-leasing agreements to provide alternatives to fuel-cycle development for nations new to the atomic market.

So-called "123 agreements" allow other nations to purchase U.S. nuclear materials and technology for their civil-power programs. Washington has inked such deals with more than two dozen nations, including Australia, Canada, China, India, and Russia.

The nuclear agency will continue to maintain the nation's atomic stockpile through its warhead-life-extension-and-dismantlement efforts, and will augment the complex through the establishment of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement site at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and the Uranium Processing Facility at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tenn.

D'Agostino acknowledged that the strategic plan contained no new efforts or changes to existing programs.

"If you find something in there that's a big surprise, let me know about it," the administrator told reporters. "Our point here is not to surprise people."

One nuclear-stockpile expert somewhat agreed with that assessment.

"Honestly, it sounds like a sound-bite update in the sense that it's a snapshot of the NNSA workload," according to Hans Kristensen, director of the Federation of American Scientists' Nuclear Information Project.

The document allows the agency to demonstrate it is focused on efforts to maintain the country's nuclear arsenal, he told *Global Security Newswire* during a Wednesday phone interview.

That said, the strategic document "is a public-relations document more than it is a plan," Kristensen said.

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