

White House Objections to Proposed Cuts in the 2021 NDAA

The Trump administration opposes several measures in the Senate version of the fiscal year 2021 defense spending bill, including proposed cuts to experimental weapons programs, according to a new letter from the White House Office of Management and Budget. In the letter, which was sent 30 November 2020 to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

1. The administration registers a broad objection to a proposed \$2.1 billion in cuts to the Defense Department's research, development, test and evaluation account. It notes several provisions to which it "strongly objects," including one that would rescind \$150 million in FY-20 funds from the Pentagon's secretive Strategic Capabilities Office. "This funding is critical to continue the development, demonstration, and transition of novel capabilities to counter threats and respond to the needs of combatant commands," the letter states.
2. The administration strongly objects to a proposed \$389 million cut to the Conventional Prompt Strike program and a \$45 million reduction to the hypersonic prototyping program. The cuts, according to OMB, would delay the development and fielding of sea-, land-, and air-based offensive hypersonic weapons "by a minimum of one year." "In addition to delaying the deployment of Navy, Army, and Air Force hypersonic capabilities, these reductions would destabilize the design process for the hypersonic weapon system, negatively impact efforts to strengthen the hypersonic industrial base, and increase costs due to contract termination of existing efforts," the letter states. "This would delay vital warfighting capability and increase United States warfighting asymmetry for long-range hypersonic weapons with near-peer adversaries as a result of their rapid hypersonic development."
3. The administration strongly objects to a proposed \$20 million reduction from the Rapid Prototyping program as it would "significantly delay" SCIFiRE, the Southern Cross Integrated Flight Research Experiment the United States recently launched with Australia. "SCIFiRE provides the maturation vehicle for Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency Hypersonic Airbreathing Weapon Concept with a partner nation's co-investment," according to OMB. "This reduction would create at least a two-year delay to this hypersonics program."
4. The administration opposes the bill's proposal to cut \$50 million in procurement and \$136 million in research, development, test and evaluation from the Standard Missile-6 program. The proposed reductions, according to OMB, would cause a "breach" in the current multiyear procurement contract with Raytheon Technologies, "which would lead to a renegotiation and probable loss of savings." The bill would also add "significant and unacceptable schedule risk by delaying the delivery of the SM-6 Block IB capability by one year and, in the process, would also delay the Navy's ability to start addressing the DOD capability gap for long-range, hypersonic offensive strike weapons needed for near-peer adversaries," according to OMB.
5. The administration strongly objects to \$123 million in proposed cuts to the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense programs. "The reductions in the bill would delay critical ground and flight tests required to implement the administration's priority of achieving Layered Homeland Defense," the letter states.

6. The administration strongly objects to a proposed \$50 million cut in precision strike missiles. "The reduction would eliminate the program's ability to procure early operational capability missiles in FY 2021 and delay fielding to at least FY 2024, which does not meet the Army's requirement date to accelerate acquisition of enhanced long-range precision fires needed to counter emerging threats from near-peer adversaries by FY 2023," the letter states.

7. OMB says it opposes cuts to the Navy's Large Unmanned Surface Vehicle program. The Navy is seeking \$438 million for the procurement of two LUSV prototypes in FY-21, but Senate appropriators do not support the request.

8. The administration strongly objects to a proposed \$24 million cut to National Background Investigation Services, saying it would cause a "12-month delay in the development and delivery of the new NBIS system and require continued sustainment of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) legacy information technology systems, at a cost of \$176 million annually to taxpayers." Also, "a delay in unclassified Continuous Evaluation and Continuous Vetting support to customer agencies would jeopardize the Federal Government's ability to deliver a timely Trusted Workforce product," the letter states. "Further, this delay would also hamper [the Office of Personnel Management's] ability to focus on modernization of the agency's other legacy systems."