

ECA Update: November 7, 2013



In this update:

Obama Eyes Senior Pentagon Official for Key Nuclear-Arms Post
Global Security Newswire

"Pandora's Promise" - Is Nuclear Power the Answer to Climate Change?--Film Airs on CNN Tonight
CNN

Inhofe Says NDAA Work Starts Nov. 18
John T. Bennett, Defense News

New technique can help reduce nuclear waste volume by 90 percent
Ananth Baliga, UPI

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[LINK](#)

President Obama on Wednesday said he plans to nominate a top Defense Department strategic-policy official to help oversee the U.S. Energy Department's nuclear-weapons branch, according to a White House press release.

Madelyn Creedon is expected to go before the Senate Armed Services Committee for consideration to take over as principal deputy administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration. The White House as of press time had not formally submitted her nomination to Congress.

If confirmed, Creedon would take a senior role in the semiautonomous agency overseeing the U.S. nuclear arsenal and its supporting infrastructure. She would serve under NNSA Acting Administrator Bruce Held, who holds the agency's top spot.

Creedon has served at the Pentagon since 2011 as assistant secretary of Defense for global strategic affairs. Prior to that, she held posts as a Democratic policy adviser on the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, and as a Clinton-era associate deputy Energy Secretary.

"Pandora's Promise" - Is Nuclear Power the Answer to Climate Change?--Film Airs on CNN Tonight

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CNN New Day Anchor Kate Bolduan interviewed Academy Award-

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nominated director Robert Stone about his documentary film Pandora's Promise, which profiles several high profile environmentalists who now strongly support nuclear power as a part of the global solution to reduce fossil fuels emissions. Stone, who supports the replacement of fossil fuel powered energy plants with nuclear energy, debated Sierra Club executive director Michael Brune, who says that the cost and safety concerns of nuclear energy are outweighed by the relative benefits of renewable energy sources like solar and wind power.

Pandora's Promise debuted at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2013 and is set to debut for the first time ever on television on Thursday, Nov. 7. The CNN Films broadcast will premiere tomorrow from 9:00pm to 11:00pm and 11:00pm to 1:00am on CNN. All times Eastern. During the film, users can join the debate with the filmmaker and environmentalists from all perspectives on this topic online tomorrow by using #PandorasPromise or by tweeting to @CNNFilms on Twitter.

More information about Pandora's Promise may be found here: www.cnn.com/pandoraspromise.

Inhofe Says NDAA Work Starts Nov. 18

John T. Bennett, Defense News
November 5, 2013

[LINK](#)

WASHINGTON -- The US Senate is poised to take up a major Pentagon policy bill the week before Thanksgiving, a senior Republican lawmaker said.

Senate Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., told Defense News on Tuesday that he expects the upper chamber will take up its version of the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) the week of Nov. 18.

"We've been talking about it. There's been some talk about the 18th is when it would start," Inhofe said on his first full day back here after undergoing a heart procedure in Oklahoma last month.

"Sooner is better," Inhofe said. "It's going to take a full week. So it would seem to me that we should get started sooner than the 18th."

Speaking later to reporters, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., said he can't confirm when the Senate will take up the policy bill.

Levin also said it is unclear if the bill will be finished before Thanksgiving. "I would not make travel plans," he told reporters.

Contentious debates and amendments are expected on a number of hot-button issues, including NSA domestic spying programs, detainee policy, the future of the Guantanamo Bay terrorist suspect detention center, sequestration and some big-ticket weapon programs.

In fact, on the latter, committee member Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., told reporters Tuesday that he is preparing an amendment that would bring changes to the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship program.

McCain was largely mum about the amendment's details.

"We're working on an amendment," McCain said. "We need more scrutiny and more benchmarks."

When pressed about the possibility he will propose pausing the LCS program, he added: "It depends on what you mean by pausing it. Does it mean a certain number are going to be procured, or is [the program buy] open-ended."

Asked whether pausing the program in any regard would drive up unit costs, thereby making the entire program more expensive, McCain pushed back.

Lawmakers for years have griped about the program's growing price tag - though some Navy observers say the program's managers and service officials have turned it into a rare well-performing defense acquisition program.

"The costs have been driven up dramatically, and outrageously, and obscenely," McCain shot back. "That's why we are examining the whole situation."

McCain also said he and Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., are working on an amendment that would "give flexibility" to Pentagon leaders to decide what gets cut under sequestration -- "but also maintains oversight."

The Senate's NDAA proposes around \$526.6 billion for the Pentagon's base budget request, and \$79.4 billion to fund the war in Afghanistan and other overseas conflicts. Those were the amounts requested by the Obama administration.

Both funding authorization levels set up a major issue when a House-Senate conference committee is tasked with crafting a final version of the NDAA to send to President Barack Obama.

That's because the House Armed Services Committee-approved version would clear the Pentagon to spend up to \$552.1 billion in 2014. What's more, the House bill would approve a war-funding measure of about \$85 billion.

The Senate bill mostly adopts the administration's plans for high-profile weapon programs such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and LCS.

On LCS, the upper chamber's bill already proposes a mandatory review of the program. The legislation excludes a cost cap for the Navy's new aircraft carrier program, though a Senate Armed Services Committee aide told reporters in June that McCain pushed for language mandating one during the committee's mark up of the bill.

With McCain and some influential House Armed Services Committee members like Virginia GOP Rep. Randy Forbes in favor of such a provision, it could be an issue for the coming conference committee.

The Senate Armed Services Committee set up a major conference issue by excluding any approval of money for a House Republican-proposed East Coast missile shield.

However, the Senate's bill essentially proposes a compromise by authorizing the Pentagon to spend funds to set up advanced sensors that senior military missile defense officials tell Senate Armed Services Committee leaders would be "more effective than just missiles," Levin told reporters in June.

The House passed its version of the 2014 NDAA this year.

New technique can help reduce nuclear waste volume by 90 percent

Ananth Baliga, UPI
November 6, 2013

[LINK](#)

(UPI) -- Engineers have found a way to reduce the volume of nuclear waste by up to 90 percent by turning it into glass, which could lead to lower storage and disposal costs.

Researchers from the University of Sheffield have found that plutonium-contaminated waste mixed with blast-furnace slag, turning it into glass in a process called vitrification, would reduce waste volume by 85 to 90 percent.

Contaminated waste includes filters, used personal protective equipment (PPE) and metal and masonry waste from decommissioning.

"Our method produces a robust and stable final product, because the thermal treatment destroys all plastics and organic material," said lead researcher, Professor Neil Hyatt.

"This is an advantage because it is difficult to predict with certainty how the degradation of plastic and organic materials affects the movement of plutonium underground," he added.

Currently, nuclear waste storage methods call for encapsulation in cement -- which considerably increases waste volume -- and burial. The new method can both cut costs and reduce eventual contamination.

Researchers hope their new technique, detailed in the Journal of Nuclear Materials, will be applicable in the cleanup of the large amount of mixed-wastes generated at the Fukushima plant in Japan.

At present the amount of nuclear waste generated in the U.K. could fill Big Ben seven times over.

"Our process would reduce this waste volume to fit neatly within the confines of just one Big Ben tower," Hyatt said.

The researchers used cerium, which is known to behave similarly to plutonium, to develop the technique and are working on optimizing it for a full-scale demonstration. They are also planning small-scale experiments using plutonium.

