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**U.S. Plans More Annual Spending on Nuclear Submarine Program**

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The U.S. Navy plans to increase annual spending on its nuclear missile submarine program to \$5 billion by 2024, according to a Pentagon report cited Tuesday by Bloomberg News.

According to that report, the Department of Defense details in a report sent to Congress that the increase would begin next year, when the Navy will seek \$4.3 billion for the Columbia class submarine program.

That figure will be higher than the \$2.3 billion currently projected for fiscal year 2020, which begins in October.

The document mentioned by Bloomberg projects budget requests of 4.46 billion in fiscal year 2022, and 4.13 billion in 2023, ahead of the goal set for 2024.

Bloomberg said the Columbia class project aims to build 12 new ballistic missile submarines, which will replace an older force of 14 Ohio class submarines first manufactured in the 1970s.

The submarines are part of a trillion-dollar (trillion-dollar) effort to modernize the U.S. marine-air-to-ground nuclear triad over the next 30 years, including maintenance and assistance, the agency said.

The Columbia class program was initially approved during Barack Obama's administration (2009-2017), although the current president, Donald Trump, asked the Pentagon to accelerate actions to strengthen the size of the naval fleet, the publication added.

Last week, in statements to the press at the White House, Trump said they are spending 'billions of dollars on nuclear weapons, figures like we have never spent before'.

Last March the executive mansion launched a \$4.7 trillion budget plan that would increase spending on nuclear weapons by 11.8 percent by fiscal year 2020 compared to the current level of spending.

In response to that anticipated increase, the Global Zero campaign, an international movement for the elimination of nuclear weapons, stated that the top U.S. national security priority should be to prevent the use of such devices.

The Trump administration's accelerated search for 'low-performance' nuclear weapons does the opposite, the group's executive director, Derek Johnson, said in a statement.

For its part, the American Arms Control Association published a report in April on how the rising costs of the government's plans to replace the nuclear arsenal are 'unnecessary, unsustainable and unsafe'.

The United States keeps a larger and more diverse nuclear arsenal than is required to deter and respond to a nuclear attack against itself or its allies, said Kingston Reif, the group's director of disarmament and threat reduction policy.

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