



CONSORTIUM *of* SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

## President's FY 2021 Budget Request for the Department of Defense—Additional Details | February 18, 2020

While the majority of the details of the President's fiscal year (FY) 2021 budget request were made public the week of February 10 ([read COSSA's analysis](#)), full details for some agencies and departments—including the Department of Defense (DoD)—were delayed until the following week.

The DoD budget request reflects over \$5 billion in cuts made as a result of the FY 2021 Defense-Wide Review. The [FY 2021 Defense-Wide Review](#) is a major DoD initiative led by Secretary of Defense Mark Esper “to improve alignment of time, money, and people to [National Defense Strategy] priorities,” including finding budget cuts at DoD. The Department of Defense (DoD), the largest contributor to federal research and development expenditures, supports research and development, along with many other programs, through what are known as Defense-Wide accounts. The three branches of the military, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy, also individually contribute to funding research and development and were not affected by the review.

The cuts identified by the review affected programs across the Department—from warfighting support, to logistics, to personnel and benefits—and did not spare Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation, through which the bulk of research and development funds are administered.

*The Department of Defense's FY 2021 budget request can be found at:*

<https://comptroller.defense.gov/Budget-Materials/Budget2021/>

*The FY 2021 Defense-Wide Review can be found at:*

<https://media.defense.gov/2020/Feb/06/2002244621/-1/-1/1/FY-2021-DEFENSE-WIDE-REVIEW-FINAL.pdf>

### Minerva Research Initiative

The Minerva Research Initiative (MRI) is a university-based social science research program that seeks to “improve DOD's basic understanding of the social, cultural, behavioral, and political forces that shape regions of the world of strategic importance to the U.S.” The FY 2021 DoD budget request directs the Basic Research Office to discontinue funding the initiative. The Minerva Research Initiative is not provided with a dedicated appropriation from Congress, but rather receives funds from the Navy, the Air Force, and the Basic Research Office (a Defense-Wide account), totaling about \$13 million each year. In FY 2019 and FY 2020, MRI also received an additional \$2 million in the final DoD appropriations bill to support research on “peer/near-peer competition” and “foreign malign influence,” respectively.

MRI includes three primary components: (1) a university-based social science basic research grant program, funded in partnership with Air Force and Navy University Research Initiatives; (2) the Defense Education and Civilian University Research (DECUR) Partnership program for professional military

education (PME) institutions; and (3) a collaboration with the United States Institute of Peace to award research support to advanced graduate students and early career scholars working on security and peace. As a result of the Defense-Wide Review, the Department recommends ending the Minerva Research Initiative in FY 2021.

The budget request clarifies that researchers participating in the 2019 award cycle of the first two components will be notified that new awards will not be made and existing awards will be terminated early (note: MRI awards operate on calendar years, not fiscal years). Additionally, the request says that awards will be made in response to the university funding opportunity announcement on the topics of peer/near-peer competition and foreign malign influence, which Congress provided funding for in FY 2019 and FY 2020. However, new awards on these topics will only be made with directly appropriated congressional funds and Service (military branch) contributions – which, together, make up about a third of the MRI budget. No additional awards will be made on any other topics formerly supported by the MRI.

No additional details, including when awards will be terminated, are provided. Because the Minerva Initiative does not receive a direct Congressional appropriation, the Department has the authority to terminate it unless Congress affirmatively acts to prevent it. Should appropriators wish to maintain the MRI, they would need to include specific language in their FY 2021 appropriations bill stipulating that funding for the program continue.

*Details on the Minerva Research Initiative budget request can be found on pages 63 through 67:*  
[https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2021/budget\\_justification/pdfs/03\\_RDT\\_and\\_E/RDTE\\_Vol3\\_OSD\\_RDTE\\_PB21\\_Justification\\_Book.pdf](https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2021/budget_justification/pdfs/03_RDT_and_E/RDTE_Vol3_OSD_RDTE_PB21_Justification_Book.pdf)