

## Trump administration reverses Nuclear worker firings, sparks concerns



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The Trump administration has reversed its decision to fire hundreds of employees working on the United States' nuclear weapons programs, an unexpected move that has raised concerns about national security, workforce stability, and long-term consequences for the nation's defense infrastructure.

In a dramatic shift, the administration halted the firings of approximately 350 workers at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), which oversees the country's nuclear arsenal. Many employees were caught off-guard, with some losing access to their work email accounts before being locked out of their offices. The layoffs, which initially impacted key facilities like the Pantex Plant in Texas, a critical site for reassembling warheads, left workers in a state of confusion and uncertainty.

The firings were part of a broader cost-cutting measure across the Department of Energy (DOE), targeting around 2,000 employees. Critics have raised alarms about the decision, arguing that the cost-cutting measures, led by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), were misguided and failed to understand the sensitive nature of nuclear weapons-related work. Daryl Kimball of the Arms Control Association expressed concerns about DOGE's lack of experience in managing critical defense issues.

After widespread backlash, NNSA acting director Teresa Robbins rescinded most of the firings, retaining only 28 workers. However, this reversal did little to calm the concerns of senior NNSA officials, lawmakers, and experts. Rob Plonski, a senior NNSA official, warned that such cuts could undermine national security, calling them "reckless" and potentially damaging to the country's future defense efforts.

The workers who were laid off, many with years of experience in nuclear security, also managed some of the nation's most dangerous radioactive waste sites, such as the Savannah River and Hanford Nuclear Sites, ensuring they did not pose a threat to surrounding communities.

The firings, and the uncertainty they have caused, come at a crucial time as the U.S. embarks on a \$750 billion nuclear weapons modernization program. Experts warn that disrupting key departments could undermine national security, offering opportunities for adversaries to exploit perceived vulnerabilities. The reversal has sparked fears that such instability within these essential agencies could weaken U.S. defense efforts both at home and abroad.