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Scoop: White House seeks to hasten nuclear deployment



Daniel Moore

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Illustration: Aida Amer/Axios

The White House is planning executive action soon to try to speed nuclear reactors' deployment, Axios has learned.

Why it matters: One or more orders will likely lean heavily on the departments of Defense and Energy as a way to meet soaring energy demand.

- The orders could seek to leverage those two agencies to avoid any licensing delays from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, one source involved with the plans told Axios.

Driving the news: More than half a dozen sources familiar with the White House's plans described their general components. The sources — from government and industry — all spoke on condition of anonymity.

- The orders view DOD — with its deep pockets, massive energy demand, and ability to absorb risks in ways the private sector can't — as a "key enabler" for nuclear.
- DOD's Army Reactor Office and DOE both have authority to regulate reactor development.
- "The idea now among those who want to keep the NRC out of the mix is: Why don't we just use a partnership between the DOD and the DOE?" the source said.

Another person who had seen a "lengthy and comprehensive" summary document said the plans covered "a wide spectrum of nuclear matters, covering both civilian and national security attributes."

- "If addressed within the four corners of a proposed executive order, [the orders] could likely bring wide acclaim from the nuclear industry," that source said.

The big picture: President Trump's administration is keen to achieve the first commercial deployment of an advanced reactor before the end of his term.

Between the lines: The White House is wrestling with how to streamline requirements as the NRC [implements bipartisan legislation](#) designed to speed up licensing reviews.

- The new orders would be in line with recent announcements from [DOE](#) and [DOD](#) to siting reactors or data center infrastructure — an idea recently floated by [some Democrats](#).
- The NRC's role in the orders is still under debate, several sources said.

What's next: The plans have been in the works for weeks and could drop any day, all of the sources said.

