

U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism

Американо-Российская инициатива по предотвращению ядерного терроризма

April - May 2011 Newsletter

Информационный бюллетень за апрель – май 2011 года

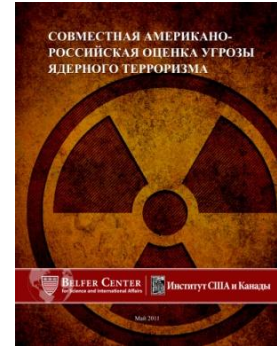
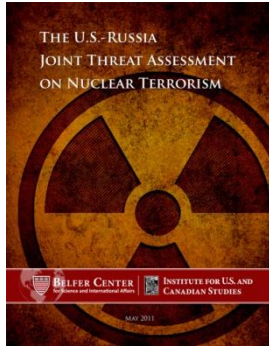


ИСКРАН

NEWS:

Belfer, ISKRAN Complete Groundbreaking Joint Assessment of Nuclear Terrorism Threat

Experts from the United States and Russia have produced the first joint assessment of the global threat of nuclear terrorism. The bilingual report warns of the continuing danger that terrorists could acquire and use a nuclear bomb. It also recommends a series of measures to tighten security over existing nuclear weapons and the nuclear material terrorists would need to make a crude nuclear bomb.



The [*U.S.-Russia Joint Threat Assessment of Nuclear Terrorism*](#), which was completed in May, is the result of a nearly year-long partnership by

nuclear security experts from the [Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs](#) at Harvard Kennedy School and [the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies](#) (ISKRAN) in Moscow, a leading Russian research center. The Belfer team of authors was led by Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, a senior fellow with the Belfer Center and a former senior intelligence officer with the U.S. Department of Energy. The ISKRAN team was led by Pavel S. Zolotarev, a retired army major general who is deputy director of ISKRAN.

The researchers' joint assessment was reviewed and endorsed by a group of retired U.S. and Russian senior military and intelligence officers, led by General Anatoliy S. Kulikov (former Minister of Interior) and General Eugene E. Habiger (former STRATCOM commander). This "Elbe Group" was established in October 2010 to create an informal communication channel on security issues of concern to both the United States and Russia.

The *Joint Threat Assessment* was conducted under the aegis of the [U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism](#) (IPNT) with support from the [Nuclear Threat Initiative](#).

The report examines potential terrorist pathways to a nuclear attack, among them buying or stealing an existing weapon, or acquiring highly enriched uranium (HEU) or plutonium and fashioning a crude nuclear bomb of their own, which the study warns is distressingly plausible. It also concludes that while the killing of Osama bin Laden damages Al Qaeda's capacity to carry out nuclear terrorism, surviving leaders of the group retain nuclear terror ambitions. The study notes that in addition to Al Qaeda, terrorists from the North Caucasus region remain committed to carrying out catastrophic attacks.

To reduce the threat, all stocks of nuclear weapons, highly enriched uranium and plutonium must be protected against all plausible terrorist and criminal threats, and the number of locations where these stocks exist must be reduced as much as practicable. The report also notes that coordinated U.S.-Russian leadership is vital for this international effort.

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G-8 Extends Partnership to Prevent Spread of WMD Beyond 2012

Group of Eight leaders extended the mandate of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction at their summit in Deauville, France, on May 27th. “[We] agree to extend the Partnership beyond 2012, based on the areas of focus enunciated at Muskoka (nuclear and radiological security, bio-security, scientist engagement, and facilitation of the implementation of UNSCR 1540),” the G-8 summit [declaration](#) says.

Despite the death of terrorist kingpin Osama bin Laden, the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction remains a threat, Bonnie D. Jenkins, coordinator for threat reduction programs at the U.S. State Department, told Xinhua when commenting on reasons behind the extension.

Obama and Medvedev Discuss Nuclear Security and Counterterrorism

U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev held a meeting on sidelines of G-8 summit in Deauville, France on May 26th to discuss ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in counterterrorism and nuclear security. The two leaders signed the [Joint Statement on Counterterrorism Cooperation](#), which says the U.S. and Russia will cooperate to “strengthen security in airports serving our two countries and enhance cooperation on other modes of transportation.” Prior to the meeting, the U.S. government had announced that it is offering a reward of up to \$5 million to anyone who helps locate Doku Umarov, the Islamist rebel leader of Imarat Kavkaz who is Russia’s most-wanted terrorist.

At their meeting the two presidents also hailed the [Joint Report by the Coordinators on Progress of the U.S.-Russia Presidential Commission](#), which says: “we believe that further development of our cooperation to strengthen nuclear security should remain a priority.” The report notes that the U.S. and Russia agreed to begin joint efforts to counter improvised explosive devices.

“Preventing the Next Fukushima”

Matthew Bunn, Associate Professor of Public Policy and IPNT member, and Olli Heinonen, Belfer Center senior fellow and IPNT member, co-wrote an [op-ed](#) published on May 26th calling on G-8 leaders to take steps to strengthen global nuclear safety (designed to prevent nuclear accidents) and global nuclear security (designed to prevent terrorist sabotage or theft of nuclear materials) in the aftermath of the tragedy at Fukushima. “The Fukushima tragedy has opened a window for action to strengthen nuclear safety and security – steps which could



Bunn

make it possible to expand nuclear energy to help respond to climate change without taking on undue risks. If this opportunity is not seized, those affected by Fukushima will have suffered in vain. The time for action is now,” the authors warned.



Heinonen

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Russian Parliament Ratifies Plutonium Disposal Agreement

The State Duma ratified the U.S.-Russian plutonium disposition protocol on May 20th. The protocol, which was signed by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in April 2010, calls for both sides to dispose of 34 tons of plutonium.

Allison Discusses Prevention of Nuclear Catastrophe

Belfer Center director and IPNT member Graham Allison participated in a panel at Harvard Kennedy School on May 18th that discussed prevention of nuclear catastrophe. The other three nuclear policy veterans on the panel were Joseph S. Nye Jr., Ashton B. Carter, and Albert Carnesale. The panel took its title, “Avoiding Nuclear War: Hawks, Doves, and Owls, Then and Now,” from the 1985 book *Hawks, Doves, and Owls*, which was co-edited by Allison, Carnesale, and Nye. “If you look at nuclear terrorism and the thinking about WMD, you can see that the focus on the materials is complemented by thinking about the people and the networks of terrorism,” said Carter, who took a leave from the Belfer Center to serve as U.S. undersecretary of defense.



Allison

NNSA's Strategic Plan Pledges Continued Cooperation with Russia

The U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) released its Strategic Plan 2011, which calls for continuation of cooperation with Russian authorities in disposing of excessive weapons-grade nuclear materials originating in Russia and securing facilities that contain such materials in other countries. The report, which was released on May 18th, notes that down blending of 500 metric tons of Russian surplus HEU will be completed in 2013. The new plan also outlines how the nuclear security enterprise will implement the mission in the areas highlighted in the U.S. Department of Energy's Strategic Plan, which was also released in May. These areas include stockpile stewardship, nuclear nonproliferation, counterterrorism and emergency response, and powering the nuclear Navy.

Interpol Expands Its Counterterrorism Activities to Combat Nuclear Terrorism

Interpol has launched a nuclear terrorism prevention unit to counter threats “facing all” nations, AFP reported on May 18th. Interpol said the new team would “crucially” expand Interpol’s anti-counterterrorism activities to take in chemical, radiological and nuclear threats “using an integrated approach that leverages international partnerships and expertise across all sectors.”

Russia's Strategic Missile Forces Boost Protection from WMD

Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (RVSN) have boosted procurement of means of radiological, chemical and biological protection. “Given the importance of the implementation of tasks of provision of alert duty service and nuclear security, over 40 [tons] of radiation, chemical and biological protection means were supplied to RVSN in 2010, which is double the volume of deliveries in previous years,” a spokesman for the force, Col Vadim Koval, told Interfax on May 3rd.

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Russia Introduces Color Terrorism Alert System

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a bill introducing a three-color terrorism alert system into law on May 3rd. The law provides for an elevated level of threat to be colored blue, the intermediate level of threat to be colored yellow, and highest level of threat to be marked in red.

Paper: Threat of Catastrophic Terrorism to Russia Persists

IPNT member and Belfer Center fellow Simon Saradzhyan has co-authored a [paper](#) with deputy editor of the *Moscow Times* Nabi Abdullaev that warns that terrorism continues to pose a major threat to Russia's national security. After a relative lull of several years, the number of terrorist acts in Russia has steadily increased since at least 2008, according to the paper published by the European Union Institute for Security Studies in May 2011. The authors also note that some of the earlier attacks, including hostage-taking raids and raids on cities, were executed by groups with *shakhids* among them that relied on corrupt or ideologically sympathetic law-enforcement



Saradzhyan

officers to facilitate deployment to targets. Such attacks demonstrate the potential capability of these groups to attack high-security facilities, including nuclear facilities. The authors warn that terrorist networks may try to acquire and use WMD in a major Russian city.



Abdullaev

Killing of bin Laden Doesn't Reduce Need for Securing Nuclear Materials

Securing all nuclear materials has become even more necessary with the death of Osama bin Laden, IPNT director and Belfer Center senior fellow William Tobey told the [Korea Times](#). "We know that al-Qaida has long sought to conduct acts of nuclear terrorism, but so far, has proven unsuccessful. The key, of course, is to preventing them from gaining access to fissile material," Tobey said in the May 3rd issue of the newspaper. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, warned that Al-Qaeda has hidden a nuclear bomb in Europe which will unleash a "nuclear hellstorm" if bin Laden is captured, AFP reported on April 25th, citing WikiLeaks.

Tobey said the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit in 2012 needs to directly address the imperative of preventing terrorists from gaining access to fissile material: "Specific actions that the governments could undertake would include setting a date to end the use of highly enriched uranium in civil applications, mandating stronger regulatory oversight of security and adopting



Tobey

strong minimum standards for securing fissile material." IPNT member and former deputy director of the IAEA Olli Heinonen also noted concern. "The Pakistani military and the intelligence service were helping to harbor or aware of the location of bin Laden. What is to say they would not help al Qaeda or other terrorist groups to gain access to sensitive nuclear materials such as highly enriched uranium and plutonium," he told the [Washington Times](#).

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UN Security Council Extends Resolution 1540

The UN Security Council has given a 10-year extension to its main legal weapon to prevent nuclear, chemical and biological weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups, AFP reported on April 21st. The UN nonproliferation committee, first set up by Resolution 1540 in 2004, is normally renewed every three years, and diplomats said the 10-year extension given this time is a sign of the urgency of the campaign. The Council said it remained “gravely concerned” about the threat of terrorist attacks carried out with weapons of mass destruction, according to AFP.

Russia Exits Program Designed for Ex-Soviet Weapons Scientists

Russia is pulling out of a \$1 billion U.S.-led program that that was set up to discourage ex-Soviet WMD scientists from migrating to rogue states by giving them grants, AP reported on April 20th. “The mission has been accomplished,” Russia’s U.S. ambassador Sergei Kislyak said of the pending withdrawal.

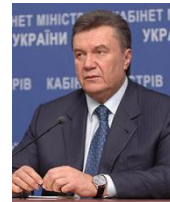


Ryan

Executive director of the Belfer Center and IPNT member Kevin Ryan said Russia’s Federal Security Service and the FBI have long worried that Russian and U.S. weapons scientists working together on peaceful projects might inadvertently spill state secrets. Even if Western aid has helped Russia’s military institutes, they represent little threat to the U.S. compared with the weapons programs of countries like Iran and North Korea, he said.

International Donors Pledge Funds to Secure Chernobyl

An international donors’ conference raised pledges of \$802 million to build a shelter to cover the exploded Chernobyl reactor building for the next century, AP reported. The conference was held in Kiev on April 19th to mark the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich told the conference that “Ukraine continues to demonstrate responsible and consistent policy against nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.”



Yanukovich

Allison Talks Nuclear Security to Black Sea Officers

Belfer Center director and IPNT member Graham Allison gave a lecture on April 11th on the threat of nuclear terrorism and fragility of the existing global nuclear order to participants of the Black Sea Security Program at the Harvard Kennedy School. The participants included senior military representatives and civilian security specialists from the United States and countries in the greater Black Sea region.

Obama Seeks Ratification of Key Nuclear Security Treaties

The Obama administration on April 13th sent to Congress legislation “required for the ratification of four key treaties that are critical to securing nuclear materials and preventing nuclear terrorism around the world,” the White House said in a [statement](#). These key treaties are: the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, the 2005 Protocol to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, and

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the 2005 Protocol to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf.

NOTABLE STATEMENTS ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM:

- Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff Nikolai Gerasimov: If missiles armed with WMD warheads “end up in hands of terrorist organizations, the consequences could be really horrendous.” (Prime-Tass, May 20, 2011.)
- U.S. Congressman Adam Schiff: “There’s no way to deter al-Qaeda from using a nuclear weapon, should it ever get one or develop one. All we can hope to do is deter those that would facilitate them by transferring technology or material... This is something that could threaten an entire city, an entire population, and could have the most catastrophic consequences.” (GSN, May 16, 2011).
- U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates: “I think what I and most of us would say” scares us most “would be a terrorist with a weapon of mass destruction.... especially in this country.” (60 Minutes, May 12, 2011).
- U.S. Senator Bob Casey: “While the threat posed by al-Qaida or some shadowy terrorist network or their desire to acquire a nuclear device – while all that may be unimaginable and frightening, what we can do to address this significant threat is actually not remote or imaginary; it’s actually quite real and concrete.” (Arms Control Association, May 10, 2011).
- U.S. Senator Richard G. Lugar: “There is a risk that some bin Laden-inspired group may try to lash out in dramatic fashion. The most dramatic, of course, would be the detonation of a nuclear device or some other weapon of mass destruction.” (*Washington Times*, May 2, 2011).
- U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller: “Not only has Ukraine chosen this leadership role on reducing the chances of nuclear terrorism, but Ukraine has chosen a path towards the peaceful use of nuclear technology.” (U.S. State Department, April 26, 2011).
- Toby Dalton, former director for U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Nuclear Safeguards and Security: “The probability of nuclear terrorism, like any nuclear accident, is very, very low. But the consequences would be extremely grave. The absence to date of terrorist use of nuclear materials... does not prove that U.S. efforts have reduced that probability to zero.” (*The Hill*, April 13, 2011).
- Russia’s ambassador to UN Vitaly Churkin: “We must cooperate to contribute to the universalization of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. We stress the importance of the Global Initiative to Combat Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, the development of the “best practice” of nuclear materials identification and nuclear criminalistics. All these efforts deserve targeted support and our forum could contribute to this process.” (States News Service, April 18, 2011).

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- August 6, 2011. Anniversary of Hiroshima.
 - August 9, 2011. Anniversary of Nagasaki.
 - August 29, 2011. International Day Against Nuclear Tests and 20th anniversary of the closure of Semipalatinsk, main Soviet nuclear test site.
 - September 11, 2011. 10th anniversary of attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.
 - September 12-16, 2011. IAEA board of governors meeting.
 - September 19-23, 2011. IAEA general conference.
 - October 11-12, 2011. 25th Anniversary of Reykjavik Summit between President Reagan and Gorbachev on nuclear arms reductions.
 - November 3-4, 2011. Presidents Medvedev and Obama attend G-20 in Cannes, France.
 - November 12-13, 2011. Presidents Medvedev and Obama attend the APEC summit in Honolulu.
 - November 17-18, 2011. IAEA board of governors meeting.
 - December 12, 2011. 20th anniversary of Nunn-Lugar program.
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ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism (IPNT) solicits papers, articles and commentary from readers for inclusion in the newsletter and publication on the Initiative's web site. Contact Belfer Center fellow Simon Saradzhyan at (phone) +1-617-496-8228, (fax) +1-617-495-8963, or simon_saradzhyan@hks.harvard.edu.

The Working Group of the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism includes the following institutions:

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- Белферовский центр науки и международных отношений Института государственного управления имени Джона Ф. Кеннеди Гарвардского университета. [Уильям Тоби, william_tobey@hks.harvard.edu, 1- 617-496-0518]

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