



ИСКРАН

NEWS:

U.S.-Russia Elbe Group Maintains Focus on Threat of Nuclear Terrorism

The [Elbe Group](#), retired U.S. and Russian generals from the military and intelligence services, held a video meeting in October to discuss the threat of nuclear terrorism, cyber security and a number of other issues relevant for bilateral relations. One of the Russian participants in the 13th meeting of this Track 2 group warned that the human factor, in his view, is the most important in preventing terrorists from acquiring and using nuclear weapons. The participants also discussed the situation in Afghanistan, agreeing the U.S. and Russia should dedicate special attention to Pakistan's possession of nuclear weapons and technologies, with the goal of preventing their leaking into Afghanistan, according to an account of the meeting by Brig. Gen. Kevin Ryan, who co-founded the group and participates in the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism (IPNT). Based on the outcome of their discussions, the Elbe Group recommended that the U.S. and Russia initiate a consultative meeting of representatives of "Nuclear Club" states and "Near Nuclear" states.

The meeting was also addressed by a senior Russian diplomat who offered his assessment of the U.S.-Russian relationship in general and the dialogue on strategic stability in particular, according to Brig. Gen. Ryan. In addition, the Belfer Center's Cyber Project Director Lauren Zabierek and director of the Center for Applied Studies at the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies Pavel Sharikov presented key takeaways from their [exploratory paper](#) on potential bilateral rules of the road in the cyber domain to the meeting.

Former Chernobyl Plant Manager Bryukhanov Dies

Viktor Bryukhanov, who helped build and manage the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, where a reactor exploded in 1986, died on Oct. 13 in Kyiv, [The New York Times](#) reported. He was 85. After serving five years in prison, Mr. Bryukhanov returned to government service in Ukraine to head the technical department in its Economic Development and Trade Ministry.

Matthew Bunn on Threat to Nuclear and Radiological Transports

Harvard Kennedy School Prof. Matthew Bunn [presented](#) his work on the evolving global threat to nuclear and radiological transports to the U.S.-based Transport Security Unified Stakeholders Group in September 2021. "Effective and lasting nuclear security worldwide will not be achieved unless key policymakers and nuclear managers around the world come to believe nuclear terrorism is a real threat to their countries' security, worthy of investing their time and resources to address it," he warned in his presentation. "War on terrorism will not be won until every nuclear bomb and cache of bomb material everywhere in the world is secure and accounted for to stringent and demonstrable standards," he said.



On 9/11 Anniversary Russian Officials Call for Resumption of U.S.-Russian CT Cooperation

In an [op-ed for Gazeta.ru](#) Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev has called on the U.S. on the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks to work together to combat terrorism. "Russia has always been ready for such work, despite our complicated relations with the West," Medvedev wrote in reference to counter-terrorism cooperation. "Deepening of cooperation between Russia and the U.S. in countering terrorism is of special importance," he said. In a statement released by Moscow's diplomatic mission in Washington, Ambassador Anatoly Antonov [said](#) Russia was grieving together with the U.S. and proposed reviving cooperation on the fight against terrorism despite a litany of problems in bilateral ties. Prior to the anniversary, Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, [said](#) the U.S. and Russia would jointly organize an event commemorating those who were killed by terrorists in the 9/11 attacks.

Experts Weigh in on 9/11 Anniversary

Writing on the occasion of the 9/11 anniversary, HKS Professor Matthew Bunn [warned](#) that terrorists could still go nuclear 20 years after the catastrophic attacks. "There is still a need to ensure that nuclear weapons, materials, and facilities are protected against the full range of plausible threats—especially from insiders, who appear to pose the biggest nuclear security problem," he wrote. "If terrorists ever did manage to turn the heart of a modern city into a smoldering radioactive ruin, they would change history," he warned. Writing on the same occasion, Georgetown University professor Angela Stent noted "The demise of the post 9/11 U.S.-Russian partnership shows that Moscow and Washington have worked together best when they have a clear, limited goal involving similar interests, be it the defeat of Nazi Germany or the defeat of the Taliban." "Once those goals were achieved... in the absence of broader common interests and values, further partnership has foundered on fundamentally different worldviews and mutual suspicions," she [wrote](#) on Sept. 8, 2021

Paul Kolbe, director of the Intelligence Project at the Belfer Center, also [weighed](#) in on the anniversary, penning a commentary on U.S.-Russian CT interaction for the Belfer Center's Russia Matters project. "Whenever commentators and policymakers grapple with concrete ways to improve American and Russian bilateral relations, they gravitate toward counterterrorism intelligence sharing as representing a logical and easy first step. Afterall, who could disagree about the desirability of comparing notes on al-Qaida, of cooperating to prevent nuclear terrorism or of sharing information that will save lives?" he asked in the opening paragraph of his article. According to Kolbe, however, the U.S.-Russian interaction on counter-terrorism cannot counter all the negatives in the bilateral relationship to serve as a basis for improved overall bilateral ties. "The only real path to improvement in relations lies in addressing the contentious issues that have effectively driven the two countries into a state of conflict," he wrote.



Stent

Kolbe

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U.S. and Norway Agree to Eliminate All of Norway's HEU



The U.S. Department of Energy and Norway's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries signed a memorandum of understanding to advance a cooperative project to eliminate all of Norway's highly enriched uranium.

Per the memorandum, Norway's HEU will be down-blended into low-enriched uranium. That follows from an announcement that the [U.S. Department of Energy](#), which U.S. President Joe Biden has put [Jennifer M. Granholm](#) in charge of, made in September 2021.

Two Soviet Nuclear Submarine Reactors Located

A Russian research expedition has rediscovered the location of the container with two damaged reactors from the Soviet navy submarine K-19, the [Barents Observer reported in September 2021](#). The reactors were dumped in the Ambrosimova Bay of the Kara Sea in 1965.

Russian Security Council: Terrorists Remain Interested in NBC

Deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council Yuri Kokov has given a wide-ranging interview to [Rossiiskaya Gazeta](#) to become the first senior Russian official in many months to publicly warn of the enduring interest of terrorists in NBC weapons. "The aspirations of terrorists to gain access to information on manufacturing weapons of nuclear, chemical and biological destruction, as well as their increased attention to possible use of using pathogenic biological agents and toxic chemicals, are being recorded. For that purpose they are purposefully recruiting industry specialists, including teachers and students of chemical and biological educational institutions," Kokov was quoted as saying in the Russian government daily's Sept. 6, 2021 issue. He also said terrorists in countries such as India have attempted to employ individuals carrying COVID-19 to infect the civilian population.



IAEA Adopts Resolutions on Nuclear Security, NS Center Planned

The 65th Annual General Conference of the IAEA in Vienna concluded on Sept. 24 with [resolutions](#) adopted on strengthening the agency's work in the areas of nuclear science,



technology, safety and security.

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi [told](#) the conference that the IAEA's Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Center will become operational in 2023. It will help strengthen countries' abilities to tackle nuclear terrorism in areas such as the illegal trafficking of nuclear material, the physical protection of facilities, and protecting major public events, he said. The construction of the center at IAEA's Seibersdorf

facility near Vienna [began](#) in July 2021. "This Center will help us in supporting countries to

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remain ahead of the curve in guarding against nuclear terrorism,” Mr. Grossi said as he [broke ground](#) for the construction of the facility. The Center will provide more than 2000 square meters of specialized technical infrastructure and equipment, according to the [IAEA](#).

Allison on Risk of Mega-terrorist Attack After U.S. Withdrawal From Afghanistan

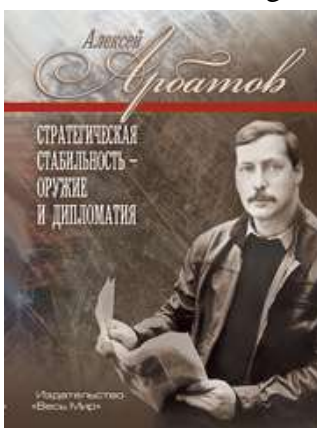
“In choosing to withdraw, Biden accepted increased ownership of the risk that a Taliban-governed Afghanistan could indeed become the haven for a future mega-terrorist attack on the United States,” according to HKS Professor and IPNT participant Graham Allison. Nevertheless, “Biden’s willingness to accept this calculated risk in order to extract the United States from a failing effort in a misguided mission was, in my view, a commendable [profile in courage](#),” Allison wrote in his Aug. 18, 2021 commentary in *The National Interest*. Allison has also addressed the Afghanistan conundrum, along with America’s counter-terrorism and Russia policies in the two executive education classes he taught to participants in HKS’s [Senior Executives in National and International Security](#) program in November 2020 and June 2021, as well as in his Fall 2021 course on [Central Challenges of American National Security](#) at HKS.



Arbatov Warns of Enduring Threat of Nuclear Terrorism to Russia in His New Volume

Alexey Arbatov, head of the Center for International Security at Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations, has penned a book on strategic stability, which contains multiple references to the [threat of nuclear terrorism](#). The Russian-language book, which is entitled “Strategic Stability – Weapons and Diplomacy,” constitutes a collection of the commentaries, book chapters and interviews that this renowned Russian strategist has produced in the [past decade](#).

The book warns that, given the “complete stopping” of U.S.-Russian cooperation in securing nuclear materials and technologies, “nuclear weapons will fall into the hands of terrorists sooner or later.” In the book, Arbatov notes that the U.S.-Russian dialogue on nuclear weapons represents “a highly important channel of U.S.-Russian interaction, ... on which non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and prevention of access of terrorist organizations to these weapons depends.” “Nuclear proliferation is the main source of the threat that international terrorism, which is conducting a direct intervention into the Russian Federation at the North Caucasus and via Central Asia, will gain access to nuclear weapons,” according to Arbatov who participates in IPNT. “Russia, which has recently become one of the leaders in the fight against international terrorism, may become one of the first targets of their revenge,” he warns.



“It is evident that nuclear arms control has entered the stage of the most acute and all-embracing crisis in its half-century history. It is highly likely that this crisis will entail the collapse of the existing system of treaties and regimes. Then new cycles of the arms race will become inevitable, while the use of nuclear weapons, both accidentally and for military purposes or terrorist acts, will become much more likely in the foreseeable future with catastrophic

humanitarian, material and moral consequences for the current civilization,” Arbatov says in the new book.

Russia’s New Security Strategy Drops References to CT Partnership With U.S.

Vladimir Putin signed off on [Russia’s new National Security Strategy](#) in July 2021. Compared to the [previous strategy](#) adopted in 2015, the new document omits any references to U.S.-Russian partnership in general and in counter-terrorism in particular. The 2015 document said that that Russia is “interested in establishing full-fledged partnership with the United States of America.” “The ... solution of questions involving the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, expanded cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the settlement of regional conflicts remain most important areas of this partnership,” the 2015 document said. In contrast, the July 2, 2021, document proclaims that the world is undergoing a “period of transformation” amid the failing “aspiration of the Western countries to retain their hegemony” in the world. The document also notes the “lowering of the level of terrorist activities” in Russia. “The new strategy’s geopolitical arithmetic reflects a Kremlin view that can be described as “deter the U.S., ignore the EU, partner with China and India,” IPNT participant Simon Saradzhyan [wrote](#) in his commentary on the new document.

NNSA’s Non-Proliferation Budget to Decrease in ’22, Provides for US and Russian Visits

The National Nuclear Security Administration’s budget is to grow from \$19.7 billion in [2021](#) to \$20.3 billion in [2022](#) if the U.S. Department of Energy’s budget request is granted without revisions. The portion of the NNSA’s budget dedicated to Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation would decline from \$2.26 billion this year to \$1.96 next year. NNSA’s budget plan for 2021 provides for “up to three monitoring visits in Russia to ensure that Russian plutonium oxide is stored securely and that shutdown Russian plutonium production reactors remain in a non-operational status, and host Russian monitors on annual monitoring visit to shutdown U.S. plutonium production reactors at the Savannah River Site” under the terms of the U.S.-Russian Federation Plutonium Production Reactor Agreement (PPRA). The same language appears in the 2022 budget of NNSA, which U.S. President Joe Biden has put [Jill Hruby](#) in charge of.



Should U.S.-Russian Interaction in Cyberspace Involve CT?

The Belfer Center’s Russia Matters, Cyber Project and U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear



Terrorism teamed up to publish a U.S.-Russian [exploratory paper](#) on whether the two countries could and/or should agree on rules of the road in the cyber domain. The June 2021 paper was co-authored by Cyber Project Director Lauren Zabierek and students Christie Lawrence and Miles Neumann of the Belfer Center exploring the American perspective, and Pavel Sharikov, director of the Center for Applies Studies at the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies discussing the Russian perspective. The U.S. co-authors and the Russian co-author agreed that a formal, binding bilateral agreement is not possible now due to mutual mistrust, misunderstanding, and stark differences in approaches to the cyber domain. At the same time, the

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U.S. researchers agreed with their Russian co-author that their countries should strive toward a much better understanding of one another's red lines. While the trio of U.S. co-authors did not refer to terrorism in their part of the paper, the Russian expert argued that cyber-terrorism should be among the subjects of bilateral talks. Sharikov also wrote: "The countries could discuss different instruments to jointly conduct investigations," and that "such cooperative measures could go beyond cyberspace, involving legal cooperation more generally, against organized crime or [terrorist threats](#)," he wrote in his section. As stated above, Sharikov and Zabierek jointly briefed members of the Elbe Group on key points of their paper in October 2021.

Russia's NPP Operator Conducts Emergency Preparedness Exercise

Rosenergoatom, the nuclear power plant operator subsidiary of Russia's Rosatom, has announced the successful completion of its annual emergency preparedness exercise. This year's exercise was conducted on June 30-July 1 at the Novovoronezh nuclear power plant, [World Nuclear News](#) reported. More than 600 people from 20 organizations took part and included Rosenergoatom's Crisis Center in Moscow, according to WNN.

Putin and Biden Discuss Terrorist Threat Emanating from Afghanistan, but No Deal

The potential reappearance of terrorist bases in Afghanistan was among the topics U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed during their June 16, 2021, summit in Geneva. "I caught part of President's — Putin's press conference, and he talked ... how we can each contribute to the shared effort of preventing a resurgence of terrorism in Afghanistan. It's very much in — in the interest of Russia not to have a resurgence of terrorism in Afghanistan," Biden told a [press conference](#) after the June 16 summit. During the summit, Putin [reportedly](#) offered the use of Russian military bases in Central Asia for information gathering from Afghanistan, but opposed the reopening of any U.S. bases there. U.S. efforts to follow up on the offer produced no tangible results as of early December 2021. It remains unclear whether the two leaders discussed either counter-terrorism or Afghanistan during their Dec. 7 video conference. Neither of the two issues were mentioned in either the [White House's](#) or [Kremlin's](#) readouts of that meeting.

FBI Director Christopher Wray has earlier [warned](#) that the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan raises concerns that the country will become a magnet for terrorism groups, while Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said in July that Russia is registering active movement of the Islamic State terror group militants to Afghanistan's territory from different countries. Putin then [estimated](#) in September that the "number of [IS] members alone in northern Afghanistan is about 2,000 people." Al-Qaida could rebuild inside Afghanistan in one to two years, according to top U.S. intelligence officials cited by [The New York Times](#).

The only way Russia could agree to a renewed U.S. military presence in post-Soviet Central Asia with the purpose of countering terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan would be to offer Russia concessions on an issue that Russia views as important to its national interests, such as "the conflicts in Eastern Europe," [according](#) to Alexey Arbatov, head of the Center for International Security at Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations.

"When it comes to Afghanistan, Russia and the United States share vital interests in preventing the country's relapse into a haven for jihadist networks, such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State, which have both displayed an interest in nuclear terrorism," according to [Simon Saradzhyan](#).

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“[E]lements of a win-win agenda [for the U.S. and Russia] could include preventing Afghanistan’s slide into a failed state, combined with preventing the reappearance of bases of international terrorist networks there and elsewhere in Central Asia, as well as in the Middle East,” he [wrote](#).

U.S. Experts on Ensuring Access to Neutrons While Reducing Nuclear Terrorism Risks

To ensure that the world has reliable access to the neutrons it needs, at the lowest possible cost, and to facilitate further efforts to minimize and eventually eliminate civilian use of highly enriched uranium, the international community needs a mechanism to anticipate worldwide neutron needs and plan how to meet them, according to U.S. nuclear experts Julia Phillips, Miles Pomper, and William Tobey. The IAEA is the institution best placed to facilitate such planning, they write in a May 12, 2021, commentary for the [Bulletin of Atomic Scientists](#). “An IAEA-based registry of capacity and needs would ... facilitate conversion or closure of remaining plants that use highly enriched uranium for fuel, reducing proliferation and nuclear terrorism risks,” according to Tobey, who has previously directed IPNT, and his co-authors.

Beebe Weighs in on U.S.-Russian CT Interaction

George Beebe, vice president and director of studies at the Center for the National Interest and former director of the CIA’s Russia analysis, has written a primer for the Belfer Center’s Russia Matters project that assesses the past, present and future of U.S.-Russian interaction in the counterterrorism domain. The primary terrorist threats facing the United States today include Islamist groups such as Islamic State and al-Qaida, as well as domestic groups on the far right and far left, with the possibility that terrorists anywhere in the world might gain access to nuclear materials. “As one of the world’s foremost repositories of nuclear weapons, materials and expertise, Russia can play a leading role in combatting nuclear terrorism,” he wrote in the [April 2021 primer](#). Whether the U.S. and Russia go beyond intelligence sharing toward broader counterterrorism cooperation will depend to a great degree on a host of domestic political factors that neither government fully controls, according to Beebe.



Duo Detained for Alleged Attempt to Sell Americium-241

Two men have been apprehended in Georgia for attempting to sell a radioactive substance. Georgia's State Security Service said on April 16, 2021, that the two suspects were detained in the republic’s city of Kutaisi, while trying to sell Americium-241, a radioactive isotope of the chemical element Americium, for 300,000 euros, according to [RFE/RL](#).

12th GUMO Guard’s Sentence Upheld

A Russian military appeals court in Siberia issued a verdict in April 2021 to uphold the sentence of Private Ramil Shamsutdinov, who was sentenced to 24 1/2 years in prison in January for killing eight fellow servicemen in a rampage he says was the result of hazing he faced in the army. Shamsutdinov served in a unit which is [reportedly](#) part of the Defense Ministry’s 12th Main Directorate, which is responsible for nuclear weapons.

NDAA-Mandated Group to Identify Nuclear Terrorism Risks

[Arms Control Today](#) reported in April 2021 that America’s National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine have begun to convene an ad hoc committee of experts on a report on nuclear war risks in a study mandated in the 2020 NDAA. The task of this study group is to “identify risks associated with nuclear terrorism and nuclear war” and “examine the assumptions about nuclear risks that underlie the national security strategy of the United States.”

Belfer’s MTA Hosts Conference on Lessons of Fukushima and Chernobyl

The Belfer Center’s Project on Managing the Atom (MTA) [brought together](#) three dozen experts from government, academia, and the nuclear sector for a March 3-5, 2021, conference exploring the lingering effects of Fukushima and Chernobyl and the evolution of the nuclear safety, security, and governance regimes in their aftermath.

“While decisions on nuclear safety and security must be supported by technical analyses, their effects are profoundly human and must also reflect informed consent by those potentially affected by them,” former director of the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism William Tobey wrote on the conference’s insights for the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. “We must learn from and remember the lessons of the past—while recognizing that Fukushima is not going to ‘happen again’ as future accidents will have their own characteristics,” he [wrote](#). Another IPNT participant and HKS Professor Matthew Bunn, posed the following question in his [take](#) on the outcome of the conference: “The burning question is how nuclear organizations and others operating potentially dangerous technologies can make sure they are alert to such warnings, remaining vigilant and constantly questioning their assumptions. Are we sure there won’t be a tsunami higher than the seawall? Are we sure terrorists won’t have that type of weapon?” In their [turn](#), Bunn’s MTA colleagues Ali Ahmad, Aditi Verma, and Francesca Giovannini urged nations not to indulge in illusions that “an accident could never happen within their own national borders because of differences in technological or institutional designs. “In an earlier development, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists [republished](#) Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s take on the lessons of the Chernobyl disaster. “I also remain concerned over the dangers of terrorist attacks on power reactors and terrorist groups’ acquisition of fissile material ...While the Chernobyl disaster was accidental, caused by faulty technology and human error, today’s disaster could very well be intentional,” the first and last president of USSR wrote in the piece that was republished in December 2020. “We especially must pay attention to keeping



Giovannini

Ahmad

Verma

Tobey

weapons and materials of mass destruction—in this case, nuclear weapons-grade materials such as high-enriched uranium and plutonium—out of the hands of terrorists and rogue nations,” he wrote.

Russia Withdraws from Uranium Hexafluoride Transportation Deal with U.S.

Russia has withdrawn from the agreement that regulated shipments of uranium hexafluoride from the United States as part of the US.-Russian HEU-LEU project for the disposition of

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weapons-grade uranium, according to [Gazeta.ru](#). The Russian government [instructed](#) Rosatom on March 2, 2021, to notify the U.S. about the decision.

Bell: U.S. Needs to Convince Russia on Contending With Nuclear Terrorism Threat

Alexandra Bell, then-Senior Policy Director at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, contributed a [primer](#) for the Belfer Center's Russia Matters project detailing the impact Russia does or can have on the U.S. interest in preventing the use and slowing the spread of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and securing nuclear weapons and materials. The January 2021 primer urges the Biden administration to "press Russia to expand cooperation to contend with ... [the] continuing threat of nuclear terrorism and the need for nuclear security cooperation." "The United States should also see if Russia has any interest in working together to expand all these efforts into multilateral formats, she wrote, Given the size of Russia's nuclear weapons and material stockpile, the United States has had an interest in mutual work to secure and safeguard these assets," Bell writes. Since contributing the primer, Bell joined the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance at the U.S. State Department and has [reportedly](#) been recently put in charge of the U.S. team in one of two U.S.-Russian working groups set up as part of the bilateral dialogue on strategic stability.



U.S. and Canada Complete Repatriation of HEU Material

The U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited have announced the completion of a multi-year campaign to repatriate 161 kilograms of highly enriched uranium liquid target residue material. The material has been repatriated from Chalk River Laboratories in Ontario, Canada, to the Savannah River Site in Aiken, South Carolina, [NEI Magazine](#) reported in January 2021.

Siegfried Hecker Outlines his Vision of Future for Nuclear Security Cooperation

Siegfried Hecker, a fellow at Stanford's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies and the former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, granted an [interview](#) to John Mecklin of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists to remind its readers of the threat of nuclear terrorism among other challenges. "We still have a huge spectrum of things on which we must cooperate with the Russians, and for that matter, the Chinese. These include avoiding nuclear confrontation, preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, safeguarding nuclear materials, mitigating the environmental consequences of all things nuclear, and expanding nuclear power globally safely and securely," Hecker said in the interview BAS published on Dec. 7, 2020. In the interview, Hecker noted how Vladimir Putin claimed that U.S. supposedly used U.S.-Russian nuclear security cooperation to "get access to all of their secrets," but that was not true. "Future cooperation will have to be structured not as an assistance program, but as mutually beneficial threat reduction. We thought that's what we were doing during the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, but Putin has his own narrative, and we are not going to change that," argued Hecker, who participates in IPNT.



Hackers Breach U.S. Nuclear Agency

U.S. Department of Energy and NNSA officials found suspicious activity in networks belonging to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories, the Office of Secure Transportation at NNSA, and the Richland Field Office of the DOE, according to [Politico](#). The hackers are believed to have gained access to the federal agencies' networks by compromising the software company SolarWinds, which sells IT management products to hundreds of government and private-sector clients, the outlet reported in December 2020. The Russian government has denied any complicity in the SolarWinds hack.

Tobey on Assassinations of Nuclear Scientists and Terrorists

In a [November 2020 update](#) of his 2012 article on assassinations of nuclear scientists, former director of IPNT William Tobey noted that nuclear scientists—even those in suspected illicit weapons programs—are different from terrorists. “In the abstract, the world will be more dangerous and less just if every nation feels within its rights to kill citizens of another country that advance their country’s military capabilities. Moreover, nuclear scientists are different from terrorists. They do not pose an immediate threat of violence against another nation. Presumably, they are acting within the laws of their country. Unless their nation is at war, they are not obviously legitimate military targets,” he wrote.

Rosatom Has Checked Nuclear Sites, Following a Tip on Terrorism from U.S.

Rosatom conducted a series of unscheduled inspections of nuclear facilities in September 2020 after the Russian authorities had been notified by the U.S. embassy in Moscow that it was possible that Islamic State terrorists would try to gain access to radioactive substances in Russia. This follows from Rosatom’s annual report for 2020, Interfax reported in [July 2021](#). [The report](#) said Rosatom registered no instances of embezzlement of nuclear materials, terrorist attacks or sabotage of nuclear plants in 2020.

NOTABLE STATEMENTS ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM AND NUCLEAR SECURITY:

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin:** “Russia... will proactively participate in international efforts to counter common challenges and threats which, unfortunately, still include terrorism and cross-border crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, poverty, inequality, climate change and environmental degradation.” ([Kremlin.ru](#), Nov. 18, 2021.)
- **U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer M. Granholm:** “We must also advance nuclear nonproliferation intentionally, and we have to do it internationally. We have to address the threat of nuclear terrorism, we have to mitigate the environmental harm from our nuclear program.” ([Energy.gov](#), June 24, 2021)
- **IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi** [in an address to the European Parliament]: “While our founders assumed the gravest danger lay in countries across the globe acquiring nuclear weapons, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, brought home the danger of non-state actors.” ([Europarl.europa.eu](#), March 16, 2021)

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- **The 2021 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community:** “Terrorists remain interested in using chemical and biological agents in attacks against U.S. interests and possibly the U.S. homeland.” ([Office of the Director of National Intelligence](#), April 13, 2021)
- **The 2021 Interim U.S. National Security Strategic Guidance:** “Pandemics and other biological risks, the escalating climate crisis, cyber and digital threats, international economic disruptions, protracted humanitarian crises, violent extremism and terrorism, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction all pose profound and, in some cases, existential dangers. None can be effectively addressed by one nation acting.” ([Whitehouse.gov](#), March 4, 2021)
- **U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan:** “What hasn’t stopped is the commitment by the United States, by the people of the United States, to provide information that would stop a terrorist from killing innocent Russians and people from other countries... I’m proud of the fact that my government will provide information to protect Russians from terrorist violence.” (Dozhd/[U.S. Embassy in Russia](#), Jan. 28, 2021)
- **Stimson Center’s Rebecca Earnhardt, Brendan Hyatt, Nickolas Roth:** “Every [U.S.] president serving in the last two decades has said that nuclear terrorism is a significant national security threat. ... A robust response to violent far-right extremist threats vis-a-vis nuclear security is necessary to minimize risk. Violent far-right extremists are not going away: The instability and chaos of the COVID-19 era combined with increased political polarization and dwindling trust in long-standing institutions suggests that the problem of right-wing extremist terror is likely to grow in coming years. Moreover, there is evidence that this threat is growing in other countries with nuclear facilities.” ([Bulletin of Atomic Scientists](#), January 2021)
- **James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies’ William Potter and Center for Energy and Security Studies’ Anton Khlopkov:** “Given the past record of U.S.-Russian nonproliferation cooperation, what accounts for our current inability to respond to the existential threat posed by proliferation and use of nuclear weapons? Have the memories of prior close calls such as the Cuban Missile Crisis faded? Do we no longer recognize our shared interests and responsibilities in preventing a nuclear catastrophe? Is it possible for us to rediscover the prior habit of cooperation to forestall the spread of nuclear weapons to other state and non-state actors?” ([Kommersant/Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey](#), Jan. 13, 2021)
- **The “NATO 2030: Unified for a New Era” report:** “The evolving strategies and modus operandi of terrorist networks and groups and the emergence and spread of EDTs [emerging and disruptive technologies] call for adaptive and innovative counterterrorism strategies, means, and methods. ... NATO could offer a surge capacity to individual countries whose capabilities may be overwhelmed by e.g. a terrorist attack involving non-conventional means including chemical, biological, or radiological substances.” ([NATO](#), December 2020)
- **The U.S. Department of Homeland Security:** “The United States faces a rising danger from terrorists and rogue states seeking to use weapons of mass destruction.” ([DHS](#), undated)

CREDITS:

The Russia Matters project's student associate Aleksandra Srdanovic researched information for the news item regarding the NNSA's 2021-2022 budgets.

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

В рабочей группе по осуществлению Американо-Российской инициативы по предотвращению ядерного терроризма состоят следующие организации:

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