

U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism Российско-Американская инициатива по предотвращению ядерного терроризма

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ИСКРАН

NEWS:

Graham Allison Calls for U.S.-Russian Cooperation on Counter-Proliferation

Graham Allison, Douglas Dillon Professor of Government at Harvard Kennedy School, believes that the U.S. and Russia could still cooperate in a number of areas, including denying state and non-state actors access to nuclear weapons. In an article published in the September-October 2017 issue of [The National Interest](#), Prof. Allison calls for bilateral efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. “By punishing Russia for its unacceptable aggression against Ukraine by cutting off all communication and cooperation with Russia—including joint actions to secure nuclear weapons and materials in Russia and other countries, and communication between commanders in Europe and the Middle East whose military forces were operating in close proximity—did Washington decrease or increase the level of risk?” the former director of Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs asks in his article. Professor Allison participates in the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism (IPNT).



LEU Bank Opens in Kazakhstan

The International Atomic Energy Agency’s low-enriched uranium bank opened on August 29 in Kazakhstan. The \$150-million facility will store up to 90 tons of LEU fuel. The project was funded by donors, including the United States, the European Union, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Norway and the Nuclear Threat Initiative, according to [Reuters](#). “By hosting the IAEA LEU bank, Kazakhstan has made another contribution to strengthening the global non-proliferation regime,” Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said. “The prospect of a global summit on nuclear security, which was held at the initiative of the United States, remains open. ... Kazakhstan is ready to initiate the renewal of the global nuclear security summit in order to hold it here in our capital, Astana,” he said. The bank makes it easier for countries like the United States to argue if some country is building its own enrichment supply that that's not legitimate, according to Harvard Kennedy School Professor [Matthew Bunn](#), who participates in the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism.



Bunn

U.S. and Russian Experts on Nuclear Threats Posed by North Korea

Professor Graham Allison is concerned that the North Korean regime might sell a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group. In an [article](#) published by *The Atlantic* Aug. 28 and focused on analyzing the potential impact of the recent tests of North Korean long-range missiles, Professor Allison argues that Kim Jong Un is more likely to sell a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group than to launch a nuclear attack on the United States. “There is another, even more likely way that a North Korean nuclear weapon could explode in a U.S. city: Kim could sell one to terrorists. Are

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the terrorists the United States is fighting today interested in nuclear weapons? Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al Qaeda, has been seeking nuclear weapons for more than a decade. Moreover, in 2016, an ISIS-related group was discovered actively pursuing nuclear materials at a Belgian nuclear power plant.” Professor Allison asserts that the United States must do everything possible to make Kim believe he won’t be able to get away with “selling a nuclear weapon, or the material to make one, to a terrorist group.”

Belfer Center Executive Director for Research Gary Samore and William Tobey, the director of the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism, have also weighed in on the North Korean missile tests. As Dr. Samore notes in his August [interview](#) with Russia Matters, “For all his noisy threats and bluster, Kim Jong Un has been very careful to avoid actions that could cause a conflict with the U.S.” However, Samore believes that U.S. President Donald Trump still needs to send Kim a clear message, with an identical copy delivered to China’s president Xi Jinping: “If any nuclear bomb of North Korean origin were to explode on American soil or that of an American ally, the United States will respond as though North Korea itself had hit the United States with a nuclear-tipped ICBM.” Mr. Tobey also [believes](#) North Korea can be successfully deterred from attacking the U.S. and its allies.

Siegfried Hecker, a professor at Stanford University’s Center for International Security and Cooperation, has also weighed in on the North Korean tests. “The greatest North Korean threat we face is not from a nuclear-tipped missile hitting the U.S. mainland, but from Washington stumbling into an inadvertent nuclear war on the Korean peninsula,” he [told](#) the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists in August 2017. Dr. Hecker believes the Trump administration should hold talks with DPRK to convey to Pyongyang that “any export of nuclear technologies or weapons know-how is unacceptable.” U.S. officials could take the opportunity to emphasize to their North Korean counterparts that they won’t risk war by attacking North Korea or seeking to overthrow the Kim government, just as they expect North Korea to not risk war by attacking the United States, South Korea, and Japan or by transferring elements of its nuclear program to terrorist groups, Hecker [told](#) the Atlantic in a separate interview. Alexey Arbatov of the Center for International Security at the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of World Economy and International Relations [argues](#) the first step that the international community and North Korea can agree upon is a moratorium on North Korean nuclear tests in exchange for easing sanctions on the so-called Hermit Kingdom. Gen. Viktor Yesin, senior researcher at the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, [believes](#) that the recent tests show that North Korea can develop a nuclear-armed ICBM in 2022-2023. Professor Allison, Dr. Samore, Dr. Hecker, Dr. Arbatov and Gen. Yesin all participate in the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism.



Allison

Samore

Tobey

Hecker

Arbatov

Yesin

Ghana Becomes Free of HEU

The U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration has cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the governments of Ghana and China to repatriate approximately one

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kilogram of highly enriched uranium from a reactor in Ghana originated in China. This shipment removes the last known HEU from Ghana, making it the 32nd country, plus Taiwan, to become HEU-free, according to an August 29 statement by [NNSA](#).

First Spent Nuclear Fuel Rods Shipped From Andreeva Bay

The first of 22,000 spent nuclear submarine fuel rods sent from the Andreyeva Bay in the Russian Arctic arrived at the Mayak reprocessing facility in the Ural Mountains on August 16, according to a report by Norway's [Bellona](#) NGO. Western nations are giving Russia nearly \$130 million to clear up nuclear waste at this Cold War naval base, which remains one of the most toxic sites in the whole of the country, according to the [BBC](#).

South Carolina Sues Federal Government over Plutonium

South Carolina is suing the U.S. government to recover \$100 million in fines that it says the Department of Energy owes the state for failing to remove one metric ton of plutonium stored there, according to an August 8 report by [Reuters](#). A 2000 U.S.-Russian agreement required each country to dispose of 34 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium, left over from the Cold War. The U.S. project to build a mixed-oxide fuel fabrication facility at the Savannah River site in South Carolina, where weapons-grade plutonium would be disposed of under the 2000 agreement, has suffered delays. Russia, which has already built such a plant, suspended its participation in the 2000 deal last year.

U.S. and Ukraine Renew Nuclear Safety Deal

The U.S. and Ukraine have renewed their agreement to exchange technical information on nuclear safety. The two countries are also going to cooperate in the training of personnel and exchange of specialists, [according](#) to Boris Stolyarchuk, the head of Ukraine's nuclear regulatory body.

Russia's New Naval Doctrine Highlights Terrorism and WMD Threats

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a strategic naval document that highlights nuclear and terrorist threats to Russia. In particular, the Fundamentals of the Russian Federation's Naval Activities through the Year 2030 lists "proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile technologies" among the security challenges that the country faces. The July 20 [document](#) says Moscow is also concerned about the "widening scale of international terrorism, piracy and poaching, and the illegal transportation of weapons, psychotropic narcotics, chemical substances, and radioactive materials."

Rosatom Continues to Install Nuclear Security Systems

Rosatom installed nuclear security systems at 50 Russian Defense Ministry facilities in 2016. Rosatom also conducted 12 inspections of systems of physical protection at its facilities to ensure that they are compliant with anti-terrorist protection requirements. The corporation also initiated

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work to decommission hazardous facilities at 20 locations in order to preclude acts of terrorism there, according to [Rosatom's annual report for 2016](#), which was released in July 2017.

Russian MoD's Nuclear Security Chief Resigns

Lt. Gen. Yuri Sych, the head of the Russian Defense Ministry's 12th Directorate, which is in charge of the storage, maintenance and launch preparation of the country's nuclear arsenal, has resigned after complaining of health issues. Maj. Gen. Igor Kolesnikov has been appointed the acting head of the directorate, according to a July 17 report in [The Moscow Times](#).

Fuel to Be Loaded into the Reactor of World's First Floating NPP in Murmansk

Residents have successfully pressed Rosatom to refrain from activating the reactor of the first floating nuclear power plant in St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city. Rather, the fuel would be loaded into the reactor of the floating NPP in Murmansk. The NPP will then be transported to generate electricity at Pevek, which is located in Russia's far eastern Chukotka peninsula, according to a July 25 report by Russia's [Rosbalt](#) news agency. The Baltiysky plant in St. Petersburg is completing construction of the floating plant. The reactor was 96 percent ready as of June 2017, and it is to be shipped out by June 2018, according to a July 14 report by Russia's [RIA](#) news agency that cited the plant's management.

Hecker and White on U.S.-Russian Nuclear Cooperation

Siegfried S. Hecker and Paul C. White have co-authored an [op-ed version](#) of the book "Doomed to Cooperate," which Dr. Hecker edited and tells the story of U.S.-Russian lab-to-lab nuclear cooperation in the words of American and Russian scientists. In their op-ed, published by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists on July 13, the authors argue that the scientists and engineers on both sides are prepared to resume the cooperation that was suspended in the wake of the Ukraine crisis. Doing so would enhance both nuclear security and safety, the authors write, noting, "Ensuring nuclear safety is a never-ending job."



Hecker

Alexey Arbatov: Nukes Will End Up in Hands of Terrorists Sooner or Later

Alexey Arbatov, of the Center for International Security at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations, has written a commentary for Russia's [Nezavisimaya Gazeta](#) in which he warns that acquisition of nuclear weapons by more states will undermine the existing global nuclear order. "Nuclear weapons or weapons materials and expertise will inevitably sooner or later fall into the hands of terrorists via new nuclear states, which will put an end to the nuclear weapons' role as a "factor of peace and security," he writes in the July 7 commentary. Arbatov's center participates in the working group of the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism.



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Hackers Breach U.S. Power Stations

Hackers working for a foreign government recently breached at least a dozen U.S. power plants, including the Wolf Creek nuclear facility in Kansas, U.S. officials told Bloomberg. The intruders could be positioning themselves to eventually disrupt America's power supply, according to a July 7 report by [Bloomberg](#).

Pentagon Classifies Results of Nuclear Security Checks

The Pentagon has classified assessments of safety and security of its nuclear weapons operations, [AP](#) reported on July 3. While overall results of routine inspections at nuclear weapons bases had previously been publicly available, they are now classified. "The whole thing smells bad," Steven Aftergood, a government secrecy expert with the Federation of American Scientists told AP. "They're acting like they have something to hide, and it's not national security secrets," he added.

Russia Develops a New LEU Research Reactor

The Russian joint stock company Krasny Zvezda (Red Star) is developing a new reactor based on the [Argus research reactor](#). The new reactor is called Argus-M, and its so-called active zone will be twice as large as its predecessor, with a volume of 45 liters. Uranium will be enriched in Argus-M to 19.5 percent so that it complies with the International Atomic Energy Agency's ceiling of 20 percent enrichment, according to a June 20 report by [Regnum](#) news agency.

Computer Attack Forces Workers to Manually Monitor Radiation at Chernobyl

Computer systems in Ukraine were struck in an international cyberattack in late June and among those affected were systems that monitor radiation at the Chernobyl nuclear plant. The attack forced workers to manually monitor radiation because their computers failed, [New York Times](#) reported on June 28th.

Former Top Western and Russian Officials Urge Cooperation against Nuclear Terrorism

Former British Defense Secretary Des Browne, former German Ambassador to the United States Wolfgang Ischinger, former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, and former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn have written a letter to Presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, urging them to start working on issues of common interests, such as countering nuclear terrorism. One step that the U.S. and Russian leaders should take is "to collaborate to prevent ISIS and other terrorist groups from acquiring nuclear and radiological materials through a joint initiative to prevent WMD terrorism," according to the text of the letter, which [NTI](#) published on June 27.

Belfer Center Experts Build Timeline for Nunn-Lugar in FSU

The Belfer Center's Simon Saradzhyan and Mariana Budjeryn have put together a [timeline](#) of activities under America's Cooperative Threat Reduction programs in post-Soviet states, while William Tobey wrote [a foreword](#) to the chronology, which was published in June 2017. Mr. Tobey notes "that the story of the bombs that did not go off and the terrorist attacks that did not occur deserves to be told and understood and thus the timeline is an important contribution." He

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also warns that “the threats to nuclear security continue to be real and urgent in Russia and elsewhere.” To address these threats effectively will require that the current set of American and Russian leaders demonstrate as much courage and creativity as did their predecessors in the 1990s, according to Mr. Tobey, who directs the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism. In addition, Mrs. Budjeryn interviewed former U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn, who, together with former Sen. Richard Lugar, initiated the CTR effort. “The main lesson that came out of the CTR program was that in today’s world, when nations no longer have the monopoly on weapons of mass destruction and disruption, we have a choice between cooperation and catastrophe. And that’s an ongoing choice,” Sen. Nunn [said](#).



Nunn

Russia’s Anti-Terrorist Committee Discusses Nuclear Terrorism Threats

The National Anti-Terrorist Committee of Russia convened a meeting to discuss terrorist threats in Russia’s Southern Federal District. “The issues of improving the state system of countering nuclear terrorism and the results of the activities of antiterrorist commissions in subjects of the Russian Federation located within the Southern Federal District were discussed” at the meeting, which was chaired by the head of NAC and the chief of the Federal Security Service, Alexander Bortnikov, according to a June 6 report by Russia’s [Nezavisimaya Gazeta](#) daily.

Representatives of 21 Countries Hone Nuclear Material Accounting Skills

The U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration and the International Atomic Energy Agency hosted a training session on state systems of accounting for and control of nuclear material at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. Twenty-three representatives from 21 countries learned how to implement and maintain effective accounting and control through during the May session, according to a June 8 statement by [NNSA](#).

Japan Hosts GICNT

Nearly 220 delegates from 74 countries and four international organizations took part in the two-day meeting in Tokyo of the 10th plenary of the [Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism on June 1-2](#). The participants exchanged views on how to prevent weapons of mass destruction and related materials from falling into the hands of terrorists, according to a report by Japan’s Kyodo news agency.

NOTABLE STATEMENTS ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM AND NUCLEAR SECURITY:

- Anatoly Antonov, Russia’s ambassador to U.S.: “In addition to the obvious counter-terrorism sphere, the coordination of efforts between Russia and the United States is needed in tackling other dangerous challenges, including drug trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and cybercrime. ([Kommersant](#), August 31, 2017)

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- U.S. President Donald Trump: “We must prevent nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the hands of terrorists and being used against us, or anywhere in the world, for that matter.” ([Washington Post](#), August 21, 2017)
- Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor and publisher of the Nation: “The first priority for the United States should be reengaging Russia in efforts to reduce nuclear arsenals, and to deny terrorists access to nuclear materials.” ([National Interest](#), September-October 2017)
- Kirill Yermakov, technical director of Russia’s KIWI electronic payment company: “The threat of information security was regarded as a threat of losing money some 5-10 years go. Now, however, we say that information security threat is a threat of global disasters, because, for example, seizure of control systems of a nuclear power plant can lead to the most terrible consequences.” ([RIA Novosti](#), July 26, 2017)
- A Greenpeace statement on the building of the first floating NPP in Russia: “The usual list of accident risks will be supplemented by natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis), sea piracy and terrorism. In the event of the floating NPP is captured, a significant amount of highly enriched uranium will fall into the hands of criminals, and they will get a chance to engage in nuclear blackmail.” ([Rosbalt](#), July 25, 2017)
- Tebogo Seokolo, chairman of the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors: “What we saw at nuclear facilities in Russia is a very high level of both nuclear security and safety, and of nuclear culture in general.” ([RIA](#), July 14, 2017)
- Rosatom Corporation: “In 2016, no breaches of requirements for entry and inner presence regimes at facilities of the state corporation Rosatom that would have led to theft of nuclear materials, terrorist acts or acts of sabotage at nuclear units were allowed.” ([Rosatom’s annual report for 2016](#), July 2017)
- John Bruce Jessen, one of the psychologists involved in devising harsh interrogation techniques for the U.S. government, of pressure from U.S. security officials: “They kept telling me every day a nuclear bomb was going to be exploded in the U.S. and that because I had told them to stop, I had lost my nerve and it was going to be my fault if I didn’t continue.” ([Newser](#), June 21, 2017)
- Alexander Merten, president of Rosatom International Network: “Our nuclear stations are now capable of withstanding an earthquake of up to nine points, a tsunami of up to 15 meters high, and the fall of a heavy transport aircraft onto the reactor dome.” ([Gazeta.ru](#), June 14, 2017)

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 2017: 210th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and the United States.
- September 12-25, 2017: United Nations General Assembly in New York.
- September 14-20, 2017: Large-scale Russian-Belarusian military exercise “West-2017.”
- October 2017: 25th anniversary of US and Belarus signing the umbrella CTR agreement.
- October 1, 2017: 25th anniversary of the U.S. Senate ratification of the START I treaty
- October 4, 2017: 60th anniversary of the launch of Sputnik.
- October 16-28, 2017: 55th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- November 2017: 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution.

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- December 8, 2017: 30th anniversary of the signing the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.
- February 5, 2018: New START Treaty due date for U.S. and Russia to reach a limit of 1,550 warheads on deployed strategic delivery systems each.
- March 18, 2018: Presidential elections in Russia.

CALL FOR PAPERS, ARTICLES AND COMMENTARY:

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

CREDITS:

Photos of Graham Allison, William Tobey, Gary Samore, and Matthew Bunn by the Belfer Center; photo of Siegfried Hecker by the U.S. State Department; photo of Viktor Yesin by the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies; photo of Alexei Arbatov by the Institute of World Economy and International Relations; photo of Sam Nunn by the Nuclear Threat Initiative. Karen Saradzhyan contributed to this newsletter.

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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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