

U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism

Российско-Американская инициатива по предотвращению ядерного терроризма

March – May 2017 newsletter Информационный бюллетень за март - май 2017 г



ИСКРАН

NEWS:

Japan Hosts GICNT's 10th Plenary

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. The participants of the June 1-2, 2017 event exchanged views on how to prevent weapons of mass destruction and related materials from falling into the hands of terrorists, according to Kyodo news agency. They also welcomed Paraguay and Nigeria as new partners, according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry's [account](#) of the plenary.

Siegfried Hecker's *Doomed to Cooperate* Wins a U.S. National Award

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) has [given](#) an award to the Los Alamos Historical Society's publishing division for publishing a book edited by Siegfried Hecker entitled *Doomed to Cooperate*. Through the words of American and Russian scientists, the book tells the story of how scientists helped the world avoid nuclear war in the post-Cold War period. It was this cooperation that allowed the two former superpower enemies to "get past the sensitivity barriers" and make "the world a safer place," Hecker [told](#) Stanford News at the time the book was released in 2016. Dr. Hecker participates in the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism.



Rolf Mowatt-Larssen on U.S.-Russian Interaction on Terrorism

Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, newly-appointed director of the Belfer Center's Intelligence and Defense Projects, has published a number of articles in which he touched upon U.S. interaction with Russia in the sphere of counter-terrorism against the background of the ongoing investigation of Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 presidential campaign in the United States. "Unquestionably, U.S.-Russian counterterrorism cooperation to prevent ISIS bombings of civilian airliners is in our common interest, especially at a time when so many issues divide us," he wrote in a May 17 [commentary](#), in which he criticized the way Donald Trump reportedly chose to share information related to an ISIS bomb threat with senior Russian officials.



Olli Heinonen: Terrorist Threat is Getting Increasingly Sophisticated

Belfer Center associate Olli Heinonen has briefed participants of a May 2017 [NATO conference](#) in Finland on evolving global proliferation challenges. In his [presentation](#), Mr. Heinonen stated that humanity is fortunate not to have experienced any acts of nuclear terrorism so far, but

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warned terrorist organizations are getting more sophisticated. “Threats of nuclear terrorism also come from many sources, ranging from sophisticated and well-financed terrorist organizations, nuclear smugglers, and hackers capable of launching devastating cyber-attacks to would-be terrorists with inside information on nuclear installations,” he stated. Mr. Heinonen participates in this Initiative.

The Trump Administration Requests \$13.9 Bn for NNSA, Wants to Terminate MOX Plant

The Trump administration released its Fiscal Year 2018 budget request on May 23. The request would increase the funds allocated to the [National Nuclear Security Administration](#) by \$1 billion to \$13.9 billion, a 7.8% increase above the FY 2017 Omnibus level, according to the agency. NNSA would get \$10.2 billion for nuclear weapons activities, which represents 10.8% above the FY 2017 Omnibus level. For Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, Trump’s FY 2018 Budget Request (\$1.8 billion) is consistent with the FY 2017 Omnibus level, according to the NNSA. The administration is proposing to “terminate the MOX project and pursue the dilute & dispose (D&D) option as an alternative,” according to [Stephen Young](#) of the Union of Concerned Scientists. In a separate earlier development, a U.S. federal judge [ruled](#) that federal authorities cannot complete the unfinished mixed-oxide fuel facility at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina. Construction of this facility was stipulated by the U.S.-Russian Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement, but Russia suspended its participation in the agreement in October 2016, [citing](#) “inability” of Washington to fulfill its obligations under the agreement. The Russian Foreign Ministry then issued a [statement](#) in April 2017 saying Russia “is ready to consider the possibility of reactivation of the PMDA if the U.S. side eliminates the causes that led to a radical change of conditions that were in effect at the moment, when the agreement came into force.”

UN: Terrorists No Longer Need Access to Nuclear Weapons to Effect a Nuclear Detonation

The existing arsenals of the nuclear-armed States represent the most obvious means by which terrorists or other non-state actors could acquire a nuclear weapon, according to an April 2017 [study](#) by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). However, technological advance suggests a declining need for modern terrorists to directly access an actual weapon in order to effect a nuclear detonation event, the study warns. For instance, they could try to hack into early-warning or even nuclear command and control systems to provoke a nuclear strike, according to UNIDIR. “Unfortunately, both the understanding of these new risks and strategies to address them are lagging behind, adding to the uncertainties in assessing the risk of non-state actors vis-à-vis nuclear weapons,” states the report, entitled “Understanding Nuclear Weapon Risks.”

Changes at the Belfer Center

Harvard Kennedy School Dean Douglas Elmendorf [announced](#) on March 28 that Belfer Center’s long-time leader Graham Allison will step down as director of the Center at the end of the academic year and will be succeeded by former Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and Carter’s former Chief of Staff Eric Rosenbach. Both Carter and Rosenbach are alumni of the Belfer

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Center. Professor Allison, whose [new book](#) “Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?” cites the threat of nuclear terrorism as a common threat to the US and China as well as to Russia that might provide a reason to work together, will remain part of the Belfer Center’s research elite and continue as the Douglas Dillon Professor of Government at the Harvard Kennedy School. In another development, Kevin Ryan has [stepped](#) down as director of the Belfer Center’s Intelligence and Defense Projects, but will remain part of The Elbe Group, which he launched in 2010 to maintain open communications between high-level defense and intelligence officials in the U.S. and Russia. General Ryan will also continue as an associate at the Center working on intelligence and defense issues with a focus on Russian military and security issues. General Ryan’s Elbe Group colleague and long-time intelligence officer Rolf Mowatt-Larssen is the new director of the center’s Intelligence and Defense Projects. Allison, Ryan and Mowatt-Larssen participate in this Initiative.



From left to right: Eric Rosenbach, Douglas Elmendorf, Graham Allison and Ashton Carter.



Rolf Mowatt-Larssen and Kevin Ryan (first and second from right)

Byron Dorgan on U.S.-Russian Cooperation against Nuclear Terrorism

Former U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan has penned [an article](#) for *Defense One*, in which he calls on U.S. and Russia to resume cooperation in the sphere of nuclear security. In his March 28 article, Senator Dorgan warns that a nuclear terrorist attack is not a “far-fetched” scenario. “Therefore, nuclear terrorism should be added to the list” of issues that U.S. and Russia jointly tackle in spite

of their differences over Ukraine and Syria, according to the former legislator. “It would take only one nuclear terror attack to radically alter our way of life. Should this happen, the public would wonder why alleged treaty violations, military differences, and geopolitical disagreements prevented action to avert catastrophe,” he warned.

Russians Believe Al-Qaeda Most Likely of All Non-State Actors to Use WMD against Their Country

When [asked](#) by the state-owned Russian Public Opinion Research Center in May 2017 to assess which actor is most likely to use weapons of mass destruction against their country, Russians said they viewed al-Qaeda and “Chechen terrorists” as the second and third likely source of such an attack after the United States. At the same time, Russians do not appear to be very concerned about proliferation of nuclear weapons among the states. The share of Russians who told the center that they think Russia and other nuclear powers should refrain from punishing other countries for pursuing nuclear weapons (41%) was greater than the share of Russians who think such aspiring members of the nuclear club should be punished (38%). (Russia Matters, 05.17.17)

Spent Nuclear Fuel Removed At Andreeva Guba

The first seven of 22,000 spent nuclear fuel elements that are stored in concrete tanks at Andreeva Guba were taken out in May, according to a May 18 report by the [Barents Observer](#). The tanks make up the most hazardous Cold War heritage in the Russian north, according to this publication. Andreeva Guba served as the main nuclear waste facility for the Soviet Navy’s Northern Fleet.

Nuclear Security Center Opens in Kazakhstan

The government of Kazakhstan and NNSA have teamed up to open a Nuclear Security Training Center on May 12 in this Central Asian republic’s town of Ala-Tau. The NSTC will train nuclear facility personnel in security disciplines, including physical protection systems, nuclear material accounting and control systems, response forces, and secure transportation, according to a [NNSA](#) press release.

Russian Government Establishes Security Zones around Nuclear Facilities

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has issued an edict to establish security zones with “special legal regime” around the nation’s nuclear facilities, including atomic power plants and storage facilities. Medvedev signed the [decree](#), which aims to protect these nuclear facilities from terrorist attacks, on May 4.

Russia to Build a New Ship to Transport Nuclear Waste

Russia has announced plans to build an enormous ice-class ship to ferry nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel from points along the Northern Sea Route as well as from its river tributaries, according an April 17 report by [Bellona](#). In a separate development, Russian State Corporation

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Rosatom was reported to have been removing all spent fuel from one of the facilities at the Scientific Research Technological Institute in Sosnovy Bor. The fuel was shipped to the RT-1 reprocessing plant at the NPO Mayak, Ozersk, according to [IPFM](#).

Belfer Center Launches a U.S.-Pakistan Relations Dialogue on Nuclear Security and Other Issues

A number of Belfer Center experts [participated](#) in launching a U.S.-Pakistani dialogue in Istanbul in April 2017. Participants discussed a number of issues, including pathways that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons, fissile material production in South Asia, and nuclear security policies and practices of each country. The Belfer Center's delegation to the event included Gary Samore, James Cartwright, William H. Tobey, Steven E. Miller, Matthew Bunn, Martin B. Malin, and Mansoor Ahmed. Samore, Tobey and Bunn participate in this Initiative.



Pakistani Lt. Gen. Khalid Ahmed Kidwai and Gary Samore in Istanbul

RUSI: Central Asia Should Do More to Prevent Nuclear Smuggling

Central Asia's increasing vulnerability to the smuggling of nuclear fissile material poses a potential threat to international security, according to a recent [commentary](#) published by Britain's Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). To reduce the threat, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan should join the IAEA's Convention on Nuclear Safety. All Central Asian states should also be encouraged to report the seizure or loss of nuclear material to the IAEA's Incident and Trafficking Database, according to the April 6, 2017 commentary by RUSI's Sophie Henderson. The willingness of Central Asian governments to combat nuclear proliferation also provides an opportunity for U.S. and Russia to cooperate in the sphere of nuclear security, according to the author.

Belarus Stages a Counter-Terrorism Exercise at NPP

The government of Belarus has staged a counter-terrorism exercise at the nuclear power plant that is being constructed in Astravets. Units of the republic's State Security Committee, the

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Interior Ministry, the State Border Committee of Belarus, and the Emergencies Ministry took part in the April 27 exercise, which was meant to hone responses to terrorist attacks, according to [Belta](#).

Radiation Detection System Installed at Moldova's Main Airport

NNSA and Moldovan government cooperated to install a radiation detection system at this post-Soviet republic's Chisinau International Airport. The system of 18 radiation portal monitors and associated communications systems will enhance efforts to prevent smuggling of dangerous radioactive materials across international borders, according to [NNSA](#)'s April 18 press release.

NNSA Maps Out Its Global Effort to Remove HEU and Plutonium

On April 17, NNSA released an updated [map](#) on its global efforts to remove plutonium and HEU that could be used for terrorist purposes.



GAO: DOE and NNSA Should Improve Reporting Practices

The U.S. Government Accountability Office has analyzed nuclear security reporting by the U.S. Department of Energy to conclude that this agency should improve its reporting practices regarding its HEU housing facilities, according to [Homeland Preparedness News](#). GAO's report found DOE and NNSA's recent annual reports on the security of HEU facilities did not meet the federal definition of quality information, citing an issue with the report's timeliness, accessibility, or accuracy, HPN reported on April 14th.

William Tobey on U.S. Policy toward Russia



Director of the Initiative William Tobey has published a [commentary](#) in Foreign Policy to outline his vision of U.S. policy toward Russia. The article takes stock of the bilateral relationship to identify areas of divergence and convergence of the two countries' interests. "On some matters, Russian and American interests coincide. Both countries seek to end radical Islamic terrorism. Both countries need to secure nuclear weapons and materials, and to work with third parties to do so. Both countries have an interest in a stable and transparent nuclear weapons balance," Tobey writes.

Murmansk Has Hosted Conference on Nuclear Terrorism

Russia's city of Murmansk has hosted a conference on preventing acts of nuclear terrorism, [Barents Observer](#) reported on April 5, 2017. "The Kola Peninsula is saturated with nuclear facilities, so the topic is very relevant for us," Aleksandr Metelkov, chief of staff of FSB's operational headquarters, told the conference. "As we see it today, the tactics of terrorists are constantly changing, both their ways and the means they are using to achieve their goals are changing," Metelkov said.

Matthew Bunn on Insider Threats

Matthew Bunn, Professor of Practice at Harvard Kennedy School and Co-Principal Investigator of the Belfer Center's Project on Managing the Atom, has given a number of presentations to promote the *Insider Threats* [volume](#) that he has edited together with Scott D. Sagan of the Freeman Spogli Institute at Stanford University. Among other venues, Professor Bunn presented at a [webinar](#) organized by the Union of Concerned Scientists on March 22.



Russian MoD Refutes a Prank Report on Theft of Nuclear Weapons

A spokesman for Russia's Central Military District felt obliged to [refute](#) a message that was posted on a local web site as a piece of "satire" that claimed a truckload of nuclear weapons was stolen from a military unit in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg. "These are fruit of imagination," the district's spokesman Yaroslav Roshchupkin told [TASS](#) on March 9, 2017.

Elbe Group's March Meeting Tackles Nuclear Terrorism, Other Challenges

The U.S. – Russian [Elbe Group](#) met on March 15-16 in Valletta, Malta to discuss sensitive US-Russia issues including Syria, violent Islamic extremism, strategic stability, European security, and nuclear terrorism. Members of the group concluded the meeting by issuing a joint statement, in which they urged the leaders of both governments to meet as soon as practical to reduce tensions and craft a way forward on several serious common issues. The members of the Elbe

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Group are senior U.S. and Russian retired military and intelligence flag officers, all of whom have strong connections back into their governments.



IPNT Experts Weigh in on North Korean Nuclear Challenge

This spring has seen Belfer Center experts continue to ponder the challenges to the global nuclear order posed by North Korea, which has not only conducted missile tests, but has also reportedly attempted to sell a form of lithium metal, which is used for development of miniaturized nuclear weapons. The attempt to sell enriched lithium-6 to unidentified international buyers took place online last year, according to the UN Panel of Expert's February 2017 [report](#) on North Korea cited by [Wall Street Journal](#) on March 8. One radical way to solve North Korea's nuclear program would be for China to assume responsibility for removing the Kim regime, denuclearizing the country, and reunifying the peninsula under a government in Seoul friendly to Beijing. This sequence of actions was outlined in a [thought-provoking](#) commentary that outgoing director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs Graham Allison published in the *New York Times* on May 30. According to Belfer Center senior fellow William Tobey, the strides that North Korea has made in its nuclear and missile programs means that patience toward the Hermit Kingdom is no longer a viable option. "The risk of nuclear theft will become more acute. As fissile material production grows..., opportunities for diversion will grow," he warns. The Belfer Center's executive director for research Gary Samore has also weighed in on the North Korean challenge in an article he has co-authored with MIT Professor John Deutch for *National Interest*. In their [May 31 piece](#) the two experts underscore the need to convince China, which has the greatest leverage over DPRK, that the effort to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons is worthwhile. Dr. Samore has also shared his views on the North Korean nuclear challenge in a number of interviews and presentations, including an April

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19 interview to [Harvard Gazette](#) and April 28 interview to [WGBH](#). Siegfried Hecker, professor at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation, believes that the North Korean nuclear program cannot be stopped with weapons. Rather, United States should launch a dialogue with North Korea to prepare multilateral negotiations on how to stop, and eventually eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons, Dr. Hecker [told](#) the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists in mid-May. Pavel Zolotarev, a deputy director of Russia's Institute for the U.S. and Canadian Studies, also appears to see no military solution to the North Korean problem. Rather, all parties interested in resolution of this issue should exercise restraint, this retired general [told](#) Nikkei on April 26. Prof. Allison, Dr. Samore, Gen. Zolotarev and Dr. Hecker participate in this Initiative, which Mr. Tobey directs.

FMCT Group Meets

The first session of the High Level Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) Expert Preparatory Group took place in New York on March 2-3, 2017, [IPFM Blog](#) reported on March 3, 2017. The group includes representatives of Russia and United States and its discussions will continue in Geneva on July 31, 2017.

NTI and Luxembourg Forum Organize Event to Discuss Nuclear Terrorism

The Nuclear Threat Initiative and International Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe joined forces for an event in March in Washington D.C., to discuss the threat of a deadly nuclear attack emanating from rogue states and terror groups, including the Islamic State. The two organizations also presented a book, entitled [Preventing the Crisis of the Nuclear Arms Control and Catastrophic Terrorism](#) at their joint event. Participants of the event included Alexey Arbatov and Vladimir Dvorkin of the Center for International Security at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations, which participates in this initiative. President of the Luxembourg forum Moshe (Vyacheslav) Kantor has also penned an [op-ed](#) for *Washington Times* to alert readers of this newspaper to the growing threat of terrorism. “The leaders of Russia, the United States, Britain, China and other important powers around the world must make countering nuclear terrorism the highest priority, and can only do so by upholding international security with cooperation,” he wrote in the March 23, 2017 article. National governments should authorize greater collaboration of their special services to lower probability of nuclear terrorism, according to Mr. Kantor.



Arbatov

Dvorkin

NNSA and FBI Stage a WMD Exercise

NNSA and FBI co-sponsored a WMD counterterrorism exercise in March at the University of Michigan. The exercise, which drew 112 emergency responders and law enforcement officials, challenged participants to refine strategies and techniques for radiological security and incident response, according to a statement by [NNSA](#).

NOTABLE STATEMENTS ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM AND NUCLEAR SECURITY:

- IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano’s statement at High-Level Dialogue on Nuclear Security: “As for security, terrorists will attack the weak points in a security chain. So, the most dangerous country from the nuclear security perspective – and the most vulnerable – is the country that does not recognize the risk of nuclear terrorism and take action against it.” ([IAEA](#), June 9, 2017).
- Sergei Oznobishchev, director of the Moscow-based Institute for Strategic Assessments: “There exists a hypothetical probability a so-called “bomb in the garage” will be built, that is a nuclear explosive device would be assembled from separate components in the center of a large city.” ([Expert](#), June 8, 2017)
- Dean of the School of World Economics and International Relations at Russia’s National Research University–Higher School of Economics Karaganov: “All nuclear powers should pool efforts in order to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons to keep them away from terrorists and accidental use.” ([Russia in Global Affairs](#), June 6, 2017)
- Alexey Arbatov, director of the Center for International Security at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations: “It doesn’t make sense for terrorists to provoke a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan because they themselves live there. They will not be spared in a nuclear war.” ([Pravda](#), May 9, 2017)
- Former U.S. ambassadors to the International Atomic Energy Agency Laura E. Kennedy and Laura S. H. Holgate on why U.S. should continue to support IAEA: “Such tools as international standards for nuclear security, regional cooperation and peer reviews of security practices are all critical to countering nuclear terrorism, and if the IAEA didn’t already exist to support these efforts, we would have to invent it.” ([National Interest](#), May 4, 2017)
- Former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry: “A chilling return to Cold War nuclear dangers in addition to the more recent possibilities of nuclear terrorism and regional nuclear conflicts lead me to conclude that the likelihood of a nuclear catastrophe today is greater than it was during the Cold War.” ([The Hill](#), April 25, 2017)
- Moroccan Nuclear and Radiological Safety and Security Agency Director General Khammar Mrabit: “It is widely acknowledged that the threat of nuclear terrorism is real and the response has to be global.” ([World Nuclear News](#), April 24, 2017)
- Chairman of U.S.-Korea Institute Robert Gallucci on the proliferation threats emanating from North Korea: “It is this type of activity, selling fissile material, the equipment or technology to produce it, nuclear weapons components or designs, or even the weapons themselves, that would create the nightmare scenario of nuclear terrorism we most fear.” ([Yonhap](#), March 30, 2017)

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- June 16-17, 2017. 25th anniversary of Presidents George Bush and Boris Yeltsin signing the U.S.-Russian umbrella agreement on the Cooperative Threat Reduction.

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- August 29, 2017. The Jubilee Pugwash Conference devoted to nuclear disarmament will be held in Astana, Kazakhstan.
- September 2017. IAEA fuel bank to open in Kazakhstan.
- October 2017. 25th anniversary of U.S. and Belarus signing the umbrella Cooperative Threat Reduction agreement.

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.

PHOTO CREDITS:

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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:

- Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University [W. Tobey, william_tobey@hks.harvard.edu, 1- 617-496-0518]

- 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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