

U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism

Американо-Российская инициатива по предотвращению ядерного терроризма

August-September 2012 Newsletter

Информационный бюллетень за август-сентябрь 2012 года



ИСКРАН

NEWS:

Top UN Officials Urge Nations to Boost Efforts to Counter Nuclear Terrorism

The United Nations hosted the High-Level Meeting on Countering the Threat of Nuclear Terrorism on September 28th to review progress in international efforts to prevent a terrorist nuclear mushroom cloud.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the annual debate of the UN General Assembly, which was attended by a number of heads of state and top ministers, including U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

In his speech at the event UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon [warned](#) that the threat of nuclear terrorism is “most unnerving” and urged the nations to implement the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and UN Security Council Resolution 1540. Yukiya Amano, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency concurred with the UN chief’s assessment of the threat and need for further action.

“Terrorists will exploit the weakest link in any security system. The challenge is global, so the response must be global. Continued shortcomings in nuclear security need to be addressed urgently,” Amano [told](#) the meeting.



Ban Ki-moon

Amano encouraged countries to work with the IAEA to establish networks of nuclear security support centers and improve nuclear security. He noted that more than 2,200 incidents have been registered since IAEA established the Illicit Trafficking Database in 1995 to monitor thefts and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and radioactive materials.



Yukiya Amano

Russia’s FSB, MoD, and Rosatom Practice Countering Nuclear Terrorism

Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), Ministry of Defense and Rosatom conducted a nuclear terrorism exercise in Moscow on September 27–28, 2012. The “Guard-2012 exercise, which was conducted under the aegis of the Global Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) involved not only detection, but also management of consequences. “During the exercises Russia will demonstrate the latest achievements of the Defense Ministry and the Rosatom Corporation in the field of detection of nuclear materials and radioactive substances, and the FSB and Rosatom technical emergency services will demonstrate their achievements in methods of countering the threat of nuclear terrorism and elimination of its after-effects,” FSB announced ahead of the exercise, which drew observers from IAEA, Interpol, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and 58 countries.

“There is a need for a very deep cooperation in preventing nuclear terrorism. It is an extremely diverse phenomenon. This could be the detonation of a conventional explosive containing radioactive materials, which is called a ‘dirty’ bomb. Finally, there is a threat, which it is the

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most terrible, and that is the explosion of an improvised nuclear explosive device, which can produce the same effect as the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, relating to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people,” said Vladimir Dvorkin, senior researcher at the Center for International Security at Russia’s Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). The Center participates in the working group of the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism (IPNT).

Security Company Loses Contract after U.S. Nuke Plant Break-In

The security contractor at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Tennessee has been fired over an incident during which protesters cut through fences and vandalized a building in an unprecedented break-in. The U.S. Department of Energy had earlier recommended that WSI Oak Ridge’s contract with nuclear weapons facility be terminated over the July 28th break-in, AP reported on September 30th.

Russia and United States Cooperate to Retrieve HEU

Russia and the U.S.A. are planning to retrieve highly enriched nuclear fuel of research reactors from eight countries in 2013, Nuclear.ru reported. The plan was outlined in a joint statement signed by Rosatom director general Sergey Kiriyenko and U.S. secretary of energy Steven Chu on September 17 on sidelines of the IAEA General Conference in Vienna.

September has seen 27 kilograms of Russian-origin HEU fresh fuel and 61.9 kilograms of HEU spent fuel sent from the research reactor at Poland’s National Center for Nuclear Research to Russia, according to NNSA’s September 25th [press release](#).



Sergey Kiriyenko

In a separate project, a cache of Russian-origin HEU used to power an atomic scientific reactor in Uzbekistan will be repatriated. The project calls for a swap in which fresh Russian low-enriched uranium would be provided for atomic operations at the Institute of Nuclear Physics in the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, GSN reported on August 31st.



Steven Chu

Counterterrorism Training Center Opens in Russia

The Russian Ministry of Defense’s Abramovo Counterterrorism Training Center has begun operations, U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration announced on September 21st.

The center was built in joint partnership with NNSA, Canadian foreign ministry, and the Russian defense ministry to train personnel for Russia’s nuclear sites in security tactics and measures, according to NNSA’s September 21st press release. The center “allows training personnel specifically to guard nuclear facilities of the armed forces,” head of the Russian defense ministry’s 12th Main Directorate Col. Yuri Sych was quoted as saying in the September 14th issue of *Krasnaya Zvezda*.

Moldova Detains Suspected Uranium-235 Smugglers

Moldovan police have detained seven suspected members of a group that traded uranium, operating in the separatist Transdniestria region, Reuters reported on September 21st.

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"We have documented numerous cases involving shipments of hand grenades, TNT blocks, Kalashnikov assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launcher charges and containers with radioactive uranium-235," Vitalie Briceag, the head of the Moldovan interior ministry's investigations department, said.

12 GUMO Chief on Security and Upgrades of Russian Nuclear Weapons

Head of the Russian military's nuclear security branch Col. Yuri Sych has granted a wide-ranging interview to the Defense Ministry's Red Star newspaper to trumpet guaranteed security



of Russia's nuclear arsenal. "Ensuring full protection of nuclear weapons is an extremely important task," said Sych, who heads the Russian defense ministry's 12th Main Directorate (12th GUMO). Sych was [quoted](#) in the September 14th issue of *Krasnaya Zvezda* as saying that his directorate continues to improve both technical and human components of the Russian military nuclear security's system. "We have taken steps to increase security of nuclear weapons through introduction of technical systems that fully excludes even unsanctioned use...

(and) with conscripts relieved of non-core duties, the level of their preparedness has noticeably increased," Sych said.

Dirty bomb threat persists at U.S. hospitals

Nearly four out of five high-risk hospitals in the United States have failed to implement safeguards to secure radiological material that could be used in a "dirty bomb," according to a draft report by congressional investigators [cited](#) by *The Washington Post*.

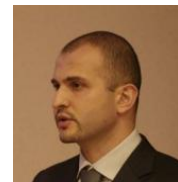
"Medical facilities currently are not required to take any specific actions to make sure these materials are safe, and many have very sloppy practices, which is remarkable nearly 11 years after 9/11," the report says, according to the September 11th issue of *The Washington Post*.

Saradzhyan on Deadly Terrorist Mix of Uniformed Turncoats and Militant Converts

Simon Saradzhyan, research fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and member of IPNT, has published an [op-ed](#) in the September 9th issue of *The Moscow Times* to warn that a combination of turncoats and converts can penetrate defenses at critical infrastructure facilities.

The op-ed cites two terrorist attacks carried out in the North Caucasus on one day by ethnic Russian Alla Saprykina and Dagestani border guard Ramazan Aliyev. Prior to blowing herself up, Saprykina had converted to a radical form of Islam and joined North Caucasus-based terrorist networks, as did a number of other ethnic Slavs such as suicide bombers Razdobydkos and explosives expert Pavel Kosolapov.

"Havoc wrecked by Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents could be repeated as result of premeditated actions by terrorists if personnel of security services and critical facilities are not prepared to interdict attacks on such facilities assisted from inside. If you think it is improbable, then just imagine a group comprised of the likes of Razdobydkos guided by Kosolapov assaulting a nuclear power station guarded by the likes of Aliyev," the op-ed warns.



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Graham Allison Calls for Locking Fissile Material Away From Terrorists

Graham Allison, director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and IPNT member, has published an [op-ed](#) in the *International Herald Tribune* in which he warns that the



relentless advance of science and technology is making it possible for smaller and smaller groups to kill larger and larger numbers of people.

“If a Qaeda affiliate, or some terrorist group in Pakistan whose name readers have never heard, acquires highly enriched uranium or plutonium made by a state, they can construct an elementary nuclear bomb capable of killing hundreds of thousands of people,” Allison wrote in the September 7th article.

If all fissile material can be secured to a gold standard beyond the reach of thieves or terrorists, aspirations to become the world’s first nuclear terrorist can be thwarted, according to Allison.

Lugar and Nunn Honored For Securing Loose Nukes

U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar and former Sen. Sam Nunn were honored in late August for their role in



Sam Nunn

helping ex-Soviet states secure and dismantle huge stocks of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The prize was awarded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York philanthropic foundation and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace think tank, AP reported on August 29th.



Richard Lugar

Future of CTR Programs in Russia in Doubt

The Obama administration has drafted a proposal that would extend an umbrella agreement, which allows the United States to conduct Cooperative Threat Reduction operations in Russia, but it is uncertain whether Moscow will approve the draft deal, GSN reported on August 23rd. Senator Richard Lugar said his meetings with Russian officials in Moscow left him with the “impression that they had not had great debate or discussion within their ministries” on the issue. However, government staffers “were not certain that simply changing the date was going to be adequate,” he was quoted by GSN as saying.

- Breaking news: Less than two months after Lugar’s visit, Russia notified the United States that it no longer wants to extend the CTR umbrella agreement, which expires in June 2013. “The American side knows that we do not want another extension,” Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Interfax on October 10th. Russia doesn’t oppose cooperation with the United States in this sphere in principle, according to a source in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But rather than extend the CTR accord, Russia wants to negotiate a new treaty with the United States that would be “based on principles of equal rights and mutual respect,” the diplomatic source was quoted in the October 10th issue of Kommersant as saying.



Sergey Ryabkov

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Kazakhstan Completed Elimination of Semipalatinsk Range Infrastructure

Elimination of the infrastructure for testing nuclear weapons at the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground in Eastern Kazakhstan has been completed, according to Erlan Batyrbekov, director of the Central Asian republic's Nuclear Physics Institute. One hundred and eighty-one wells have been closed down in the Delegen mountainous area and 13 unused testing wells at the Balapan sector, and barriers have been built to isolate the nuclear waste, Batyrbekov was quoted by Interfax as saying on August 11th.

In a separate development NNSA [announced](#) delivery of a secure radiological transportation vehicle to Kazakhstan's Institute of Atomic Energy on August 8th.

Rosatom Fights Corruption

Rosatom director general Sergei Kiriyenko has fired 40 managers over corruption allegations in the past year and a half. "We often hear about arrests and theft in the atomic industry. Is this because they steal more at Rosatom? No, they steal as much across the whole country, but it is only at Rosatom that we are tough in abiding by the laws and fighting corruption," Kiriyenko is quoted in the latest issue of Rosatom's *Vestnik Atomproma* corporate magazine as saying. They "turned out to be weak... I feel sorry for them as human-beings," Kiriyenko said of the June 2012 arrest of director general of Rosatom's Siberian Chemical Combine Vladimir Korotkevich and his deputy in charge of finances, Yuri Kungurov. Both were charged with accepting bribes. "We are creating a principle of intolerance of theft... I have had to fire some 40 leaders of different levels in the past year and a half, including top managers of companies and a rather substantial circle of deputy heads at the corporation itself," Kiriyenko said.

Dvorkin on Impact of Nuclear Terrorism Threat on Strategic Stability

Vladimir Dvorkin, senior researcher at the Center for International Security, has published an op-ed in the August 17 issue of *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozrenie* in which he explores the impact of nuclear terrorism and other destabilizing factors on strategic stability. "The end of the last century and beginning of the new century saw perceptions of strategic stability expand as new



threats and destabilizing factors emerged. Of these, proliferation of nuclear weapons and missile technologies, and the real possibility of nuclear terrorism are most important," he wrote.

Of all the nuclear terrorism scenarios, it is building an improvised nuclear device by terrorists that poses the maximum risk. There are no engineering problems that cannot be solved if terrorists decide to build a simple "gun-type" nuclear device.

Information on the design of such devices, as well as implosion-type devices, is available in the public domain. It is the acquisition of weapons-grade uranium that presents the sole serious obstacle, Dvorkin wrote. The Belfer Center has published a revised version of Dvorkin's op-ed, and it is available [here](#).

FBI and NNSA Conduct Counter-Terrorism Exercise

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and NNSA have conducted a tabletop exercise at the University of Cincinnati to counter a dirty bomb plot.

The Bearcat Thunder exercise played out a fictitious scenario with terrorists infiltrating a research facility and attempting to seize control of a high-activity radiological source that, in

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principle, could be used in radiological dispersal devices, according to an August 10th [press release](#) by NNSA.

NOTABLE STATEMENTS ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM:

- **UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon:** “The prospect of terrorists acquiring nuclear materials is one of the most unnerving threats imaginable.” (Web site of the United Nations, September 28, 2012).
- **IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano:** “The threat of nuclear terrorism has not diminished. Although much progress has been made in recent years in countering it, more needs to be done.” (Web site of IAEA, September 29, 2012).
- **Russia’s Federal Security Service:** There is a need “to develop systems for timely reaction to nuclear terrorism threats and the creation of effective mechanisms for removing nuclear materials and radioactive substances from illegal circulation.” (Interfax, September 28, 2012).
- **Col. Yuri Sych, head of the Russian defense ministry’s 12th Main Directorate:** “Today's world faces increased terrorist activity/Therefore, ensuring full protection of nuclear weapons is an extremely important task for the 12th Main Directorate.” (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 14, 2012).
- **U.S. State Department:** “CBRN materials and expertise remain a significant terrorist threat based on: terrorists' stated intent to acquire and use these materials; the nature of injury and damage these weapons can inflict; the ease with which information on these topics now flows; and the dual-use nature of many relevant technologies and precursors, making them difficult to control.” (Web site of the U.S. State Department, July 31, 2012).

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- October 15-28, 2012. 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- October 2012. 20th anniversary of the United States and Belarus signing the umbrella Cooperative Threat Reduction agreement.
- December 8, 2012. 25th anniversary of the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty.
- December 12, 2012. 21st anniversary of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program.
- January 31, 2013. Russia formally accedes to the Nuclear Energy Agency of OECD.
- June 2013. The umbrella U.S.-Russian Cooperative Threat Reduction agreement expires.

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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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