

## U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism

### Российско-Американская инициатива по предотвращению ядерного терроризма

December 2017 - February 2018 newsletter Информационный бюллетень за декабрь 2017 – февраль 2018



ИСКРАН

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#### NEWS:

##### **U.S. Experts Debate Whether Russia Can Be a Viable CT Partner for America**

The director of the Intelligence and Defense Project at the Belfer Center, Rolf Mowatt-Larsen, believes the U.S. and Russia should continue to exchange information on terrorist threats if only because human lives are at stakes. “It’s in American interest to not see any Russians die in terrorist attacks as it is in the Russian interest to prevent any terrorist attacks in the U.S. or elsewhere in the world,” he [said](#) in a recent interview. “We have a duty to warn anybody anywhere in the world if their lives might be threatened by terrorist activity,” this CIA veteran added in the interview, which aired after the Kremlin [thanked](#) the White House for having the CIA provide information that enabled the FSB to prevent a terrorist attack in St. Petersburg. In a comprehensive review of recent U.S. strategic documents, Belfer Center associate Kevin Ryan [notes](#) that the 2018 National Defense Strategy represents a shift in priorities from terrorist threats to “long-term strategic competition” with Russia and China. When asked to comment on the shift, Mowatt-Larsen said: “I’m not in any way a believer that we’ve passed this threat of terrorism.” Another CIA veteran, George Beebe, [concurred](#) with Mowatt-Larsen in a piece he wrote for the Belfer Center-based analytical portal, Russia Matters. Mr. Beebe wrote that the U.S. can benefit from Russia’s strong capabilities, particularly in the regions from which many global terrorist threats now emanate. According to RAND analyst Colin Clark, however, “Russia is not a viable counterterrorism partner for the United States.” In his piece for Russia Matters, Dr. Clark [cites](#) practical difficulties in sharing classified intelligence, especially in the current atmosphere of mistrust between the two countries. Belfer Center Director and former U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter has also called for the U.S. to exercise caution when deciding whether to engage Russia in countering terrorist groups, such as ISIS. “I thought the Russians who said they entered Syria with the intention of fighting ISIS and helping move Assad aside so that the tragic civil war there could be transitioned to an end, had done neither of those things,” he [told](#) Politico Magazine. Sec. Carter said he was prepared to resign if former President Barack Obama had agreed to Russian proposals for counter-terrorism cooperation in Syria, because “they were intent upon trapping us.” Mowatt-Larsen and Ryan participate in the U.S.-Russian Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism. They also participate in the U.S.-Russian Elbe Group, which is to meet again in March to discuss terrorism among other issues.



Mowatt-Larsen Ryan



Beebe



Clark



Carter

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#### **U.S. Nuclear Posture Review on Countering Nuclear Terrorism**

The 2018 [U.S. Nuclear Posture Review](#) contains multiple references to the threat of nuclear terrorism and outlines approaches for reducing the threat. Preventing proliferation and denying terrorists access to finished weapons, material or expertise are key considerations in the elaboration of U.S. nuclear policy and requirements, according to the document.

The U.S. strategy to combat nuclear terrorism encompasses a wide range of activities that comprise a “defense-in-depth against current and emerging dangers,” the NPR says. For effective deterrence of nuclear terrorism, the U.S. will hold fully accountable any state, terrorist group or other non-state actor that supports or enables terrorist efforts to obtain or employ nuclear devices, the NPR says.

#### **U.S. and Russian Experts Weigh In Nuclear Challenges Posed by North Korea**

Belfer Center Executive Director for Research Gary Samore [believes](#) it is worth it for the U.S. to pursue talks with North Korea on its nuclear and missile programs even though “Kim Jong-un wants to obtain sanctions relief and economic benefits ... while not making any significant concessions to limit—much less surrender—North Korea’s nuclear and missile (programs).” Dr. Samore [offered](#) a comprehensive analysis of the Trump administration’s options for policies toward North Korea and Iran in his recent lecture at Dartmouth University. Dr. Siegfried Hecker of Stanford University’s Center for International Security and Cooperation has also spoken in favor of a dialogue with North Korea on its nuclear program. Dr. Hecker [told](#) the Brown Political Review in January that the first order of business for the incoming Trump administration “should have been to talk to the North Koreans and to ensure that they had an understanding that nuclear weapons could not be used.” Asked to assess probability of war with North Korea, Dr. Hecker said: “The most imminent threat is this war of words—that we back North Korea into a corner, where unexpectedly, because of a misunderstanding or a miscalculation, we stumble into a confrontation, and that confrontation leads to a nuclear exchange.” In his keynote lecture in Tokyo on Feb. 10, Graham Allison, the Belfer Center’s former director and Douglas Dillon professor of government at the Harvard Kennedy School, [reportedly](#) said there is a 20-25 percent likelihood that the U.S. will strike North Korea. Belfer Center Director and former U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter [believes](#) a U.S. preemptive strike on North Korea will not fully eliminate its nuclear weapons program. While North Korea has developed nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, its missiles still lack the range needed to reach the continental United States, [according](#) to Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin, the senior researcher of IMEMO’s Center for International Security General. Gen. Viktor Yesin, who works as a senior researcher at the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, [estimates](#) it will take the DPRK about 3-4 years to acquire such a capability. Gen. Yesin, Gen. Dvorkin, Dr. Samore, Dr. Allison



Samore

Hecker

Allison

Yesin

Dvorkin

and Dr. Hecker participate in the work of the U.S.-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism.

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#### **Yekaterinburg Carried SLBMs When It Caught Fire**

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Ragozin has admitted there were missiles aboard the Yekaterinburg nuclear submarine when it caught fire during repair work at a shipyard near Murmansk in late 2011, [Bellona](#) reported on Feb. 27. “There were both torpedoes and ballistic missiles on it,” Ragozin [told](#) Russia’s Kommersant daily. The Project 667BDRM submarine has two nuclear reactors and 16 R-29RM ballistic missiles, according to the [Rusnavy](#) portal.

#### **Russian Nuclear Scientists Nabbed For Mining Bitcoins at Work**

Russia’s Federal Security Service has detained several scientists working at a top-secret Russian nuclear warhead facility for allegedly mining Bitcoin using one of Russia's most powerful supercomputers. The supercomputer, at the Federal Nuclear Center in Sarov, was not supposed to be connected to the internet—to prevent intrusion—and once the scientists attempted to do so, the nuclear center’s security department detected the attempt and alerted the FSB, according to a Feb. 9, 2018 [report](#) by the BBC.



#### **Changing of the Guard at the NNSA**

Lisa E. Gordon-Hagerty was [sworn](#) in on Feb. 22, 2018 as the U.S. Department of Energy's undersecretary for nuclear security and administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). Prior to joining the Trump administration, Gordon-Hagerty was president of Tier Tech International which provides expertise on combating terrorism that uses weapons of mass destruction, according to the Energy Department. The previous NNSA administrator, Frank Klotz, retired on Jan. 19, 2018. It has been earlier [reported](#) that the ongoing reorganization of the Energy Department won't impact the duties of the undersecretary for nuclear security.



#### **Report in Science Magazine Blames Mayak for Ruthenium Leak**

New facts suggest a ruthenium leak detected in November 2017 over Europe did, in fact, arise from a filtration error at the Mayak Chemical Combine in Russia’s southern Ural Mountains, [Bellona](#) reported in early February, citing [Science Magazine](#). A report published in this magazine says the release likely occurred when Mayak staff were making a radioactive capsule of cerium 144. Earlier, a commission that was convened at the Nuclear Safety Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences said that because of “large uncertainties” it was “impossible” to say whether the cloud of radioactive isotope ruthenium 106 had originated at the Mayak facility, according to [Bellona](#).

#### **Trump Administration Requests a \$1 Billion Increase in NNSA Financing in FY2019**

The U.S. president's fiscal year 2019 spending plan, released Feb. 12, seeks \$30.6 billion for the Energy Department, which represents a \$2.6 billion increase over its requested budget for the

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2018 fiscal year. About \$1.1 billion of the increase would go to the National Nuclear Security Administration, according to a February 2018 report by [The Santa Fe New Mexican](#).

### **Graham Allison on Importance of Prevention of Nuclear Terrorism**

In spite of the rise of serious cyber threats, the challenge of preventing nuclear terrorism still takes a priority, Graham Allison wrote in his January 2018 review of former Belfer fellow Lucas Kello's book "The Virtual Weapon and International Order." "When compared with a nuclear war that could extinguish all human life, a single terrorist nuclear bomb that could devastate the heart of a great city or a biological pathogen that could kill hundreds of thousands, how dangerous should cyber threats be considered? Hyperbolic claims—like the author's assertion that equating the effect of cyber on international affairs to that of nuclear weapons actually 'inflates the relative significance of the atom bomb'—only encourage skepticism," [according](#) to Allison. Professor Allison has also penned an article for [PRISM](#), "Nuclear Terrorism—Did We Beat the Odds or Change Them?" that is set to be published in the near future. He is also going to be discussing the threat of nuclear terrorism as an increasing global security concern at America's [National September 11 Memorial & Museum](#) on March 8.

### **Russia's National Guard Is Mulling Drone Defense at NPP**

Russia's National Guard is considering establishment of special units that would protect key Russian installations, including nuclear power stations, from drone attacks, Russia's [Izvestia](#) reported on January 9, 2018. Deputy Commander of Russia's National Guard Col. General Sergey Melikov told this newspaper that his agency, which is responsible for guarding civilian nuclear facilities in Russia, is consulting the Federal Security Service and Federal Guard Service on whether to establish anti-drone units at NPPs. Gen. Melikov granted the interview shortly after Syrian rebels had launched a [number of drones carrying explosives](#) to try hit Russia's forces in that Arab country.



### **NNSA Conducts Training in Kazakhstan, Reviews Accomplishments There**

December 2017 saw the NNSA's Office of Nuclear Smuggling Detection and Deterrence (NSDD) conduct a workshop with several Kazakh government agencies responsible for countering nuclear smuggling. The participants were from the Kazakhstan National Security Committee, Border Guard (BG) Service and Academy, State Revenue Committee/ Customs Training-Methodological Center, Institute of Nuclear Physics, and Nuclear Security Training Center, according to a Jan. 24 statement by the [NNSA](#). The NNSA's [review of its 2017 accomplishments](#) refers to the agency's partnering with the Institute of Nuclear Physics (INP) in Kazakhstan to remove its remaining Russian-origin highly-enriched uranium (HEU). The NNSA has helped remove or down-blend 200 kilograms of HEU from the INP, enough for eight nuclear weapons, according to the review.



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#### **Russia Says It Remains Open to Nuclear Cooperation With the U.S.**

“As for cooperation in the field of nuclear security, the Russian Federation is open to nuclear cooperation on appropriate international platforms and with all international partners, including the United States ... But we have stopped and will continue to prevent any attempts to dictate to us approaches that do not meet Russia's interests,” Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova was [quoted](#) by Regnum as saying on Dec. 6. Zakharova was responding to earlier remarks by U.S. National Security Council official Christopher Ford. Ford [said](#) in November 2017 that “Russia’s withdrawal from almost all aspects of bilateral cooperation on securing nuclear material could result in a reduction in security at certain facilities in Russia’s vast and expansive nuclear complex” and that “Moscow will need to commit significant financial and human resources to maintain adequate security within its nuclear infrastructure.”

#### **DHS Establishes Office to Counter WMD Terrorism**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced in December 2017 the establishment of a new office to protect the United States from WMD terrorist attacks. DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen was [quoted](#) by The Washington Post as saying in early December that the goal of the [Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction](#) (CWMD) Office will be to “elevate and streamline DHS efforts to prevent terrorists and other national security threat actors from using harmful agents, such as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material and devices to harm Americans and U.S. interests.”

#### **Western Countries Agree to Fund More Clean-up at Andreyeva Guba**

Western nations backing the cleanup of Andreyeva Guba have agreed to put more funding toward removing damaged and broken nuclear fuel rods lurking at the site, [Bellona](#) reported on Dec. 12, 2017. The funders, comprised of Sweden, Finland, Belgium, France, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Italy and the United Kingdom, have agreed to put €100,000 to prepare Building 3A for fuel removal and another €675,000 for studies on removing broken elements from Building 5, according to Bellona. Andreyeva Guba served as the main nuclear waste facility for the Soviet navy’s Northern Fleet.

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#### **NOTABLE STATEMENTS ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM AND NUCLEAR SECURITY:**

- Former commissioner of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Peter Lyons: “Somewhere in Russia, 34 tons of surplus weapons-grade plutonium—enough material to make about 10,000 weapons—are awaiting disposal. Moscow was supposed to start destroying this stockpile, but has yet to begin, leaving a huge threat lurking in an unknown location. If even a tiny fraction of this material fell into terrorists’ hands, they could threaten nuclear terrorism around the world.” ([Politico](#), Feb. 7, 2018).
- U.S. President Donald Trump on the 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review: “It reaffirms our commitment to arms control and nuclear non-proliferation, maintains the moratorium on nuclear testing and commits to improving efforts to prevent, detect and respond to nuclear terrorism.” ([Whitehouse.gov](#), Feb. 2, 2018)

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- Outgoing NNSA administrator Frank Klotz: “My sense is nuclear terrorism remains among one of the most significant threats to the security of this country, to the security of our allies and to the security of our partners. ... The thing that keeps me up at night is the threat of nuclear terrorism. I mean, the devastating economic, psychological consequences of a dirty bomb or a nuclear device set off by a rogue nation would be horrendous.” (SEC Wire, Jan. 9, 2018)
- The 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy: “U.S. interests in the region [South and Central Asia] include countering terrorist threats that impact the security of the U.S. homeland and our allies, preventing cross-border terrorism that raises the prospect of military and nuclear tensions and preventing nuclear weapons, technology and materials from falling into the hands of terrorists.” ([Whitehouse.gov](http://Whitehouse.gov), December 18, 2017)
- LTG Ion Mihai Pacepa, the highest-ranking defector from the Soviet bloc during the entire Cold War era: “Beyond all the many obvious threats facing our nation from terrorism, criminal gangs and so on, the threat of nuclear terrorism against the U.S. is real and potentially cataclysmic.” ([WND](http://WND), Dec. 20, 2017)
- Executive Director of the Arms Control Association Daryl G. Kimball: “Nuclear weapons are not necessary to deter or respond to nuclear terrorism or to a potential chemical or biological weapons attack or cyber-attack by state or non-state actors.” ([The Wire](http://TheWire), Dec. 5, 2017)

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#### **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 website. Contact Simon Saradzhyan at (phone) +1-617-496-8228, (fax) +1-617-495-8963 or [simon\\_saradzhyan@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:simon_saradzhyan@hks.harvard.edu).

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#### **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](mailto: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](mailto:william_tobey@hks.harvard.edu), 1-617-496-0518]

- ***Center for International Security, Institute for World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences*** [[imemoran@imemo.ru](mailto:imemoran@imemo.ru), 7-499-120-52-36]

- ***Центр международной безопасности, Институт мировой экономики и международных отношений, Российская академия наук*** [[imemoran@imemo.ru](mailto:imemoran@imemo.ru), 7-499-120-52-36]

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- ***Центр международной безопасности и сотрудничества Института международных дел имени Фримана Спогли Стэнфордского университета*** [Доктор наук З. Хекер, [shecker@stanford.edu](mailto:shecker@stanford.edu), 1-650-725-6468]

- ***Institute for the U.S. and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences*** [Dr. S. Rogov, [pa.to.rogov@rambler.ru](mailto:pa.to.rogov@rambler.ru), 7-495-691-11-66]

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