



Sam Nunn Applauds Recent Transfer of HEU Fuel from Uzbekistan

Former Senator Sam Nunn, co-chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, praised the leadership of the U.S. Department of Energy and applauded the recent announcement of the safe and secure transfer of 63 kilograms (139 pounds) of irradiated highly enriched uranium (HEU) fuel from Uzbekistan to Russia.

“The Uzbek spent fuel shipments represent a critical step in reducing the global threat of highly enriched uranium in civilian use,” said Senator Nunn. “This progress opens the door to removals of irradiated fuel at other sites where fresh fuel has already been removed, enabling the United States, Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to make good on their pledges to remove all HEU from these sites.”

Notable among these sites is the Vinca Institute near Belgrade, which is eager to return to Russia what is by far the largest stock of irradiated research reactor fuel. In 2002, NTI committed up to \$5 million to catalyze a project that allowed the United States, Russia and Serbia to remove two and a half nuclear bombs worth of vulnerable fresh HEU fuel from Vinca. The Serbian government also needed international assistance to address problems related to the 2.4 tons of highly radioactive spent reactor fuel at Vinca and to decommission the Vinca research reactor. The U.S. government asked NTI to fill this gap. Project Vinca drew renewed attention to the threat of terrorists acquiring nuclear weapons and served as a model for the U.S. government’s Global Threat Reduction Initiative, a \$450 million program to remove HEU from research facilities around the world. (You can read more about Project Vinca by clicking here: http://www.nti.org/c_press/c2_pressreleases.html#vinca)

According to The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), approximately 186 kilograms (410 pounds) of fresh HEU fuel have been repatriated to Russia from Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Libya, Latvia, the Czech Republic, and Uzbekistan through the NNSA's GTRI program. Uzbekistan is the first country from which Russian-origin spent HEU fuel has been returned to Russia.

“Russia should be congratulated for resolving the complicated bureaucratic processes to permit the safe and secure shipment of this fuel, which—if it were stolen or diverted—could be the raw material for a terrorist nuclear bomb,” said Senator Nunn. “I commend Energy Secretary Bodman and Administrator Linton Brooks and their team for helping to make this transfer possible. The IAEA also deserves credit for its essential facilitating role.”