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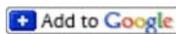
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**Russia and USA confirm plutonium plan**

20 November 2007

**The US Secretary of Energy Sam Bodman and Russian Federal Atomic Energy Agency (Rosatom) director Sergey Kiriyenko have signed a joint statement confirming a plan to dispose of 34 tonnes of surplus plutonium from Russia's weapons program in fast reactors. In line with an earlier announcement, the USA will contribute \$400 million to the project.**

The weapons-grade plutonium (mainly plutonium-239, with very low levels of plutonium-240) will be made into mixed-oxide (MOX) nuclear fuel and burned in Russia's BN-600 fast neutron reactor at Beloyarsk from about 2012. The MOX will also be used in the BN-800 reactor now under construction there when it is commissioned. Once disposition gets under way, with the breeding blanket of depleted uranium around the core removed, the two reactors are expected to burn some 1.5 tonnes of ex-weapons plutonium per year.

The two countries also intend to continue cooperation on the development of the General Atomics GT-MHR in Russia. This is an advanced gas-cooled high-temperature reactor "which may create additional possibilities for speeding up plutonium disposition" from about 2015.

This Russian program is the counterpart of one in the USA which will also take at least 34 tonnes of weapons plutonium out of circulation, in that case by burning it as MOX in mainstream light-water reactors. Both programs arise from the cooperation pledged seven years ago under the 2000 Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement.

"This joint statement is part of a comprehensive and cooperative approach to countering nuclear [weapons] proliferation around the world. A balanced, effective nonproliferation program should provide for the disposal of dangerous materials along with securing and detecting them," said William Tobey, deputy administrator for defense nuclear nonproliferation at the US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

The USA earlier insisted that Russia duplicate US plans to make the weapons plutonium into MOX fuel for late-model conventional reactors, and for this Russia insisted that the USA pay all costs - estimated to be well over \$1 billion. But after announcement of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) in 2006 with its proposals for use of fast reactors, US objection to Russian plans for utilising the plutonium to fuel fast reactors disappeared.

The 280 MWe GT-MHR is being developed by General Atomics of USA in partnership with Russia's OKBM,

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supported by Fuji of Japan and Areva NP of France. Initially it is intended to be used to burn ex-weapons plutonium at Seversk (Tomsk, Siberian Chemical Combine) in Russia, and replace production reactors which still supply electricity there. The preliminary design stage was completed in 2001 but the program to construct a prototype in Russia seems to have languished since. Areva is working separately on a very similar design called Antares. In the longer-term perspective high-temperature reactors such as this are seen as important for hydrogen production due to their high outlet temperatures of around 900 degrees C.

#### Further information

[US Department of Energy](#)  
[National Nuclear Security Administration](#)

WNA's [Military Warheads as a Source of Nuclear Fuel](#) information paper  
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WNN: [MOX requirements advance fast reactor plans](#)



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