

FACT SHEET ON U.S.-RUSSIAN PLUTONIUM PRODUCTION REACTOR AGREEMENT

U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation

The following fact sheet was released September 23, 1997, by the White House Office of the Vice President following the ninth meeting of the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation, also known as the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission.

Vice President Al Gore notes the signature of the U.S.-Russian Plutonium Production Reactor agreement. The major provisions of this ground breaking accord are described below.

Major Provisions:

- Russia and the U.S. will not restart any of their plutonium production reactors that have already been shut down. (In the U.S., all 14 such reactors were shut down by 1989; in Russia, 10 of 13 have been shut down.)
- Russia will convert by the year 2000, with U.S. assistance, its three operating reactors so that they cease all production of weapon-grade plutonium. Reactor modifications will also reduce the residual quantity of non-weapon-grade plutonium each reactor produces to a tiny fraction of the amount of plutonium previously produced.
- The converted reactors will be shut down at the end of their normal lifetimes, consistent with prudent safety considerations.
- Plutonium produced henceforth until reactor conversion, and any uranium recovered from the spent fuel of the converted reactors, will not be used in nuclear weapons.
- Fresh fuel for the converted reactors will incorporate uranium derived from dismantled nuclear weapons, helping to reduce that stockpile as well.
- A Joint Implementation and Compliance Commission will oversee implementation of the agreement's provisions, resolve any issues that may arise, and consider additional measures to promote the objectives of the agreement.

Monitoring Regime:

- For shutdown reactors, U.S. and Russian monitors will install and periodically check seals or other monitoring equipment to provide assurance that the reactors could not be restarted without detection.
- For converted reactors, U.S. monitors will measure random samples of fresh fuel to determine that the fuel is the intended type, and they will install monitoring devices in the fuel discharge areas to ensure that fuel is discharged only when scheduled. By ensuring that the agreed fuel type and discharge schedule are used, they can ensure that the converted reactors are no longer producing weapon-grade plutonium.

Russia will also declare annually the total mass of high-enriched uranium derived from dismantled nuclear weapons that was used to make fresh fuel for the converted reactors, and the ultimate destination and intended use of any uranium they may recover from the spent fuel.

For plutonium produced prior to reactor conversion, *i.e.*, weapon-grade plutonium, U.S. monitors will periodically check tags and seals on containers in storage and measure randomly selected containers to ensure that the material inside is indeed weapon-grade and newly produced.

The plutonium subject to such monitoring will include all such material that is reprocessed in 1997 or thereafter (which will include Plutonium produced since the beginning of 1995). The agreement specifies that the total amount of such plutonium is estimated to be between 4.5 and 9 metric tons.