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PRESS RELEASES

DOE Inks Agreement To Ensure Domestic Uranium Enrichment Capacity Is Maintained; Nuclear Nonproliferation Programs in Russia To Benefit

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Washington, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Energy signed an agreement with the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC, Inc.) late yesterday that will ensure America's domestic uranium enrichment capacity is maintained and that nuclear materials from Russia will be delivered to the U.S. thereby benefiting America's nonproliferation work in that country.

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham said, "With this agreement America accomplishes two very important goals, ensuring our domestic capacity to produce fuel for our commercial nuclear reactors and meeting important nuclear nonproliferation goals by accepting enriched uranium from Russia."

The uranium delivered to the U.S. will be derived from highly enriched uranium from dismantled Russian nuclear weapons, thereby reducing the inventory of highly enriched uranium in that country.

"Our strong cooperation with Russia will help ensure that the important goals of protecting the world from the proliferation of nuclear materials continues," Abraham said. Last month, Abraham and Russian Atomic Energy Minister Alexander Rumyantsev worked out an agreement to accomplish nonproliferation work in Russia a full two years ahead of schedule.

"Not only is this agreement a win for national security, but it is also a win for the communities in Ohio and Kentucky that have provided a great service to the nation and a win to secure the future for domestic uranium enrichment," Abraham said.

The agreement establishes the future development viability and opportunity for both Portsmouth, Ohio and Paducah, Kentucky facilities, including as candidate sites for new technology enrichment capabilities as USEC must maintain any of its leased facilities in a manner that permits their future use as a site where new enrichment technology can be performed.

First, DOE's agreement with USEC will require the company to take delivery of Russian weapons-derived uranium. Second, USEC agrees to deploy a new advanced technology enrichment plant at Portsmouth (by 2010) or Paducah (by 2011). Third, USEC must maintain production of enriched uranium at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant at a level of 3.5 million SWU (the standard unit of measure for enriched uranium fuel) per year. This production level can be reduced only after USEC is within six months of completing deployments of new enrichment technology with a productive capacity of 3.5 million SWU.

Finally, the agreement calls for USEC to continue operating the Shipping and Transfer Facility located in Portsmouth for an additional 15 months to remove technetium from a portion of USEC's uranium inventory, thereby saving over half the jobs that could have been lost under USEC's corporate downsizing announced earlier.

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