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From the Cold War to the War on Cancer

NNSA-sponsored program to employ Russian scientists in cancer treatment facility

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Former nuclear weapons scientists, engineers and technicians will soon begin working in a Russian life-saving cancer treatment facility under an important nonproliferation program run by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

The Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Imaging and Isotope Production Center in Snezhinsk, Russia, will employ up to 200 former nuclear weapons scientists, engineers and technicians under NNSA's Nuclear Cities Initiative (NCI) program. The PET Center is the result of cooperation between NNSA's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the Biomedical Foundation of Northern Louisiana (Biomed), a nonprofit, economic development and research organization that provides world-class medical diagnostic equipment and services.

The PET Center of Snezhinsk brings together Biomed's advanced technology resources and highly skilled nuclear experts from the Russian Federal Nuclear Center for Technical Physics (VNIITF) to provide advanced cancer detection capabilities in a region with some of the highest cancer rates in Russia.

In addition to the approximately $3 million NNSA will provide, the project has garnered a pledge of $4.5 million. The project will be implemented over a three year period, and preliminary activities have begun.

NNSA Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation Paul Longsworth praised the project as an important nonproliferation effort. "The Pet Scan Center project represents a great opportunity to downsize the Russian weapons complex and rebuild the Snezhinsk community in a cost effective manner," he said.

The NCI Program enhances U.S. and global security by supporting weapons complex reduction in the Russian nuclear cities. NCI accomplishes this by removing functions and equipment from the weapons complex, reducing its physical footprint, and creating sustainable, alternative non-weapons work within a functioning city economy.

NNSA enhances U.S. national security through the military application of nuclear energy, maintains the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, promotes international nuclear non-proliferation and safety, reduces global danger from weapons of mass destruction, provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion, and oversees national laboratories to maintain U.S. leadership in science and technology.

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