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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, July 1, 2002

Abraham Announces Second Major Nuclear Nonproliferation Effort with Kazakhstan

Former Nuclear Weapons Facility to Produce Commercial Copper Beryllium

One hundred and fifty scientists, engineers and technicians at a former nuclear weapons plant in Kazakhstan will turn their talents to commercial production as a result of an agreement announced today by Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham at a conference in Kansas on investment and trade opportunities in Kazakhstan. This new project, undertaken by the U.S., the Republic of Kazakhstan and private U.S. industry, is the second major nuclear nonproliferation effort between the two nations.

The ULBA Metallurgical Plant, a former nuclear weapons facility in Kazakhstan, will expand and upgrade its capacity for production of copper beryllium (CuBe) master alloy. This material has commercial applications and is a component in a range of products including small appliances, computers, and telecommunications.

“The successful transition of ULBA from a nuclear weapons plant to a viable commercial entity is critical to U.S. national security,” said Secretary Abraham. “Our new project represents a superior combination of private enterprise and trade investment with the nonproliferation objectives shared by both our nations. It is also our latest project in support of President Bush’s nonproliferation agenda that is reducing the threat from weapons of mass destruction.”

Brush Wellman Inc. of Cleveland, Ohio and RWE NUKEM, Inc. of Danbury, Conn. will partner with ULBA under the agreement. The Los Alamos National Laboratory will provide technical assistance and the Energy Department’s National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is providing expertise and funding. The ULBA project, organized under the NNSA’s Russian Transition Initiatives, will convert the beryllium technology used to produce Soviet nuclear weapons to entirely commercial processes.

ULBA, which produced beryllium products for Soviet military and aerospace applications for nearly 50 years, is expected to reap significant economic benefits from the project, estimated at over \$10 million per year. At least 150 jobs at the plant will be sustained for the next 8-10 years.

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NA-02-13

Brush Wellman Inc. and RWE NUKEM, Inc. will invest \$4 million in the ULBA project. ULBA has committed over \$4.5 million, and the NNSA will contribute at least \$1.5 million.

In January 2002, Secretary Abraham announced the NNSA's first project at ULBA, in which low-enriched uranium will be separated from uranium concentrates and then made available as a power source to civilian power reactors throughout the world.

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.

-NNSA-

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