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For Immediate Release

SRS Employees Get Secretarial Recognition

AIKEN, S.C., January 12, 2009 – Five local employees from the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC (SRNS) have received the Secretary of Energy’s Achievement Award in a ceremony in Washington, DC. They were selected by Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman to receive the Secretary’s Achievement Award, which is bestowed upon a group or team of DOE employees or contractors who together accomplished significant achievements on behalf of the Department as part of the annual Secretary's Honor Awards. The Secretary's Honor Awards are the highest internal non-monetary recognition that DOE employees and contractors can receive.

“I continue to be amazed by the depth and breadth of the experience and expertise of the SRS people,” says Chuck Munns, SRNS President. “These teams have done the nation and the world a service, and I’m glad they and these programs are getting the recognition they richly deserve.”

Four employees were honored for their role in the safe, secure return of weapons-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU) from various foreign countries to the United States and Russia. Chuck Messick and Jerry Taylor, of NNSA's Office of Global Threat Reduction at SRS, and John Dewes and Jay Thomas, of SRNS, are key players in the HEU Recovery Team.

Linda Nichols of SRNS, a fellow scientist with the Savannah River National Laboratory, received her award as a member of a team that included personnel from the DOE National Nuclear Security Administration's Office of Nonproliferation Research and Development, DOE Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, and Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Their project focused on reducing the threat to national security posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Decades ago, both Russia and the United States sent highly enriched uranium to other countries to fuel research reactors. Now, in the interest of nonproliferation, they are taking it back. The U.S. has been bringing uranium-bearing spent fuel home since 1996, Russia since 2004.



The Russian shipments, being done as part of the NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative, reached a milestone late in 2008 when the largest ever shipment was completed from Hungary to Russia, completing Hungarian shipments. In all, 154 kgs of HEU – enough for about six bombs – were moved from Hungary to Russia. So far, about 750 kgs of Russian origin HEU have been shipped from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Bulgaria and Hungary – a little more than half of the total amount to be shipped. Fifteen countries are participating in the Russian return program, which is financed and managed by the United States.

The American team acts as project managers and on-site supervisors. Messick, Dewes and Thomas have logged tremendous travel hours, while Taylor provides exhaustive at-home coordination.

“We negotiate the contracts with the foreign governments, line up permissions and licenses, and arrange for any necessary facility modifications,” explains Dewes.

The U.S. foreign fuel return program is expected to be complete in about 2019 and has returned over 1,200 kgs from 27 different countries – a little over 90 percent of the total amount to be shipped. Material from both the Russian and U.S. programs is presently expected to be used to generate power in commercial nuclear reactors.

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