

**NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**Joe Davis or Jeanne Lopatto, 202-586-4940 (DOE)**  
**Bryan Wilkes, 202-586-7371 (NNSA)**

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**Department of Energy Selects Washington Group, International & Raytheon Technical Services To Begin Work On Shutdown of Russian Plutonium Production Reactors**

*Important Step In Bush Administration Nuclear Nonproliferation Program with Russia; Program Will Eliminate the Production of Enough Plutonium To Make One Bomb Every Day and A Half*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - At a press conference with Russian Ambassador to the United States Yuri Ushakov, U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham announced today that the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration has awarded Washington Group International and Raytheon Technical Services a total of \$466 million to begin work to shutdown the last three remaining weapons-grade plutonium production reactors in Russia. The Department will work to replace those reactors with coal-fired heat and electricity plants.

Shutting down the three reactors, two located at Seversk and one at Zheleznogorsk, will end the production of enough weapons-grade plutonium to produce approximately one nuclear weapon every day and a half.

"The selection of the contractors is another significant step in advancing the Bush Administration's nonproliferation programs," Secretary Abraham said. "Replacing these reactors with fossil fuel energy is critical to eliminate the production of weapons-grade plutonium in Russia and closing these facilities. Russia and the United States have enjoyed a good relationship on this program and we look forward to continued progress."

The awarding of the work orders is the next major step in fulfilling commitments agreed to by the U.S. and Russian governments in Vienna, Austria, implementing the Elimination of Weapons-Grade Plutonium Production Program (EWGPP).

At a ceremony in Vienna in March 2003, Secretary Abraham and Russian Minister of Atomic Energy Alexander Rumyantsev signed an agreement that would reduce the threat from weapons of mass destruction by stopping plutonium production at the last three Russian plutonium reactors. As part of the agreement, the Department of Energy, working with its partners in Russia, will provide replacement fossil-fuel facilities to produce replacement energy for heat and electricity currently produced by the reactors and serving two cities in Russia.

Working with counterparts at the Russian contracting firm Rosatomstroi, both Washington Group International and Raytheon Technical Services will implement the shutdown programs for both sites.

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Washington Group International will oversee work at the Seversk site. There, the U.S. will provide assistance in refurbishing an existing fossil fuel plant to produce electricity lost from the shutdown of the reactors. The refurbishment work, once contracts are signed with Rosatomstroï, is estimated to take five years, at that time the reactors will close.

Major work at the Seversk site will include refurbishing or replacing existing coal-fired boilers, providing one new high pressure coal-fired boiler, replacing turbine generators, completing construction of the fuel supply system, refurbishing the industrial heating unit and ancillary systems.

Raytheon Technical Services will oversee work at the Zheleznogorsk site. There, the U.S. will provide assistance in building a new fossil fuel plant. Once contracts are signed with Rosatomstroï, estimated time of completion for the project is eight years and the reactor will shutdown.

Major work at the Zheleznogorsk site will include providing a co-generation boiler, an extraction/condensing steam turbine, heating only boilers, a fuel handling system, an ash removal system, environmental controls, and a hot water pipeline to connect the new plant with the district heating system.

Abraham said in a letter to Minister Romyantsev that he expects the Department's National Nuclear Security Administration to have final contracts in place with Washington Group International and Raytheon Technical Services by June 30, 2003.

The reactors, although originally designed to produce weapons-grade plutonium, also provide heat and electricity required by the surrounding communities in Siberia. The EWGPP program is providing fossil-fueled energy plants to supply such heat and electricity to the surrounding communities, facilitating the shut down of the reactors.

The three plutonium production reactors will continue to operate until the fossil-replacement plants are completed. These reactors have deficiencies in the areas of design, equipment, and materials, and are considered to be among the highest risk reactors in the world. To ensure reactor safety, high priority safety upgrades are being expeditiously pursued. The Department's Pacific Northwest National Lab will be responsible for necessary nuclear safety upgrades at both sites. These upgrades will not extend the life of the reactor facilities.

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