

Last Enriched Uranium Rumbles Out of Ukraine

March 26, 2012



An officer guarding the last load of uranium from Ukraine back to Russia. **Gleb Garanich**

KIEV — A consignment of enriched uranium — enough to make a nuclear weapon, according to a U.S. expert — has rumbled out of a Ukrainian railway depot bound for Russia, a move designed to coincide with an international summit on nuclear security.

The 19 kilograms of spent highly enriched uranium, loaded in four containers onto rail carriers in a high-security operation, was the last such material to be removed from the ex-Soviet republic under a two-year program with the United States and Russia.

"What you are seeing here is enough material to make one nuclear weapon," Andrew Bieniawski, director of the Global Reduction Threat Initiative of the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration, said as the containers were loaded under guard at the depot outside Kiev.

Altogether 200 kilograms of weapons-grade material have been removed from Ukraine and sent back to Russia — where it originated — since May 2010.

The material will be delivered Thursday to the Mayak reprocessing nuclear facility in Russia's Ural mountains, after a rail journey of about five days from Kiev.

Bieniawski said similar material still had to be removed from NATO allies the Czech Republic and Hungary, and Vietnam, under programs with the United States over the next four years.

"Ukraine is the model for future shipments. ... We can say the world is safer. If you remove this material, you make a country permanently safer because terrorists can not acquire nuclear material," he said.

The enriched uranium shipped out Saturday night had been used in a reactor at a nuclear research facility in Kiev.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/03/26/last-enriched-uranium-rumbles-out-of-ukraine-a13555>