

Nuclear Dialogue Yields Benefits

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Poneman shaking hands with Kiriyenko at the Nuclear Security Working Group Plenary in Moscow on Tuesday. **Sergey Ponomarev**

The U.S. deputy energy secretary announced plans Tuesday for the United States and Russia to enhance cooperation in nuclear reactor design and maintain joint efforts to prevent nuclear materials from falling into the wrong hands.

Daniel Poneman said after a working-group meeting between the two countries that they have developed a "strong partnership" in the field.

Moscow and Washington have launched a joint effort to return fuel from Soviet and U.S. nuclear reactors built overseas.

Returning the fuel for reprocessing reduces the danger of highly enriched uranium falling into the wrong hands.

"A matter of kilograms of this material is highly dangerous and could be used for terrorist

purposes, and ... we have repatriated many multiples of that quantity," Poneman said after the talks.

Rosatom chief Sergei Kiriienko said it has already removed a total of more than 2,000 kilograms of highly enriched uranium from research reactors in six former Soviet republics and Soviet bloc nations.

Kiriienko and Poneman also noted that the conversion of research reactors in Russia and the United States to the use of low-enriched uranium fuel is essential for combating nuclear terrorism.

"We are talking about hundreds of potential 'dirty bombs' that could have fallen into the hands of terrorists," Kiriienko said. "Russia and the U.S. have taken responsibility for security in all the countries we supplied with highly enriched uranium."

Poneman said the effort seeks to replace highly enriched uranium with low-enriched uranium, allowing the countries to continue operations for scientific applications.

Poneman and Kiriienko also signed a statement Tuesday confirming Russia's intention to begin conversion of its own research reactors from highly enriched to low-enriched uranium.

They added that U.S. and Russian officials are finalizing the text of a bilateral agreement on research and development in nuclear energy that is expected to be ready for signing in September.

The agreement is intended to set the framework for shared efforts in designing prospective nuclear reactors and fuel.

Despite disagreements over the Syrian crisis and a rift over U.S.-led missile defense plans for Europe, Moscow and Washington have cooperated on key global issues such as the war in Afghanistan, counterterrorism and nuclear security.

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