

WEAPONS COMPLEX

MORNING
BRIEFING**■ U.S., Russian Officials Trade INF Treaty Violation Accusations**

U.S. and Russian officials on Wednesday renewed claims that their governments had violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and sparred over the consequences of aggressive rhetoric toward one another. Jon Wolfsthal, senior director for arms control and nonproliferation at the National Security Council, said at the ExchangeMonitor Nuclear Deterrence Summit that the U.S. seeks a resolution regarding Russia's violation of the INF Treaty.

The 1987 INF Treaty required the U.S. and then-Soviet Union to eliminate ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers. In 2014, the Department of State determined that Russia violated a core tenet of the treaty not to produce or flight test an intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missile, and has said it will consider economic and military responses. While the State Department has not elaborated on details of the violation, analysts have said the allegation might be based on a flight test of an RS-26 ballistic missile or R-511 cruise missile.

Sergey Kislyak, Russia's ambassador to the United States, denied the charge, saying allegations of noncompliance are "black" and have not been explained properly by U.S. officials. Kislyak said Russia would like the United States to come back into compliance of the treaty, but Wolfsthal scoffed at the notion that there had been a U.S. breach in the first place. Russia has claimed that U.S. target missile tests for global missile defense and armed drone production violate the treaty.

Wolfsthal called the treaty violation claim a "false allegation" for which "if there is a sincere concern on the part of our Russian counterparts to . . . discuss these [issues] again then we are ready and prepared to do that, but only as part of a two-way discussion." He added that "Russian security that will suffer more as a result of violating this treaty" and that it would be "politically challenging" to execute a follow-on agreement to the New START nuclear arms control accord while Moscow is breaching an older treaty.»

■ NRC's Ostendorff Stepping Down

After serving nearly six years on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Commissioner William Ostendorff said Wednesday he will not seek reappointment, as he has accepted a teaching position with his alma mater, the United States Naval Academy.

"I've been privileged to serve NRC since 2010," Ostendorff said Wednesday during the Platts Nuclear Energy Conference in Washington, D.C. "It's been a very busy time and an honor to serve. I will leave NRC when my term expires June 30."

Ostendorff began his first term of just over a year in April 2010, and was sworn in for a second term in July 2011. He said he will teach national security affairs as a professor in the Naval Academy's Economics Department. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1976 to 2002, retiring as a captain. Before joining the commission, he served as director in two separate roles at the National Academies: for the Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy and for the Board on Global Science and Technology.

Ostendorff said post-Fukushima decision-making highlighted his time with the NRC.»

■ NNSA Chief Lauds Life Extension Program, Nonproliferation Progress

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) in January established a uranium lease and take-back (ULTB) program for the commercial production of medical isotope molybdenum-99 (Mo-99) using low-enriched uranium (LEU). The goal, the NNSA said this week, is to give commercial producers of the isotope access to Department of Energy (DOE) LEU from its excess uranium inventory for Mo-99 production in the U.S., while avoiding the use of highly enriched uranium that is vulnerable to proliferation. Supply agreements negotiated through the program would make the LEU available to Mo-99 producers, which would then arrange for the transport of the LEU to their facilities.

The DOE will also be responsible for the spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste created from LEU irradiation, processing, or purification through take-back contracts, the agency said. It noted that the NNSA is supporting four Mo-99 production projects with up to \$25 million given for each, and that the ULTB program is managed by both the NNSA's Material Management and Minimization and the Department of Energy's Environmental Management programs.

Mo-99's radioactive decay product is used in the majority of medical nuclear diagnostic imaging procedures, around 50,000 procedures in the U.S. every day, the NNSA said. Anne Harrington, the agency's deputy administration for defense nuclear nonproliferation, said in a statement that the ULTB program "will provide services needed to make new, commercial sources of Mo-99 in the United States available for patients in a way that is consistent with the goals outlined through the Nuclear Security Summit process and strengthens the global nuclear nonproliferation regime."»

■ **Wisconsin Senate Approves Lifting Nuclear Ban**

The Wisconsin State Senate in 23-9 vote Tuesday approved legislation that would lift the state's 33-year ban on building new nuclear power plants, advancing the bill to Gov. Scott Walker for final approval.

Wisconsin currently prohibits the construction of new plants because the federal government has not established a storage facility capable of taking nuclear waste from states. In addition to lifting the ban, the Republican bill realigns the state's energy priorities, moving nuclear ahead of nonrenewable energy sources but behind renewables. The 1,000-megawatt capacity Point Beach Nuclear Plant, which was commissioned in 1970, is Wisconsin's only operational nuclear plant.

Bill author Rep. Kevin Petersen (R-Waupaca) and supporters have emphasized energy and cost efficiency provided by nuclear power, along with the prospect of new jobs, while opponents claim they are ignoring less risky alternatives such as wind and solar.

Four Democratic senators — Dave Hansen, Julie Lassa, Janis Ringhand, and Jennifer Shilling — sided with Republicans in supporting the bill.»

■ **No Protest of Fluor's Big Idaho Cleanup Award**

The Fluor-led team that won a \$1.4 billion contract for legacy-waste cleanup at the Department of Energy's Idaho Site near Idaho Falls, Idaho, will hold on to the work, now that the deadline for the mystery bidder to protest DOE's award has passed.

DOE on Feb. 4 announced Fluor Idaho had won the so-called Idaho Cleanup Project (ICP) Core contract: a deal that, including options, would last five years and phase in on June 1.

There was one other bidder for the work, which DOE did not identify in the press release announcing Fluor's win. Under federal law, the unidentified bidder had 10 days from the time of the award to protest the department's decision with the Government Accountability Office (GAO); as of Feb. 17, no notice about the ICP Core work had appeared on GAO's online bid protest docket.

Industry officials last year speculated Fluor's competitor for ICP Core, which combines cleanup work now managed under two separate contracts, was AECOM.

Asked to confirm the rumor, and whether the company planned to protest DOE's award decision, an AECOM spokesperson said Wednesday the company "does not comment on business development opportunities."»

■ **N.D. Borehole Moratorium Remains In Place**

A moratorium halting the Department of Energy's plan to drill a nuclear waste storage test borehole in North Dakota, will remain in place, according to Pierce County Commission Chairman Dave Migler.

The Pierce County Commission activated the drilling ban in early February after officials and residents voiced concern that the study will lead to eventual storage of nuclear waste in North Dakota.

The estimated five-year, \$35 million project, proposed across 20 acres of state land near the city of Rugby, would deliver data on whether drilling 16,000-foot boreholes into rock formations is feasible for storage of DOE-managed waste. DOE has contracted Battelle Memorial Institute, which has partnered with the University of North Dakota Energy & Environmental Research Center in Grand Forks, for the project.

Representatives from all three organizations joined the commissioners on Tuesday for a special meeting in

Rugby, where about 250 people gathered. Migler said Wednesday that the overwhelming majority want the project stopped.

"The experiment is fine, but the government has failed with this nuclear waste stuff, and they are looking for sites," Migler said. "And if this site is favorable for (drilling), I might not see it in my lifetime, but the consensus was that people don't trust the government, and it's possibly going to come, so their feeling was, as well as the commissioners, stop it now. Do it somewhere else."

Battelle spokesman T.R. Massey agreed that the majority of attendees opposed the project, but he said that's not necessarily representative of all of Pierce County, an area populated by about 4,400 people in north-central North Dakota. Still, he said, representatives were happy to inform attendees about the project.

"We know the scope of the project, and we know what we're doing, and we know that there will not be any radioactive waste being disposed of or stored in the deep borehole that we're going to drill," Massey said.

Battelle will need a drilling permit and lease from the state for the project, which was scheduled to break ground on Sept. 1. Massey said both applications are on hold until the matter is resolved with the county. Migler said the commission is still digesting the information, but a temporary moratorium can remain in place for five years or longer. Massey said his team will need to reassess plans if there is potential for long-term delays.»

■ **NNSA Establishes Program for Commercial LEU-Based Medical Isotope Production**

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■ **DOE Small Business Forum to Focus on SRS Cleanup**

The Energy Department in May will host a small business forum for companies and academics interested in demonstrating technology to help with nuclear cleanup at the Savannah River Site in Aiken, S.C..

The Small Business Forum Technology Demonstrations and Opportunities will take place May 19-20 at the University of South Carolina Convocation Center in Aiken, DOE said Wednesday in a press release. On May 19, DOE site officials will meet with attendees one-on-one to discuss small business needs. On May 20, DOE will offer a tour of the site, which was built in the 1950s to refine plutonium and uranium for Pentagon weapons programs. DOE is not soliciting any business at or in connection with the forum, according to the press release.

DOE is particularly interested in technologies that can help with liquid waste cleanup at the site, including "advanced robotic and remote sensing technologies." The agency also wants to hear about ideas for cleaning up the radioactive elements technetium-99, cesium-137, and strontium-90, and the heavy metal mercury.

Those interested should email techforum@srs.gov, DOE said.»

■ **Correction**

A headline in Tuesday's Weapons Complex Morning Briefing should have read "Portsmouth Site Specific Advisory Board Gets Kudos From Local Chamber."»

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