

U.S. and Ukraine Sign Deal to Remove Uranium

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NEW YORK — Ukraine has signed a deal with the United States to remove its stockpile of weapons-grade uranium by April 2012.

The material, enough to make several nuclear bombs, would be sent to Russia to be blended down and made useless for bomb-making, according to the agreement, signed Monday by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The deal was slated for signing in July but was delayed amid Ukrainian reservations, U.S. officials said. One reason was that Ukraine wanted assurances that the United States would complete a \$25 million nuclear research facility called for under the deal.

The facility would be able to produce 50 different types of medical isotopes, using only low-enriched uranium. Clinton said the United States was fully committed to meeting the timelines for constructing the facility so it would be up and running by 2014.

The Ukrainian government also wanted to ensure that the deal was properly approved under state regulations. The government may be particularly sensitive because former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko was arrested and charged with not obtaining proper approval when signing a natural gas import contract with Russia in 2009.

Clinton praised Ukraine for making the "bold commitment" to world security.

"This deal is a win-win for both countries and both peoples," she said. "It provides tangible benefits for the people of Ukraine, and it makes the world safer for all people."

Clinton also took the opportunity to gently chide the Ukrainians for backsliding on democratic principles, a clear reference to the Tymoshenko case.

"We are very committed to democratic progress continuing in Ukraine, and therefore it is vital that the government avoid any actions that could undermine democracy or the rule of law or political participation," she said.

The United States has criticized the arrest as politically motivated and said it raises questions about Ukraine's commitment to the rule of law.

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