



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: Steven Dolley**  
**Thursday, June 27, 2002 (202)-822-8444; [mail@nci.org](mailto:mail@nci.org)**

## **G-8 NATIONS TO WASTE BILLIONS ON DANGEROUS RUSSIAN PLUTONIUM FUEL**

### **U.S. Pressure Blocks Cheaper, Safer Disposal Method**

Washington---Caving in to pressure from the Bush Administration, the G-8 nations agreed today at their summit in Kananaskis, Canada to fund a dangerous, expensive program to fabricate mixed-oxide fuel (MOX) in Russia with plutonium from dismantled nuclear weapons. The nations pledged to raise up to \$20 billion over a ten-year period to support various disarmament and non-proliferation programs, initially in Russia, including disposition of Russian fissile materials. Previous attempts by the U.S. to raise much of the estimated \$2 billion cost for the Russian MOX program from other G-8 nations had been unsuccessful.

Securing poorly protected weapon-usable materials in Russia and elsewhere is a worthy goal, but spending billions of dollars on a Russian plutonium fuel program is a colossal waste of money, noted Dr. Edwin Lyman, president of the Nuclear Control Institute (NCI), a non-proliferation research and advocacy center. Moreover, the G-8 approach would greatly increase proliferation risks by subsidizing commerce in bomb-usable materials, rather than directly disposing of plutonium as waste.

Processing and transportation of Russian plutonium for a MOX program would exacerbate risks of theft or diversion of bomb materials. If the G-8 nations are truly concerned about nuclear terrorism risks, the last thing they should be doing is paying for the dissemination of MOX fuel to poorly secured facilities throughout Russia, Dr. Lyman pointed out.

According to the U.S. Energy Departments own studies, disposing of surplus plutonium by immobilizing it in a glass matrix with highly radioactive waste would be far cheaper, faster and safer than MOX-fuel irradiation. Russian officials prefer MOX to immobilization, but they refuse to pay the bill, Dr. Lyman noted. The G-8 nations should insist on use of the most effective disposition technology if they are to invest billions of their own funds.

*More information about plutonium disposition and the dangers of MOX fuel are available on NCI's website at <http://www.nci.org/nci-wpu.htm>*