The Lugar Center Joins Initiative to Address the Security of Military Nuclear Materials

November 18, 2014

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A high-level group of political and military leaders from nuclear weapons states met today to launch the “Military Materials Security Study Group,” an effort to bolster the security of the nuclear materials under the control of militaries worldwide.

Under the leadership of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), the Study Group is being chaired by NTI Co-Chairman and former U.S. Senator, Sam Nunn, Lugar Center President and former U.S. Senator, Richard Lugar, and NTI Vice Chairman and former U.K. Defense Secretary, Des Browne.

“I am very pleased that The Lugar Center will be a partner in the Military Materials Security Study Group project,” said Lugar. “Over more than two decades, the Nunn-Lugar Program demonstrated that nations could work together to safeguard large quantities of nuclear materials and weapons. We learned a lot from that experience. We need to build consensus about how proven security techniques and principles could be applied to military nuclear materials worldwide.”

Existing international security standards covering weapons-usable nuclear materials apply only to the 15 percent of materials classified as civilian. The 85 percent under the control of militaries exist outside international controls.

Common perceptions are that military nuclear materials are more secure than those under civilian control. But troubling security lapses at military facilities, as well as the vast quantity and diversity of military nuclear materials, underscore that a coordinated effort to establish international standards and improve the security of these materials is urgently needed.

The Study Group will develop recommendations that will be issued next year regarding how nuclear weapons states can cooperate to improve controls on these materials and to build confidence in their security.

See NTI’s press release here.