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Politics - U.S. Newswire Press Releases

U.S. Removes Iraqi Nuclear and Radiological Materials; Joint Operation Conducted with U.S. Departments of Energy and Defense

U.S. Newswire
 Medialink Worldwide

Tue Jul 6, 1:23 PM ET

To: National Desk, Energy Reporter

Contact: Bryan Wilkes of NNSA, 202-586-7371; Major Sandra Burr of the Department of Defense ([news](#) - [web sites](#)), 703-697-5133; Jeanne Lopatto of the U.S. Department of Energy ([news](#) - [web sites](#)), 202-586-4940

WASHINGTON, July 6 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) announced today that the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Defense (DOD) have completed a joint operation to secure and remove from Iraq ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) radiological and nuclear materials that could potentially be used in a radiological dispersal device or diverted to support a nuclear weapons program.

"This operation was a major achievement for the Bush Administration's goal to keep potentially dangerous nuclear materials out of the hands of terrorists," Secretary Abraham said. "It also puts this material out of reach for countries that may seek to develop their own nuclear weapons."

Twenty experts from DOE's national laboratory complex packaged 1.77 metric tons of low-enriched uranium and roughly 1000 highly radioactive sources from the former Iraq nuclear research facility. The DOD airlifted the material to the United States on June 23 and provided security, coordination, planning, ground transportation, and funding for the mission.

Due to safety and security issues surrounding the removed materials, the U.S., consistent with its authorities and relevant United Nations ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) Security Council Resolutions, took possession of,

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and removed the materials to ensure the safety and security of the Iraqi people.

DOE also repackaged less sensitive materials that will remain in Iraq. Radiological sources that continue to serve useful medical, agricultural or industrial purposes were not removed from Iraq.

The low enriched uranium will be stored temporarily at a secure DOE facility and the radiological sources will initially be brought to a DOE laboratory for further characterization and disposition.

The International Atomic Energy Agency was advised in advance of the U.S. intentions to remove the nuclear materials. Iraqi officials were briefed about the removal of the materials and sources prior to evacuation.

The nuclear research complex, now under the responsibility of the Iraq Ministry of Science and Technology, was once a central institution for Iraq's nuclear weapons program before being dismantled in the early 1990s, following the first Gulf War ([news](#) - [web sites](#)). The complex was also the consolidation point for highly radioactive sources collected by the Department of Defense with assistance by employees of the Ministry of Science and Technology within Iraq over the last year.

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