

CITS to Host Workshop on Radiological Terrorism

ATHENS, GA, September 6—The Center for International Trade and Security (CITS) and the Institute of Nuclear Safety at the Russian Academy of Sciences, will hold a NATO-Russia Advanced Research Workshop in Bratislava, Slovakia, on October 23-24, 2006. Entitled “Social and Psychological Effects of Radiological Terrorism,” the event will be sponsored by the NATO Science Program and the NATO-Russia Council. The Nuclear Regulatory Authority of the Slovak Republic will act as co-host.

It has become clear that terrorist organizations are seeking radioactive materials to construct radiological or “dirty” bombs, which use conventional explosives to contaminate urban areas with radiation, inducing panic and wreaking economic devastation. Similar results can be achieved using radiological dispersal devices, which scatter radiation around using equipment as simple as a fan. Also possible are acts of sabotage against nuclear power plants or facilities. If deliberately damaged, a nuclear installation could become a dispersal device on a grand scale.

While nuclear weapons are far deadlier than radiological devices, the materials needed to build them are reasonably secure from terrorists. But the makings of dirty bombs are available in bulk throughout the world. These low-level weapons are easy to manufacture and use, and ordinary citizens tend to confuse them with nuclear weapons—meaning that terrorists can inflict comparable social and psychological harm more cheaply and with less effort. Experts estimate that a dirty-bomb attack is much more likely than a nuclear terrorist attack.

Accordingly, building up public resilience is a matter of real and growing importance. The NATO-Russia Workshop in Bratislava will assess the effects of radiological terrorism on civilian populations and look for strategies to mitigate these effects. Participants will pay special attention to the lessons learned from past accidents that released radiation, such as Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. The conference will generate recommendations to help officials enact policies and laws that prepare their citizens and societies to cope with radiological terrorism.

The Bratislava workshop will support the just-unveiled U.S. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, several initiatives taken by the Group of Eight industrial democracies, and a nuclear-security agreement announced by Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin following their 2005 Bratislava summit. Scheduled just after the world marks the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the workshop is nothing if not timely.

The Center for International Trade and Security has been studying issues related to nuclear terrorism since the late 1980s. Its recent efforts include a NATO Advanced Research Workshop on Nuclear Security Culture, which convened in Moscow in October 2005. See <http://www.uga.edu/cits> for details about the Moscow workshop and the Center’s other work.

For more information on the Bratislava workshop or to schedule press coverage, contact Dr. Igor Khripunov, CITS Associate Director (igokhrip@uga.edu), +1 706-542-2985, fax +1 706-542-2975.