

U.S. says it will discard some plutonium

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The U.S. Department of Energy announced it will remove 9 metric tons of plutonium from further use as fissile material in nuclear weapons.

The announcement was made Monday in Vienna by Energy Department Secretary Samuel Bodman, speaking during the International Atomic Energy Agency's annual general conference.

Bodeman said 9 metric tons of plutonium is enough material to make more than 1,000 nuclear weapons.

"The United States is leading by example and furthering our commitment to non-proliferation and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty by safely reducing the amount of weapons-usable nuclear material in the world," said Bodman said. "As the United States continues to reduce the size of its nuclear weapons stockpile, we will be able to dispose of even more nuclear material while increasing energy and national security."

He said the excess plutonium will be removed during the coming decades from retired, dismantled nuclear weapons. It will be eliminated by fabrication into mixed-oxide fuel that can be burned in commercial nuclear reactors to produce electricity.

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