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Obama Nuclear Summit Opens in D.C.

Heads of state and other governmental officials from 47 countries gathered in Washington, D.C., on April 12 on the eve of President Barack Obama's nuclear proliferation summit. The event was described in an AP report as "the largest assembly hosted by a U.S. leader since the founding conference of the United Nations in 1945."

The summit comes less than a week after President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) on April 8.



The AP report predicted that major new strategies were unlikely to emerge from the two-day gathering, but that President Obama said that he was pleased with the direction taken by the dialogue in warm-up meetings on April 11 with the leaders of Kazakhstan, South Africa, India, and Pakistan.

"I feel very good at this stage in the degree of commitment and a sense of urgency that I have seen from the world leaders so far on this issue," Obama said. "We think we can make enormous progress on this, and this then becomes part and parcel of the broader focus that we've had over the last several weeks."

In a [blog posted on the White House website](#) April 12, Jesse Lee, the White House Online Programs Director, stated:

The New Start Treaty was signed two days after the Department of Defense released the new Nuclear Posture Review, which establishes as a goal of America's foreign policy "to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and focus on reducing the nuclear dangers of the 21st century, while sustaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent for the United States and our allies and partners as long as nuclear weapons exist."...

This morning the President arrived at the Nuclear Security Summit with leaders from around the world to pursue a comprehensive nuclear security agenda to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world within four years. As Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes explained in previewing the summit, "Obviously no one nation is capable of taking the actions necessary to secure vulnerable nuclear materials that are in many different countries and in many different regions of the world. Similarly, no one nation is capable of pursuing the kind of nuclear security measures that can prevent the transit, illicit transit, of those types of materials." The summit will focus on collective action to achieve these goals, and as the largest gathering of countries by an American President dedicated to a specific issue in decades, it represents a recognition by the President and so many other leaders of the seriousness of the threat posed by nuclear terrorism.

As the conference neared, Reuters news quoted Obama's statement that he expected it to yield "enormous progress" toward the goal of locking down loose nuclear materials worldwide. "We know that organizations like al Qaeda are in the process of trying to secure a nuclear weapon, a weapon of mass destruction that they have no compunction at using," Obama told reporters, calling it the biggest



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threat to national security.

Iran dismissed the U.S. summit and said it would not be swayed by any decisions made there. "World summits being organized these days are intended to humiliate human beings," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in Tehran.

As world leaders awaited the start of the conference, BBC News cited a White House statement that Ukraine would get rid of enough highly enriched uranium by 2012 to build "several weapons."

The BBC's Washington correspondent Jonathan Marcus stated that Ukraine's agreement sets a precedent that Obama would like other countries to follow.

As the summit progresses, it is worth looking for indications that President Obama's previously declared insistence that supposedly sovereign nation states be bound by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — enforceable by sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council — will be extended to other areas related to nuclear power, such as stores of enriched uranium being stockpiled for energy production.

As we noted in the online article "Obama and Medvedev Sign Arms Treaty":

This may seem a matter of grave consequence so long as we are speaking of some "rogue" Middle Easter regime. But consider the precedent set by this line of thinking: Nations that are party to the UN and UN-mandated nuclear non-proliferation treaties are subject to UN sanctions and therefore subservient to the UN.

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