

## Bush, Putin agree to nuclear cooperation

*by UPI*

WASHINGTON - U.S. President George Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a statement Tuesday in Washington agreeing to increased cooperation on nuclear issues.

A White House statement said the two leaders had agreed "to initiate a new format for enhanced cooperation" that would strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Among the topics the leaders initialed was to ensure the International Atomic Energy Agency has the resources it needs to meet its safeguards responsibilities as nuclear power expands worldwide.

The talks were held before the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START, expires in 2009.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice and her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov also issued a joint statement highlighting mutual desires to reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles.

"The United States and Russia reiterate their intention to carry out strategic offensive reductions to the lowest possible level consistent with their national security requirements and alliance commitments," the statement said.

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