

## Brazil Joins the Very Closed Uranium Enriching Club

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At the moment, when anyone mentions nuclear program, all eyes turn to Iran and its dispute with the United States and the European Union. The problem is that there are strong suspicions that the objective of the Iranian nuclear program is to eventually build a bomb.

The Brazilian nuclear program does not have that problem. According to Carlos Freire Moreira, a director at Indústrias Nucleares do Brasil, which will be operating Brazil's first uranium enrichment factory in Resende, Rio de Janeiro, the program is exclusively industrial and commercial, and will supply the country's nuclear power plants with fuel.

Moreira points out that Brazil is a signatory to all the nuclear non-proliferation treaties and that the Resende factory will be overseen by the Brazil-Argentina Nuclear Energy Application Agency. He also reports that Brazil presently has a good relationship with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Aquilino Serra, a researcher at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, says that when the Resende factory goes into operation the only international concern will be with possible competition from a new player in the restricted field of uranium enrichment.

The plant is ready to go into operation any day now. The only consideration seems to be to find a date in which Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva can be present for the starting ceremony.

Serra says Brazil should not have any problems with inspections, as long as they take place within the framework established, which offer Brazil protection for its processing technology.

Serra points out that the Brazilian factory will enrich uranium by 5%, which is the limit for industrial/commercial purposes. "In order to make a bomb, you have to enrich to 95%," he explains.

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