

## Brazil Joins the Uranium-Savvy Club of Ten

Contributed by Vladimir Platonow  
Monday, 08 May 2006

The Navy Technological Center, in São Paulo, in the southeast of Brazil, was responsible for developing the ultracentrifuges that went on line Friday, May 5, in the Nuclear Industries of Brazil (INB), in Resende, located in the southern region of Rio de Janeiro.

This accomplishment qualified Brazil as one of the ten countries that have mastered the technology of producing nuclear fuel.

The ultracentrifuges are high-speeding rotating devices that separate particles according to their molecular weights. In this case the centrifuges are used to separate molecules of uranium-235, which is fissionable, from uranium-238, which is not.

The INB possesses hundreds of such centrifuges, which constitute the fruit of a US\$ 48.5 million investment by the federal government.

According to the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology, Brazil's uranium reserves are the sixth largest in the world, and the country expects to attain self-sufficiency in uranium enrichment in 2016, by which time US\$ 267 million will have been invested.

The minister of Science and Technology, Sérgio Rezende defends nuclear energy as the only option capable of amply meeting demand in Brazil, in view of the drastic decline expected in global petroleum reserves over the next 20 or 30 years and uncertainty regarding the natural gas supply after Bolivia's president, Evo Morales, nationalized his country's gas and petroleum reserves.

According to the minister, aeolian (wind) and solar energy do not offer prospects of viability on a large-scale.

The nine countries besides Brazil that have the technology to produce nuclear fuel are: Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, the United States, Russia, China, and Pakistan. The United States and France are responsible for 55% of the total.

Agência Brasil