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## Tajik security officials detain smugglers of radioactive uranium

*Tue Mar 26, 9:58 AM ET*

*By LIDA ISAMOVA, Associated Press Writer*

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan - Tajik security officials on Tuesday arrested four people who possessed two kilograms (4.4 pounds) of radioactive uranium apparently stolen from a metal plant.

A spokesman for the Tajik Security Ministry said the four men were arrested in the city of Chkalovsk in northern Tajikistan, the impoverished ex-Soviet republic in Central Asia that borders Afghanistan ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) to the north.

The men refused to say where they had obtained the material and what they were going to do with it, said the spokesman who refused to be identified by name. All four were residents of Chkalovsk, and one had been convicted of robbery in the past, the spokesman said.

The spokesman said that lab tests showed that the low-enriched uranium had apparently been stolen from the Vostokkredmet metal plant in the town of Taboshar outside Chkalovsk.

An official investigation has been opened.

Reports of numerous thefts of radioactive materials in many ex-Soviet republics since the December 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union have stoked up fears that they could be used for building a nuclear bomb. Officials have claimed that all such thefts involved low-concentration substances in small quantities that were unfit for making nuclear weapons.

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