

Statement
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Committee on the Homeland Security
Subcommittee on the Prevention of Nuclear and Biological Attack
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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the newly created Domestic Nuclear Detection Office.

Of all the potential terrorist threats America will face during the next several decades, only two have the capability of bringing a super power to its knees, biological and nuclear. Notwithstanding the name of this subcommittee, I must tell you, at this time there is no way to prevent biological attacks on the American homeland. As we discussed last month at the Committee's Wye River off-site, the biotechnical revolution of the past decade combined with the fact that the majority of pathogens suitable for biological weapons exist in nature make it physically impossible to prevent such an attack. Therefore, the focus for biodefense must be early detection, rapid response, and recovery. If properly prepared, we will be able to prevent a bioterrorist attack from becoming a social, economic, and political catastrophe. Without sufficient preparation, little can be done in the midst of a crisis to lessen the consequences of an epidemic.

On the other hand, our efforts to protect America from the threat of nuclear terrorism must not be primarily focused on *detection* of nuclear materials *inside* our own borders. The priority must be on preventing any terrorist organization from obtaining highly enriched uranium or weapons-grade plutonium. That is why I am concerned about the limited scope of the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office in the Department of Homeland Security.

The newly created DNDO is certainly a worthwhile initial effort, but not the strategic program we require. The two greatest shortfalls are clearly identified in the title of the new office: *domestic* and *detection*. The word *domestic* leads me to believe its focus will be inside US borders. Most of the nuclear material that we must contain is outside US borders, the vast majority in the states of the former Soviet Union. Additionally, *detecting* nuclear material inside our borders is the last step in a long process, and what I would describe as a desperate effort with low probability of success.

On the other hand, I will say that DNDO is a worthwhile initial step, because it may serve to improve interagency cooperation amongst the wide variety of players involved in preventing nuclear terrorism on our homeland. I applaud this initiative, but must ask, are we doing enough to identify and secure the sources of weapons-grade fissile material that could be used to build a terrorist weapon? To me, this should be the top priority.

If al Qaeda, or any other sophisticated terrorist organization gets their hands on highly-enriched uranium, they can most probably build a bomb. Any terrorist organization capable enough to obtain this material is probably smart enough to transport it to an American city without detection.

Some would say we should spend more money on detection capabilities. I do not believe that this should be a high priority--from both scientific and operational perspectives. In an unclassified hearing I cannot comment on certain facts, but for those who will try to convince you about the current capabilities, I suggest you ask them one question: "Why can't you find the nuclear weapon that is located just 16 miles

from Savannah Georgia?" An Air Force B-47 dropped it there on February 5, 1958. It is reported to be 60 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Regarding funding research and development efforts for new technologies, I am a little more optimistic, yet, as we discussed at Wye River, trying to get a straight answers about the feasibility of such new capabilities is not easy. My bottom line on radiological detection is that it is most likely a better return on investment to focus on research and development rather than more deployment of current capabilities.

My bottom-line on the establishment of the DNDO is that I support the initiative, but question why it is limited to domestic efforts. I think most of us in this room agree that a nuclear-armed terrorist is the most troubling of all threats to our homeland.

If we agree that this is true, then I must ask you who is in charge of preventing such an attack, because, I do not know. If you wanted to have a hearing on what is being done to prevent such an attack, who would you have to call to testify? The Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the Director of National Intelligence, to name just a few. In other words, no one is in charge.

If I asked you who was in charge of missile defense in this country, you could point to one person who has been appointed by the Secretary of Defense to manage the program and a Presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed Under Secretary who is responsible for an annual budget of \$7.7 billion. It is very clearly known who is responsible for the program to defend *against a delivery system*, but who is in charge of defending against *the weapon*?

Frankly, I don't lose any sleep worrying about intercontinental missiles delivering nuclear weapons on American cities, but I do worry about nuclear weapons being delivered in small trucks, because that is the most likely delivery method for a terrorist organization.

I am also not convinced that a massive, new deployment of current or the next-generation radiological detectors at border crossings and ports will make us more secure. First of all, a nuclear explosion on a ship that was just pulling into one of our large ports means the weapon would have reached a high-value target. Second, why do we think that a terrorist will cooperate and bring a nuke through one of our largest ports? I would bring it across the border in a privately owned jet aircraft, a small boat (we have 95,000 miles of shoreline in America) or in a four-wheel drive vehicle across the 7,000 miles of unguarded border. Building a Maginot Line of radiological detectors would make us no more secure. In fact, it would divert funds from higher priority programs, and make us less secure.

The answer to the threat of nuclear terrorism is preventing the terrorists from getting their hands on weapons-grade material. The majority of this effort will be accomplished outside of the US borders through programs that are not receiving the political and fiscal support they deserve. I do not see how the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office will solve this problem.

Mr. Chairman, I conclude my brief remarks with what I believe to be the most troubling statement in WMD Commission Report. "... we would like to emphasize that the United States has not made collection on loose nukes a high priority."

Mr. Chairman, what could possibly be a higher priority?