

Subcommittee Hearing Notice
Committee on International Relations

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Florida, Chairperson

***** REVISED *****

October 1, 2001

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

You are respectfully requested to attend the following OPEN HEARING of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights to be held in Room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building.

DATE: Wednesday, October 3, 2001

TIME: ** 1:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: The Role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Safeguarding
Against Acts of Terrorism

***** WITNESSES:** **Mr. Richard J. Stratford**
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Nonproliferation
U.S. Department of State

Mr. E. Michael Southwick
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of International Organization Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Steven K. Black
Assistant Deputy Administrator
Office of Arms Control and Nonproliferation
National Nuclear Security Administration
U.S. Department of Energy

Mr. William Travers
Executive Director for Operations
Nuclear Regulatory Commission

**** NOTE:** New Time

***** NOTE:** Witnesses named

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**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives**

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**Statement by Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
for Hearing on:
“The Role of the International Atomic Energy Agency
in Safeguarding Against Nuclear-Related Terrorism”
Wednesday, October 3, 2001
1:00 p.m., 2172 Rayburn**

It has been repeatedly said that the United States lost its innocence on Tuesday, September 11, 2001.

The sense of security and invincibility that stemmed from being the Cold War victor and global superpower was destroyed in less than an hour – the span of time between the attack on the first tower of the World Trade Center and those on the second tower and later the Pentagon.

In this brief moment in history, the United States and the American people realized that anything and everything is possible. We now fully understand that terrorists have no boundaries, no sense of remorse; that terrorists place no value on human life.

As the September 11th attacks taught us, no country and no target is immune from this cancer. To terrorists, any means is justifiable.

Suddenly, the warnings and analyses by experts on the potential use of chemical and biological weapons and potential for nuclear terrorism, were no longer viewed as abstract arguments or action film plots. Suddenly, nuclear-related terrorism became a vivid and very real threat.

This sense of urgency was palpable as the U.S. put on standby alert its Nuclear Emergency Search Team, which is trained to respond to terrorists armed with nuclear weapons.

We therefore needed to evaluate what the U.S. has done and will do, unilaterally and globally, to prepare and protect against the daunting possibility of nuclear terrorism.

The pivotal role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in ensuring the physical protection of nuclear materials and in countering the illicit trafficking in these radioactive elements, was best described by Secretary of Energy, Spencer Abraham, at the opening session of the IAEA's General Conference held in Vienna from September 17th through 21st.

Secretary Abraham underscored that: "We know our security and that of nations around the world, largely depends upon what this Agency does to prevent the proliferation and the misuse of nuclear materials...We cannot assume that tomorrow's terrorist acts will mirror those we have just experienced. This is why the work of the IAEA is so pivotal."

How real or imminent is the threat of nuclear-related terrorism?

President Bush warned a congressional prayer meeting on Wednesday, September 19th, that there was credible evidence a second wave of terrorist attacks would strike the U.S. which could include nuclear terrorism.

It has also been reported that, in 1992, a series of National Intelligence Estimates from the CIA concluded that such nuclear terrorism was highly likely.

Earlier this year, it was reported that the CIA had identified 12 terrorist groups which had attempted to buy enriched uranium and plutonium in order to make a nuclear bomb, including Islamic militants linked to Osama bin Laden.

Such attempts to obtain nuclear materials was revealed during the trial in U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, of bin Laden and others for the August 7, 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Testimony revealed that bin Laden has been working on acquiring uranium presumably for the development of nuclear weapons.

Last week, Gary Nilhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control in Washington, D.C. was quoted as saying that: "Over the next 10 years, there is a definite risk of a terrorist attack with nuclear weapons."

The differences in these assessments concerning the immediacy of the threat appear to hinge on the definition of nuclear terrorism.

There are those who argue that terrorist organizations lack the technology, manpower, and access to materials to launch a terrorist attack using nuclear warheads, thus, delaying the threat of nuclear terrorism.

Nevertheless, what worries the experts, according to recent reports, is the lethal combination of radioactive material and conventional explosives.

As Graham Allison, director of Harvard University's Belfer Center, has described: "If you had a softball-size lump of enriched uranium, some materials [mostly] available at Radio Shack, and an engineering grad of an American university, you would have a reasonable chance" of making a crude nuclear weapon.

Others would argue that the jackpot for terrorists are "backpack" weapons. Information coming out of the bin Laden trial in New York reveals that bin Laden has a scientific team working on such "backpack nukes."

However, terrorists such as bin Laden would not need to go very far to find such minimized weapons.

According to public sources, 80 or more of these “backpack nukes” were built for the Russian special forces during the Cold War. These weapons were designed to be transported and activated by one man and can deliver a one kiloton explosion big enough to destroy a small city.

Prevention of such nuclear-related terrorism hinges on strengthening the physical protection of nuclear materials; on preventing the diversion of such materials for offensive purposes; and on detecting and intercepting the illegal transfers of such dangerous materials.

This is where the International Atomic Energy Agency steps in.

One of the Agency’s two primary goals is to ensure, as far as it is able, that the assistance it provides is not used to further any military purpose.

Under this rubric, the IAEA developed a program to address illicit trafficking of nuclear material and other radioactive sources in 1994.

The program focuses on helping countries strengthen their nuclear laws and infrastructures to ensure greater accounting, control, and security over these materials; on helping countries detect and respond to illegal movements of radioactive materials and to analyze confiscated materials; on developing and providing training for regulatory and facility personnel, as well as law enforcement authorities; on enhancing the exchange of information via international and inter-agency meetings and through such efforts as the Illicit Trafficking Database Program it developed.

The IAEA has also established the Office of Physical Protection and Material Security which involves the four Departments – Safeguards, Nuclear Safety, Technical Cooperation, and Management.

The Agency has developed, in consultation and cooperation with the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL, a Safety Guide on Preventing, Detecting and Responding to Illicit Trafficking in Radioactive Materials.

This guide, along with supplementary technical manuals, are for the use of customs officers, other law enforcement, as well as other relevant authorities and agencies in their efforts to address the illicit trafficking in nuclear materials.

The IAEA regularly reviews the threat, along with the methods to protect against it.

In fact, in May of this year, the IAEA, in concert with INTERPOL, EUROPOL, and the World Customs Organization, held an International Conference on Security of Material, which included multiple sessions on the threats and responses to nuclear terrorism – assessing vulnerability and strengthening global protection.

Nevertheless, as the IAEA Director General stated at the General Conference in Vienna, "[The IAEA] cannot be complacent. We have to and will increase our efforts on all fronts – from combating illicit trafficking, to ensuring the protection of nuclear materials – from nuclear installation design to withstand attacks, to improving how we respond to nuclear emergencies."

This, he added, would require extra resources but he was confident that IAEA Member States would rise to the challenge.

Ultimately, we hope this hearing will provide the Members with a better understanding of the nature, source, and scope of the threat of nuclear terrorism.

We hope to evaluate IAEA's efforts thus far regarding non-proliferation and nuclear terrorism; the Agency's role in addressing these grave issues, globally, and its role within U.S. priorities and objectives in this realm; the inter-relationship between the Departments of State and Energy, represented here today, and the IAEA; and what this relationship and U.S. course of action will develop into in the aftermath of the deplorable attacks of September 11, 2001.

But what does this all mean for homeland security? How has the U.S. worked with the IAEA to safeguard its own nuclear plants against sabotage and acts of terrorism such as the ones we witnessed on September 11th of this year? Can they withstand such an attack without disastrous consequences? Are they vulnerable to sabotage? Can they be used as a source for illicit trafficking in nuclear materials?

The safety and well-being of our constituents and the American people depends on all of us – the Congress and the Administration – working together to ensure that all possible steps, and even seemingly impossible ones, have been taken to protect this country from nuclear terrorism.

I look forward to it.

I thank the witnesses in advance for their testimony and the work that they do.