Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

July 26, 2012

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Statement of Chairman Lungren

Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies

Subcommittee Hearing

"Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Does DHS have an Effective and Efficient Nuclear Detection Strategy?"

July 26, 2012

Remarks as Prepared

The detonation of a nuclear or radiological device in a U.S. city is my greatest fear. It would be a catastrophic event, in the truest sense of the word, causing enormous death and destruction, as well as economic disruption.

Since 9/ 11, there is heightened concern that terrorists may try to smuggle radiological and nuclear materials or a nuclear weapon into the United States or acquire such materials within our country. If terrorists smuggled nuclear weapons or materials into the U.S., there is no doubt they would use them either to make an improvised nuclear device or a radiological dispersal device, also called a "Dirty Bomb". The detonation of such a device in an urban area could cause hundreds of thousands of deaths, along with the destruction and/or long-term contamination of buildings and critical infrastructure. But a nuclear attack is a preventable catastrophe.

In 2005, the President called for the establishment of the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO) in the Department of Homeland Security. I responded by codifying DNDO in the SAFE Port Act of 2006 which I introduced to address terrorist threats at our ports of entry. The purpose of DNDO was to improve the Nation's capability to detect unauthorized attempts to import, develop, or transport nuclear or radiological material for use against our Nation. DNDO was also directed to develop, in coordination with the Departments of Defense, Energy, and State, an enhanced global nuclear detection system of radiation detection equipment and interdiction activities. This system is called the Global Nuclear Detection Architecture (GNDA). I want to recognize the outstanding effort of Director Stern in marshalling the first-ever strategic plan for the GNDA through the very difficult interagency approval process. DNDO is responsible for implementing the domestic portion of this architecture at the U.S. border and within the United States, including the efforts of federal, state, and local governments. It is also responsible for developing and acquiring radiation detection equipment to support the domestic efforts of DHS and other federal agencies.

Our hearing today will examine how our nation's domestic defenses under the Global Nuclear Detection Architecture will detect and prevent such a nuclear event and whether there are federal, state and local gaps in this architecture. Since it was established, DNDO has been examining nuclear detection strategies along the usual pathways—air, land, or sea— for smuggling radiological or nuclear material. Through these studies, DNDO concluded that potential smuggling pathways outside of traditional ports of entry—where U.S. government efforts have been focused—represent critical gaps in the existing nuclear detection strategy. These gaps include land border areas between ports of entry; international general aviation; and small maritime craft, such as recreational boats and commercial fishing vessels.

Reliable technology is essential to the overall success of the Global Nuclear Detection Architecture. Unfortunately, after six years of development, testing and expense, we will be told this morning that DNDO's premier next-generation radiation detection technology – the Advanced Spectroscopic Portal Monitor Program – has been terminated. The ASP program, started well before Director Stern took office, has been a very costly failure and left

DNDO without the improved radiation detection equipment needed to enhance the domestic portion of the GNDA.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this morning on how they will implement the domestic detection portion on the GNDA, address identified GNDA gaps and what technology DNDO will pursue to replace ASP.

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