



CONGRESSWOMAN YVETTE D. CLARKE

REPRESENTING NEW YORK'S 11th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

New York's 11th Congressional District representing Brownsville, Ocean Hill, Crown Heights, East Flatbush, Borough Park, Park Slope, Kensington, Carroll Gardens, Prospect Heights, Lefferts Gardens, Grand Army Plaza, Windsor Terrace, Flatland, Midwood

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Rep. Yvette D. Clarke Hosts House Homeland Security Subcommittee Field Hearing in Brooklyn New York

(Washington DC)- On Monday, September 14, 2009, Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke, Chair of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cyber-security, Science and Technology, hosted a field hearing entitled, "Status Report on Federal and Local Efforts to Secure Radiological Sources." She released the following statement:

"Radiological source security is essential in preventing a Radiological Dispersion Device or RDD, often called a dirty bomb. To put it simply, no radiological material, no dirty bomb.

"Two years ago, the subcommittee, along with members of the New York City delegation, came to New York to observe some of the early efforts to secure radiological sources, specifically those Cesium Chloride Sources found in hospital blood irradiators. At that time, those early efforts were spearheaded by a partnership effort between New York City and Brookhaven National Laboratory. Security measures such as closed circuit television cameras, key-pad locking systems with alarms, and other access controls were being put in place.

"Over the last two years, three Federal Agencies, the Department of Homeland Security's Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO), the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) continued this idea by looking at the risk posed by the Cesium Chloride sources and proposing some solutions. These efforts became a little more sophisticated and brought the security focus closer to the source. The three agencies decided to take three actions to better secure radiological sources:

1. Harden blood irradiators to make it more difficult to remove the CsCl sources, called "engineering upgrades";
2. Examine whether alternate sources besides CsCl could be used; and

3. Improve the licensing and tracking system for sources.

“Today we are here to get an update on these efforts, and we have an exceptional panel of witnesses to help us in our efforts. From the Department of Homeland Security, Mr. Craig Conklin is the Director of the Sector Specific Agency Executive Management Office, Office of Infrastructure Protection. From the Department of Energy, Mr. Kenneth Sheely is the Associate Assistant Deputy Administrator for Global Threat Reduction National Nuclear Security Administration. From the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Mr. Robert Lewis is the Director of the Division of Materials Safety and State Agreements (MSSA). These three Federal witnesses will tell us about their current efforts-- what has worked and what hasn’t-- and their future plans.

“Next we have Captain Michael Riggio, head of CBRNE mitigation efforts in the Counterterrorism Directorate at the New York Police Department. We also have Mr. Gene Miskin the Director of the Office of Radiological Health for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The New York Police and Public Health Departments have been forward thinking and aggressive in their efforts to secure these sources. They have also shown us that police and public health, two entities who don’t see eye to eye very often, can work together to achieve a common goal. We are also interested in hearing from them how the various Federal agencies have worked with them.

“Also from New York is Dr. Bonnie Arquilla, who is the Director of Disaster Preparedness here at SUNY Downstate Medical Center. Thank you for being here and thank you to SUNY Downstate for allowing us to hold this hearing here. Finally, from the Government Accountability Office, is Mr. Gene Aloise, the Director of the Natural Resources and Environment Division. Dr. Arquilla and Mr. Aloise will not speak directly to source security efforts specifically, but will provide helpful context as Dr. Arquilla will explain the kinds of efforts and activities that would be necessary to respond to an RDD event, and Mr. Aloise will discuss the activities that would be involved in recovery from such events. I think we will all see that both response and recovery are quite difficult and expensive, and we should be doubly motivated to ensure that radiological sources are as well protected as possible.

“I believe in this mission. After the trip I mentioned two years ago, I introduced the Radiological Materials Security Act, which was reintroduced in April of this year. The provisions in the bill provide for the three federal agencies here today to carry out the activities that they have been and continue to carry out in their trilateral efforts. Although the bill has not yet been passed, it has helped me to push for appropriations to keep radiological source security and detection efforts going.

“I hope that the bill and this field hearing make it clear to the witnesses here today, as well as the agencies and departments that you represent, that Congress has an interest in your efforts. We will support you, and we want to see progress. Thank you all for being here. I look forward to your testimony and the following discussion.”

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