



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 2006

Contact: Donalyn Dela Cruz
(202) 224-6361

**Statement of Senator Daniel K. Akaka
“Neutralizing The Nuclear And Radiological Threat:
Securing the Global Supply Chain (Part One)”
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to see so many distinguished and qualified witnesses appearing before the Subcommittee today.

I am pleased that we are addressing the critically important issue of nuclear and radiological security. Over the past few years, I have requested several Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports that have identified insufficient efforts by the federal government to secure and dispose of radioactive sources both domestic and internationally.

In early 2003, the GAO reported to me problems with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s (NRC) documentation and licensing, which according to GAO’s testimony, remain a problem to this day. This is shocking, and I will be discussing with the NRC why corrective regulations have not been implemented, as they pledged to do.

I also successfully added a provision to the Energy Policy Act of 2005 designed to help secure radiological sealed sources in the United States.

However, today we are here to discuss the potential of radiological material crossing our borders. And, according to the testimony GAO will present today, as a nation the federal government isn’t doing enough to protect our citizens against this threat.

A nuclear or even a “dirty bomb” attack on American soil would cause unimaginable destruction to our society. I am particularly concerned about the nuclear and radiological security at our nation’s ports because commercial harbors play a critical role in the economy of my home state of Hawaii. My state receives 98 percent of the goods it imports via sea. Hawaii has successfully been using radiation portal monitors at seaports and airports to screen international cargo and mail. However, I am troubled that the Department of Homeland Security’s plan to

deploy additional detection technologies has been delayed, and now faces a projected \$342 million overrun.

Detection technologies used at US ports are the last layer of defense. The simple fact is that if a nuclear device is already in the US, it's too late. Furthermore, many of these detectors can be defeated by effective shielding techniques. The difficulty associated with detecting nuclear or radiological materials and responding to these threats when they are already present in the United States underscores the importance of preventing these dangerous materials from being smuggled into the United States in the first place.

Identifying radioactive sources at our borders and ports of entry must be our last line of defense in a layered approach that begins overseas. To be secure, we must identify, interdict, and secure radioactive sources and nuclear materials at their point of origin before they ever reach our shores. However, as I read over the findings GAO will present today, I am troubled about our lack of capability in this area.

My first concern is one of accountability. Our nation has spent more than \$178 million to deploy radiation technologies overseas at strategic locations. The Departments of Defense, State, and Energy have programs with foreign governments in 36 countries to provide detection technologies at screening locations in order to reduce nuclear smuggling efforts. While there have been some successes, detection technologies are not being used as efficiently nor as effectively as they should, according to GAO. The additional threat of corrupt border officials in some foreign countries further undermines our security. The GAO also found that federal agencies have fallen short in their ability to coordinate with one another. As GAO notes, we need specific performance measures, cost estimates, and timelines for our international nuclear detection programs.

I am also concerned about the possibility of duplicative programs in the newly established Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO) and the National Nuclear Security Administration in the area of radiation detection technologies. These technologies must be both effective at detecting nuclear or radiological materials and they must operate efficiently enough to expedite and not impede the flow of commerce. The new DNDO runs the risk of becoming another layer of bureaucracy on a crowded organizational chart, duplicating technologies being developed elsewhere in the federal government, and siphoning off scarce science and technology funds from other programs.

Lastly, we need a comprehensive understanding of the threat at the federal, state, and local levels. Intelligence, analysis, and information sharing play a critical role in combating nuclear and radiological smuggling efforts. Our intelligence community must be capable of sharing information rapidly with first responders at the state and local levels.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of our distinguished witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.