

**Opening Statement**  
**Senator Susan M. Collins**  
**Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations Hearing**  
***“Neutralizing the Nuclear and Radiological Threat:***  
***Securing the Global Supply Chain (Part One)”***  
**March 28, 2006**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I commend you for your efforts to strengthen the security of our ports by securing the global supply chain. If terrorists were to obtain nuclear or radiological material and smuggle it into this country, the consequences could be catastrophic: a tremendous loss of life and a crippling blow to our economy. Your important work builds on hearings the full Committee has held on this challenge beginning three years ago.

Many security experts, including notably Governor Kean and Dr. Flynn, who will testify this morning, warn that a weapon of mass destruction is most likely to be smuggled into our country via a marine container. The number of containers entering this country by sea continues to grow by more than 10 percent per year. In fact, Customs and Border Protection reports that in fiscal year 2005, the number arriving by vessel was more than *eleven million*.

Given current technology and the sheer volume of traffic, we cannot physically search every container without bringing trade to a standstill. The United States government cannot follow every container throughout its global journey, nor can it track every container and every piece of cargo along the roads, rails, and airways that bring them to ports. No one nation can secure the international supply chain.

For that reason, executive branch agencies engage in global initiatives to detect and interdict the illegal transport of nuclear and radiological materials through programs such as the Department of Energy’s Second Line of Defense. The deployment of radiation detection equipment overseas, at the borders of nations that are the most likely source of illicit nuclear materials, is a proactive investment in our national security. It is in every nation’s best interest to stop smuggling efforts as close to their source as possible.

The United States has set a policy of zero tolerance for the arrival of weapons of mass destruction at our borders. That includes a plan to deploy radiation detection technology at all 380 sea, land, and air ports of entry. The intent is to scan all containers and vehicles entering our country for radiation by 2009. I am interested to hear from our witnesses today about the appropriate mix of detection technologies deployed overseas versus at domestic ports of entry. Clearly, we should detect and interdict these dangerous materials as far from the United States as possible. It may well be too late if a weapon of mass destruction were discovered at one of our major seaports, such as Seattle or Los Angeles.

Just a few weeks ago, I visited both of those ports. The physical size of these facilities and the amount of activity that takes place are startling. So too is the proximity of these ports to major population centers. The Port of Seattle is in the midst of a large urban population, with

two stadiums nearby and ferries carrying thousands of passengers each day. The consequences of an attack at a port like Seattle would be catastrophic.

In improving port security, we are always mindful of the need to avoid hampering the flow of legitimate goods. While in Seattle, I watched a line of trucks pass through the portal monitors exiting a terminal. I was impressed with the speed at which the trucks were able to move. While the current technology is not perfect, CBP has proven that radiation monitors can be deployed without significantly impeding the flow of commerce. I also noted the small footprint required to install the equipment, which seemed to fit naturally into the flow of the traffic. While terminal operators use every inch of possible space to move more containers, they need only travel to Seattle and other places where the equipment is installed to see that security can be increased without sacrificing commercial flow or space.

While progress has been made in deploying a global network to detect and interdict nuclear materials, we will hear today from the Government Accountability Office about continuing challenges. Clearly, in order to be effective, equipment deployed must be properly used. Reports of corrupt personnel at certain foreign border stations and ill-functioning equipment undermine the effectiveness of these programs.

In closing, I wish to voice my support of Secretary Chertoff's decision to make nuclear detection and interdiction a priority through the creation of the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office last year. The GAO's preliminary findings indicate this office has made positive contributions already. Its mission is too important to fail.

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