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## **US and Dutch Governments Launch Effort to Detect Terrorist Shipments of Nuclear Material**

*New Security Services at Seaports will Help Thwart Attempts to Smuggle Components for Nuclear Weapons and "Dirty Bombs"*

**ROTTERDAM, Netherlands --** The U.S. and Dutch governments today announced an effort to work together in the war on terrorism by installing special equipment at Europe's busiest seaport to detect hidden shipments of nuclear and other radioactive material.

"Terrorist groups and rogue nations trying to smuggle components for nuclear weapons is a serious threat that must be addressed," U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham said, surveying the sprawling expanse of cargo facilities at the port of Rotterdam. "Installing sophisticated radiation-detection devices here, and at other key shipping centers around the world, is a major step forward in preventing the trafficking of these dangerous materials."

Abraham joined Dutch State Secretary of Finance, Joop Wijn, in the Netherlands to sign the cooperative agreement for the new program aimed at thwarting illicit shipments of weapons material. Rotterdam will be one of the first sites for this type of new security system in Europe. The Department of Energy plans to work with other international ports in the near future.

Rotterdam, one of the world's largest seaports, handles more than 300 million metric tons of cargo each year. Thousands of commercial ships traveling between Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas and the Middle East pass through Rotterdam's vast maze of docks and container facilities.

Security experts have warned that terrorists seeking to build nuclear weapons or so-called "dirty bombs" -- conventional explosives laced with radioactive material -- might attempt to use commercial shipping channels to smuggle the necessary nuclear components.

Abraham noted that terror groups are suspected of scouring the world for stolen or discarded nuclear items that could be used to make crude atomic weapons or "dirty bombs." The United States, in an operation dubbed "First Line of Defense," has been working with other governments in a number of countries to locate and secure such materials to keep them out of terrorist hands.

**(MORE)**

Today's U.S.-Dutch agreement complements the Department of Energy's Megaports Initiative, part of the U.S. government's "Second Line of Defense" program, intended to identify and intercept illegal shipments of weapons materials. The effort complements the Homeland Security Department's Container Security Initiative, in which Customs and Border Protection agents partner with countries operating major shipping ports to help safeguard the international supply chain.

The Second Line of Defense Program expertise is based on five years of experience equipping international seaports, airports and vehicle crossings with radiation detection equipment and response systems, primarily in Russia.

The specialized radiation-detection technology was developed by Department of Energy laboratories as part of the overall U.S. nuclear security program to guard against proliferation of weapons materials.

"Ultimately, we hope that the Megaports Initiative will further our international non-proliferation and anti-terrorist efforts and provide officials with useful evidence for prosecution of terrorists and smugglers," Abraham said. "The United States is gratified to have a close partnership with the Netherlands in this important operation in the fight against terrorism."

Today's announcement is another step forward in the Bush administration's ongoing efforts to secure radiological materials that have the greatest potential to result in exposure, contamination, and mass disruption. In March of this year, Secretary Abraham, along with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), convened a conference on the security of radioactive sources that was attended by 600 participants from over 100 countries. At that conference, Secretary Abraham unveiled the Radiological Security Partnership, a three-pronged approach to addressing the potential threats of radioactive sources. The first prong of this partnership is to help countries accelerate and expand national initiatives to keep track of and better secure national inventories of high-risk radioactive sources. The second prong involves international cooperation so that countries can draw on international resources that give practical advice and assistance in bringing these sources under control.

The third prong of the plan expands the focus on major transit and shipping hubs to improve efforts to interdict and prevent illicit trafficking in high-risk radioactive sources globally. The radiation monitoring equipment at Rotterdam will play a key role in the effectiveness of this critical initiative.

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