NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 012 - Folder 001

Crime - Taggants

Crime - taggants

Jose Cerda III 03/04/98 05:10:13 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Michelle Crisci/WHO/EOP, Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP, Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP

cc:
Subject: TOUGH REGULATIONS BEST PROTECTION FROM ILLEGAL BOMBS, ...

fyi...jc3...ls...

---------- Forwarded by Jose Cerda III/OPD/EOP on 03/04/98 05:09 PM ----------

SHIMABUKUR_L @ A1
03/04/98 05:05:00 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Jose Cerda III

cc:
Subject: TOUGH REGULATIONS BEST PROTECTION FROM ILLEGAL BOMBS, ...

Date: 03/04/98 Time: 15:23
ETough regulations best protection from illegal bombs, report says

WASHINGTON (AP) Researchers have yet to find a practical means of removing the bang from ammonium nitrate, the fertilizer used to blow up a federal building in Oklahoma City, or to put identifying chemicals in high explosives, the National Research Council says.

``There is no one single measure that can make the nation safe from terrorist bombing,'' Marye Anne Fox, co-chair of the NRC study committee, said Wednesday at a news conference.

Fox, a chemistry professor at the University of Texas, Austin, said that all known methods of chemically detecting or marking high explosives, or of removing the explosive potential from fertilizers ``have economic and social consequences'' that make them undesirable.

Instead, the committee recommended that the government toughen controls on the sale and distribution of explosives and of ammonium nitrate, and that researchers continue to search for chemical ways of identifying and detecting explosives.

The committee said efforts at developing a taggant, a sort of chemical identifier, for dynamite and other high explosives have failed to satisfy concerns about environmental, safety and law enforcement effectiveness.

Fox said there are so many explosives used in the United States for legitimate purposes that if the materials all contained taggants, the environment could become saturated with the identifier chemical. This could actually mask the identification of

a terrorist bomb, she said.

Edward M. Arnett, a retired Duke University chemistry professor and co-chairman, said the 18-member committee endorsed an international agreement to put into plastic explosives a chemical that would make the material more easily detected by machines at airports. Plastic-type explosives were used to bring down Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988.

But even after the agreement goes into effect, there will still be vast amounts of explosives that lack the identifying chemical, he said.

``The Achilles heel in any tagging program is that untagged explosives become of prime value to bombers,'' he said. ``There are untold amounts of untagged explosives around that could be available.''

Science, he said, needs to develop a way to detect the explosive itself, instead of the identifying chemical added to the explosive.

The committee called for a system that ratchets up the protection measures as the FBI or other agencies detect an increase in the ``perceived threat of illegal bombings.''

At the current level of the risk the committee called for:

A federal licensing program for the purchase of commercial explosives. Arnett said that bombers can now buy explosives easily in some states and haul the materials to their target.

If the FBI or other agencies in the future detect an increased threat of bombings, the committee said these recommendations should be followed:

Chemical markers that aid bomb-sensing equipment should be added during the manufacture of some explosives, such as detonators, ``if technically feasible.''

People buying ammonium nitrate fertilizers in bulk, such as by the truckload, should be required to produce identification and sellers should be required to keep sales records.

Should the threat of bombings increase still further, the committee recommends:

Markers that emit low-level radiation be added to some categories of commercial explosives. This would enable bomb squads to quickly locate devices. The committee noted, however, that is still unproven technology.

Altering fertilizer-grade ammonium nitrate so that the chemical cannot be used to make bombs ``if methods can be found that are technically feasible, agriculturally suitable and economically acceptable.''

Requiring licenses for all sellers of explosive chemicals and fertilizers, and requiring that all buyers have federal permits.

The committee did not study methods of controlling illegal bombs made with black powder or gun powder. A separate report is being prepared on that type of explosives, Fox said.

The National Research Council is a part of the National Academy of Sciences, a private organization of scientists and engineers chartered by Congress to do research at the request of the government. The report on explosives was requested by the Treasury Department.

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Crime-taggants

CERDA_J @ A1
03/03/98 06:48:00 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed, Elena Kagan, Michelle Crisci, Leanne A. Shimabukuro

cc:
Subject: FOR RELEASE AT 12:01 A.M. WEDNESDAY

Date: 03/03/98 Time: 18:04
TFor Release at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday

WASHINGTON (AP) An interim Treasury Department report ordered by Congress finds ``great promise'' in combating terrorism by putting tiny chemical tracers known as taggants in explosives.

But the report, released Wednesday, called for further research. It cited ``remaining complexities surrounding the issue.''

``We're not at the implementation stage right now,'' said Raymond Kelly, Treasury undersecretary for enforcement. He promised a final report next year after further research into cost and safety questions.

Taggants, if used successfully, would allow law enforcement agencies to trace the origin of an explosive, even after it was detonated.

President Clinton first proposed their use in 1996 in reaction to the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City a year earlier. But their use in gunpowder has been opposed by the National Rifle Association. It says they make gunpowder unstable.

The interim study, prepared by the department's Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, examined the use of taggants in Switzerland for the past 17 years and ``found no safety concerns at all,'' Kelly told reporters in a telephone conference.

Bradley Buckles, deputy director of the ATF, said the agency has focused its research so far on the most commonly used commercial explosives and has determined that dynamite and several other types hold the best potential for use of taggants.

Republicans in Congress have wanted to exempt black and smokeless gunpowders. The are used by muzzleloading enthusiasts but they also are the most common choice for pipe bombs.

That issue is being examined in a separate study and was not part of the ATF interim report, or of a companion study to be released later Wednesday by the National Research Council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences.

The NRC report examines possible strategies for tagging, marking or rendering inert explosives and chemicals that can be used to make illegal bombs.
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