

Nuclear Detection and Combating Nuclear Terrorism

Preventing terrorist organizations from acquiring and using nuclear weapons and related materials is one of the most important challenges facing the international community.

A National Defense University (NDU) report released today, written by James Goodby, Timothy Coffey, and Cheryl Loeb, reviews current nuclear detection programs and proposes a strategy for combating nuclear terrorism through international cooperation in nuclear detection and emplacement.

To encourage broad international participation, the authors recommend using an established international institution to spearhead and coordinate global nuclear detection and interdiction activities. This organization would work closely with international law enforcement and intelligence communities to ensure that nuclear detection becomes routine practice throughout the world.

Nuclear materials are still inadequately safeguarded in territories of the former Soviet Union and elsewhere around the world, and terrorist organizations have openly stated their desire to obtain and use these weapons in attacks against the United States. The catastrophic damage a nuclear terrorist attack would cause, and its international implications, demands cooperative action by all responsible governments.

Several U.S. Government programs are in place to deal with this threat, such as the Second Line of Defense Core Program, the Megaports Initiative, and the Container Security Initiative. In cooperation with other countries, these programs aim to strengthen our capacity to monitor and detect illicit shipments of nuclear and radiological materials at key transportation nodes.

The authors of the report argue that while these programs have had success, the U.S. response to the threat from nuclear smuggling and terrorism needs to be part of a global approach to nuclear nonproliferation, coordinated and prioritized to focus on identified threats, flexible and efficient in the use of resources, and tied to legislation recently adopted in Congress.

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The report is available at the following link:

http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/Def_Tech/DTP%2041%20NuclearDetectionStrategy.pdf

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