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REGIONAL NEWS

SCHUMER: DIRTY BOMB MATERIAL EASY TO GET

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Is Matthew Perry the father of Liz Hurley's baby?

June 17, 2002 -- Sen. Charles Schumer yesterday called for the registration and tracking of radioactive material that could be used to make a "dirty bomb."

A bill announced by Schumer (D-N.Y.) would also increase security requirements for facilities - such as hospitals, laboratories and power plants - that use low-grade uranium and plutonium, which can be wrapped around conventional explosives to contaminate a wide area.

"Most of the radioactive materials that could be used in a dirty bomb are easy to get a hold of," Schumer said. "Tracking materials used in dirty bombs won't be the only step in the process, but it is the next step."

A dirty bomb is a low-level explosive designed to spread radiation over a relatively small area.

Schumer's bill calls for federal inspection of all sites using radioactive material; collection by the Department of Energy of any radiological material no longer needed by its owner; and funding for National Guard troops to secure nuclear-power and -waste facilities.

Some 300 incidents of missing radioactive materials - mostly small amounts in gauges or other equipment - are reported to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission each year. About half are eventually recovered.

William J. Gorta with Post Wire Services

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