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### **Foul-Ups Mar Effort On Nuclear Materials; U.S. Anti-Smuggling Program Criticized**

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U.S. efforts to control the smuggling of nuclear and radioactive material in foreign countries are poorly coordinated and haphazardly administered, resulting in foul-ups that have left needed equipment idled in packing crates, sometimes for years, congressional investigators said.

Nonetheless, the investigators said in a new report, these international programs are in many cases more substantial than the safeguards at domestic borders, where U.S. Customs Service inspectors rely mostly on hand-held pagers to detect radioactive material.

"It's a pretty damning report," said Sen. Pat Roberts (Kan.), ranking Republican on the Senate Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities. "Quite a few of us have been working on this for several years, and we had some suspicions. The report confirms them."

The study was produced at Roberts's behest by the General Accounting Office, Congress's investigative arm, and is scheduled for release today. The Washington Post obtained a copy in advance.

The study examines programs administered by six federal agencies that spent \$ 86 million in about 30 countries between 1992 and 2001 to help them monitor and control the movement of radioactive materials that could be used in nuclear weapons or radiological bombs, known as "dirty bombs."

The assistance, mostly to Russia, former Soviet republics, and Central and Eastern European countries, is used to buy detection devices and other equipment, technical assistance and training.

The investigators found that no agency coordinated the programs, resulting in the absence of an overall strategy, duplicate bureaucracies and marked differences in the quality of equipment given to different countries.

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The report noted that the Defense and Energy departments gave Russia and another country sophisticated monitors that could read neutron emissions -- critical in detecting the presence of plutonium, a key component of nuclear weapons. The State Department installed monitors in several other countries that did not have the capability.

The report also said that the State and Energy departments run two programs each and that the two Energy Department administrators don't communicate with each other even though they fund the same equipment. The other agencies that provide anti-smuggling assistance are Customs, the FBI and the Coast Guard.

"The current multiple-agency approach . . . is not, in our view, the most effective way to deliver this assistance," the report said. "We believe the development of a government-wide plan is needed."

The report also criticized the lack of bureaucratic follow-through on how the assistance was used once it had been delivered.

The investigators said the Defense Department reported early this year that much U.S.-supplied equipment either had never been used, had been used only to impress visiting Americans or was idle because it needed new batteries or repairs.

The report also noted that several State Department-supplied vans with radiation detection equipment had been idled because they couldn't be operated in cold weather or because they were too expensive to supply with fuel. The vans cost about \$ 90,000 each.

In Estonia, \$ 80,000 worth of equipment was stored in an embassy garage for seven months while an agreement to release it was negotiated. In Lithuania, the U.S. Embassy stashed radiation detectors in the basement for two years until the United States and Lithuania agreed on the purchase of a \$ 12,600 power supply.

Roberts said the GAO included Customs' information on domestic surveillance as a supplement to the main report, because Customs was late in responding to the GAO's request for information.

Customs said its 7,500 inspectors had 4,200 radiation pagers -- the simplest of detection devices -- but planned to equip everyone by September 2003. Customs also said it had deployed 200 detectors in vans as well as other X-ray equipment for small packages.

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