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### **Report: U.S. Vulnerable to Attack; Scientists Urge New Terrorism Research**

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A team of the nation's leading scientists called yesterday for a comprehensive rethinking of the nation's anti-terrorism infrastructure, underscoring the need to quickly bring existing technologies into use, accelerate new research and create a Homeland Security Institute to evaluate counterterrorism strategies.

"The structure of federal agencies is . . . to a large extent the result of [the] distinction between the responsibility for national security and the responsibility for domestic policy," the report said. "Given this compartmentalization, the federal government is not appropriately organized to carry out a [science and technology] agenda for countering catastrophic terrorism."

The report by the National Research Council gave a long list of shortcomings in scientific preparedness, including lack of coordination in research on nuclear or "dirty bomb" threats and "enormous vulnerabilities" in the ability of the public health system to defend against biological warfare.

The report detailed challenges in developing vaccines for airborne pathogens, creating better sensors and filters for dangerous chemicals, building a system to counter sabotage of the nation's food supply, finding better methods to fend off attacks on nuclear reactors, the electrical power grid and communications systems, and developing "defense in depth" for airport and other transportation security.

Throughout the report, the researchers lamented a lack of coordination among federal agencies and the absence of a "coherent overall strategy" to "harness the strengths of the U.S. science and engineering communities, and direct them most appropriately toward critical goals, both short-term and long."

"Research performed but not exploited, and technologies invented but not manufactured and deployed, do not help the nation protect itself," the report said.

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The National Research Council is the operating arm of three private, nonprofit organizations of the nation's most prominent scientists and engineers. The council developed the report, "Making the Nation Safer: The Role of Science and Technology in Countering Terrorism," using its own funds.

Richard D. Klausner, co-chair of the committee that wrote the report, said the intent of the 120 scientists who participated was "not to criticize the government," but "to say that the current structure of government was not optimized to deal with terrorism."

But in studying counterterrorism preparedness across agencies, the panel found that "many of the required technologies" showed up repeatedly, which is not surprising in government, said Harvard's Lewis Branscombe, an expert in science and public policy and the report's co-chair. "We saw the need for an approach that wasn't going to get trapped in a bunch of independent stovepipes that don't relate to one another."

The report proposed creation of an independent, nonprofit Homeland Security Institute to function as a think tank, analyzing and testing the effectiveness of counterterrorism technologies for the White House Office of Homeland Security or a future cabinet department.

"It would be a group of highly trained people in appropriate disciplines to evaluate threats, test what's deployed and look at the real world to see what's actually going on," Branscombe said. "You make a technological analysis to determine the vulnerability you're trying to address and decide why the technology is or is not working."

Although the report wasn't scheduled for official release until today, early briefings on Capitol Hill elicited a favorable reception from House Science Committee Chairman Sherwood L. Boehlert (R-N.Y.).

"I like what I see. It says we have to have a coordinated [research and development] strategy," Boehlert said. "It says we have to have somebody in charge, and I'm enamored with the idea of the institute. A lot of what I'm reading falls under the heading of common sense."

Despite the big-picture proposals, Branscombe said the meat of the report was in recommendations for change in several "domains," which included nuclear security, communications and transportation.

Many shortcomings in the report were being addressed. The Department of Health and Human Services has asked hospital systems to assess their ability to cope with large numbers of casualties from an act of biological warfare. Many cities and states are using federal funds to build mechanisms so law enforcement and emergency responders can share information in a timely fashion.

But the report also identified emerging needs for agencies. It noted that the new Transportation Security Administration had taken on the task of improving airport security, but suggested it needed "a systematic approach" and a research and planning office so it would not be making decisions haphazardly.

"Agencies like TSA have much less experience interacting with the science community," Branscombe said. "These non-science agencies have to develop the ability to identify technological needs and develop relationships with the technologists who can fulfill them."

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