

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

May 2, 2016

The Honorable Ernest J. Moniz
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Moniz:

For nearly two decades, the Department of Energy, principally through the work of its National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), has performed a critical national security mission to deter, detect, and interdict the smuggling of weapons-usable nuclear materials and radiological materials at vulnerable ports and borders around the world.

In keeping with the Committee's interest in reducing the security risks within foreign commerce and in reducing the risks to the public of smuggled radiological materials, we periodically have examined detection, deterrence, and other nuclear security measures. For example, in the wake of the terror attacks of 9/11 the Committee closely examined DOE and Department of Homeland Security programs to deploy radiological detection systems at domestic and foreign ports and borders, among other measures, to reduce threats of nuclear smuggling.¹

We write today because recent international developments – particularly the rise of well-funded terror groups and the curtailment of U.S.-Russian cooperation on nuclear material security – have underscored the importance of NNSA's Nuclear Smuggling Detection and Deterrence (NSDD) programs. These developments have prompted us to take a closer look at the status of these programs.

¹ *A sample of this oversight may be seen in the following Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearings: Securing America: The Federal Government's Response to Nuclear Terrorism at Our Nation's Ports and Borders, October 17, 2002; Nuclear Terrorism Prevention: A Review of the Federal Government's Progress Toward Installing Radiation Detection Monitors at U.S. Ports and Borders, September 30, 2003; A Review to Assess Progress with Bureau of Customs and Border Protection's Targeting Program for Sea Cargo, March 31, 2004; Reducing the Threat of Nuclear Terrorism: A Review of the Department of Energy's Global Threat Reduction Initiative, May 24, 2005; Nuclear Terrorism Prevention: Status Report on the Federal Government's Assessment of New Radiation Detection Monitors, September 18, 2007; among oversight work.*

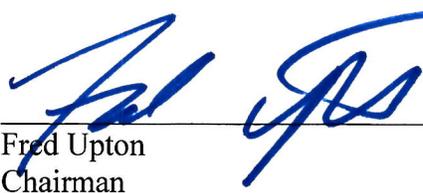
Two weeks ago, Committee staff received a classified briefing from NNSA, along with representatives from FBI, and the Homeland Security, Defense, and State Departments concerning NSDD. The briefing covered the defense-in-depth approach to deterrence and interdiction, and related assessments of the program's radiological detection systems. The briefing and related materials supplied to the Committee highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong deterrence and detection posture – in cooperation with other nations – at foreign ports and border crossings for dangerous radiological or nuclear materials. The country is best protected when these materials are detected and interdicted before they arrive on U.S. shores.

With NSDD spending approximately one billion dollars over the past five years working with 59 partner countries, the Committee seeks to increase its understanding of expenditures, technological development, and the progress of international cooperation within the program. Having full information about these matters is necessary to ensure any decisions concerning the course of this program do not inadvertently undermine its important security mission. Given the current threat environment, now is not the time to weaken our detection and interdiction programs overseas.

To assist our evaluation and pursuant to Rule X and XI of the U.S. House of Representatives, we ask that you work with our Committee staff to provide additional briefings and other information sufficient for the Committee to assess the current status of NSDD programs. This should include information concerning technological capabilities and prospects for improvement, the quality of participation of foreign partners, and related efforts to ensure program goals are met expeditiously and cost-effectively.

Thank you for promptly attending to this request. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact Peter Spencer of the majority committee staff at 202-225-2927 or Elizabeth Letter of the minority committee staff at 202-225-3641.

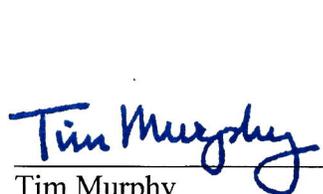
Sincerely,



Fred Upton
Chairman



Frank Pallone
Ranking Member



Tim Murphy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations