

**Remarks by  
Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham  
at the  
IAEA Conference on the Security of Radioactive Sources  
Vienna, Austria  
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Thank you, Mr. Friedrich for that generous introduction.

Good morning.

It is an honor and a pleasure to be here to address this Conference, both as its President, and on behalf of my Government.

I want to begin by thanking Director General ElBaradei for his gracious welcome, and for all the work he and his staff, including Abel [Ah-bell] Gonzalez, put in to make this Conference possible.

I also want to express my appreciation to the Russian Federation, co-sponsor with the United States of the Conference, and in particular to Minister of Atomic Energy Rumyantsev.

Thanks also to Minister Ferrero-Waldner for welcoming us all to the wonderful City of Vienna.

And thanks to all of you here today for attending this important Conference.

We are gathered here to deal with an important issue: the terrible threat posed by those who would turn beneficial radioactive sources into deadly weapons. The technical term for these weapons - Radiological Dispersal Devices, or RDDs - has not come into general use.

I seldom see it in a headline, or hear it in a newscast. But increasingly the public knows about these weapons, and they are deeply concerned.

They call RDDs, "dirty bombs."

It is our critically important job to deny terrorists the radioactive sources they need to construct such weapons. The threat requires a determined and comprehensive international response.

Our governments must act, individually and collectively, to identify all the highrisk radioactive sources that are being used and that have been abandoned.

We must educate our officials and the general populace, raising awareness of the existence of these dangerous radioactive sources and the consequences of their misuse.

And we must account for and tightly secure these sources wherever they may be.

Radioactive sources can be found all over the world, and terrorists are seeking to acquire them.

The threat they represent to people of every nation is very real.

This threat has been a particular concern to the United States since the September 11 attacks. On that day, we learned that terrorists will strike anywhere, at any time. They will employ technology never intended for use as weapons, to murder thousands of innocent and unsuspecting people in the most shocking and ruthless way.

We know now that there is no weapon they will not use, and no weapon they are not seeking to acquire. There is nothing they would like better than to cause the panic that the detonation of a radiological dispersal device would create.

We know from experience with accidental releases of radiological sources that they can cause widespread panic, economic hardship, and significant health concerns. Remember Brazil, in 1987.

Urban scavengers found a medical teletherapy machine left in an abandoned building. They removed the radioactive source from its shielding, ruptured it, and distributed the beautiful blue, glowing powder they found inside to their friends, neighbors and relatives. The powder was Cesium 137.

Four people died. More than 110,000 people were monitored for radiation exposure at the city's sports stadium. Scores of buildings were evacuated and some were even demolished. Cleanup costs were enormous.

The incident generated about 3,500 cubic meters of radioactive waste.

Actual fatalities were relatively light in the Brazil incident, but panic was widespread. I can only imagine how much worse the situation would have been had terrorists dispersed the toxic material rather than innocent, uninformed people.

That's why our work is so important. It is our responsibility to determine how to prevent such an attack in the first place, and how we should respond if, despite our best efforts, such an attack were to occur.

All countries should act in their own self-interest by taking the steps needed to better secure high-risk radioactive sources.

I came here to Vienna for the IAEA's 45<sup>th</sup> General Conference just six days after September 11.

At that time, I called on IAEA's Member States to confront the new terrorist threat. The IAEA Secretariat proposed, and the Board of Governors approved, a new Nuclear Security Fund to help its member states to protect against nuclear terrorism.

The action plan covers a broad range of activities to help states put in place the legal, regulatory, and technical elements needed to reduce the risk of misuse of nuclear and other radioactive material.

Thus far, the United States has contributed \$8.7 million to the IAEA program. I encourage all Member States to contribute to this fund.

Last September, at the 46th IAEA General Conference, I discussed why Radiological Dispersal Devices presented a growing and disconcerting threat of a new kind.

In my remarks then, I proposed that this conference be convened.

My reason for suggesting the conference was in no small measure because RDDs are different from what we are accustomed to in our more traditional nuclear nonproliferation work. We are used to policing a defined number of nuclear facilities.

Our job has been to focus on that small number of countries bent on violating the nuclear non-proliferation norm and acquiring fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

But the radiological materials that could be used in an RDD exist in a variety of forms in virtually every country in the world. And they are often loosely monitored and secured, if at all.

The use of radioactive sources is widespread. They have many beneficial industrial, agricultural, research and medical applications. In the medical field alone,

roughly one hundred radioisotopes are used in various nuclear medical research, diagnosis, sterilization, and teletherapy applications.

Millions of cancer patients have had their lives prolonged due to radiotherapy treatments, and patients of all kinds have benefited from bacteria-free, sterile medical equipment made possible by irradiation technology.

Many more lives have been saved thanks to the smoke alarms and emergency exit signs that are now common in homes, schools and offices.

Scientific research using radioactive materials takes place in laboratories all over the world. Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generators, or RTGs, have been used for remote power application. Industrial gauges containing radioactive sources are commonplace.

Radiation is used to increase the size and improve the health of crops, and remote beacons stand sentinel for years thanks to radiation's energy.

Despite the wide use of radioactive sources, only a small portion of them poses a real threat as potential ingredients in an RDD.

I called for this Conference last September in order to raise awareness of those radiological materials that have the greatest potential to result in exposure, contamination, and mass disruption.

Your presence here - almost 600 participants from well over 100 countries - is reassuring proof of how seriously we all take the RDD threat.

I have said on many occasions - before the IAEA and elsewhere - that taking measures to control dangerous and vulnerable radioactive sources is not just the responsibility of a few nations, but all nations.

Each of us must act to create a seamless web of protection and control of high-risk radioactive sources to prevent their malicious use. Each of us must take on this significant responsibility.

In the United States, we are evaluating potential vulnerabilities in our control of these materials in order to strengthen our regulatory infrastructure to better account for them, to track their use and disposition, and to ensure appropriate protection during import and export.

We are also working to ensure that those using these radioactive sources are authorized to do so and are using them for legitimate purposes.

In determining what additional protective measures might be needed, we are using a graded approach that takes into account potential hazards and protective measures already in place.

These actions will ensure that the sources of greatest concern do not fall out of regulatory control and become orphaned in the future.

In short, we are taking action to lessen the threat of radioactive sources being misused in an RDD.

I would like to ask everyone gathered here today, the government representatives and officials in a position to take bold and decisive action, to do the same.

Collectively, we can all make a difference.

Collectively, we can all reduce the threat of RDDs worldwide.

We can all work at home and through the IAEA to get the job done.

The United States believes that to solve the problems we will discuss today, we must attack them in all their dimensions.

That's why I am pleased to announce today a new initiative that I hope will become international in scale.

The Radiological Security Partnership is a three-pronged approach to addressing the potential threats from under-secured, high-risk radioactive sources.

The first prong is helping countries accelerate and expand national initiatives to keep track of and better secure national inventories of high-risk radioactive sources.

We are ready to assist other interested countries to speed the needed improvements, and we want to begin immediately.

Second, countries need to draw on international resources that can give practical advice and assistance in bringing these sources under control.

The United States is currently working with Russia and the IAEA to identify and secure high-risk radioactive sources in the former Soviet Union, and we believe the time has come to broaden that kind of cooperation.

To do so, I am pleased to announce a new United States initiative to expand this "Tripartite" model to other countries in need of assistance. It is my hope that this model, which is working so well in the former Soviet Union, will become global in scale.

The United States will focus our resources where the need is greatest. Our emphasis will be on developing countries. We are prepared to work with other countries to locate, consolidate, secure, and dispose of high-risk, orphan radiological sources by developing a system of national and regional repositories to consolidate and securely store these sources.

The international efforts to choke off the illicit traffic in these sources must also be given highest priority. As I mentioned earlier, the United States is committed to establishing detection choke points at suspected smuggling routes, in order to better detect illicit traffic in radioactive sources.

I recently initiated a new Department of Energy project to improve our ability to detect nuclear materials or weapons en route to the United States.

As the third prong of our plan, I will now expand this project by focusing on other major transit and shipping hubs, which will improve our efforts to interdict and prevent illicit trafficking in high-risk radioactive sources globally.

I am also pleased to announce that next week members of the United States Department of Energy will participate with the IAEA in important consultations that will set technical specifications for border monitoring equipment.

This equipment - which in some cases can be as simple and small as the radiation pager I'm holding in my hand - can play a key role in the effectiveness of this critical initiative.

By working together on all these dimensions of the threat, we have a chance to make rapid and significant progress toward our shared objective of reducing the potential threats from the highest risk sources.

The Radiological Security Partnership is a United States priority. To demonstrate our commitment, the United States plans to contribute \$3 million over the next year to support the Partnership. In particular, this money will support our efforts to work with developing countries to secure high-risk sources in their countries.

Later this morning, Mr. David Huizenga , of the United States Department of Energy, will discuss elements of our strategy in greater detail, and all that the United States government is doing to execute it.

Having outlined what my government has done and is willing to do, I want to applaud the work that has already been done by the IAEA and other member states.

While this may be the largest conference held on the security of radioactive sources, it is not the first. I am thinking particularly of the 1998 conference in Dijon, which was one of the first to deal with the security aspects of radiological sources.

The IAEA Member States are developing a revised Code of Conduct to guide their efforts to better account for under-secured radioactive sources. I understand the drafting work on the code is just about completed, and I applaud the member states for making the Herculean effort this task required.

I urge all Member States to review the Code before it comes to the Board of Governors for approval. The United States strongly endorses this process.

The IAEA is taking important steps to categorize radioactive sources so the international community better understands which sources pose the greatest security risks.

It is also carrying out its model project to help member states improve their national infrastructures and regulatory systems of control.

The Agency is taking concrete steps in Moldova and elsewhere to secure at-risk radiological sources, and helping countries establish effective systems for tracking and inventorying these sources.

We have already demonstrated our ability to address these problems. For example, the Republic of Georgia, in cooperation with the IAEA, undertook the dangerous task of recovering RTGs that had been left unprotected in the countryside.

Thanks to the commitment of the Georgians, the IAEA, and even my own agency, we secured the RTGs in record time. The Georgians, in cooperation with the United States Department of Energy, were also able to upgrade the security of the facility where the RTGs were stored.

I have outlined a number of steps that the United States is taking, and I have noted steps that the IAEA has initiated that can truly benefit the international community's ability to get a handle on these problems.

I know many of you have also taken important steps, and we will all benefit from your knowledge and experience as we each strive to establish "best practices and procedures" and come to grips with the challenges presented by radiological sources.

That is why this Conference is important - it will help all of us to establish a framework for addressing these issues, and taking the critical next steps to protect our citizens and provide for our security.

We have a great deal of work to do over the next three days, and a tremendous amount of information to share.

We will be hearing from experts from around the world, and we will hear from those who have had to deal with radioactive source problems firsthand.

It is my hope and expectation that, as a result of our intensive and wide ranging discussions, we will reach a consensus on steps that can be taken to ensure that the IAEA and other resources are made available to all nations.

When we leave this Conference, we will have a few essential steps to take to begin to ensure the security of our nations' - and the world's - radioactive sources:

- We must all identify the high-risk radioactive sources in our countries and ensure that they are under secure and regulated control.
- We must determine the criteria we will use to identify the radioactive sources that provide the greatest threat to security, so that nations can establish effective regulatory infrastructures.
- We must assess the security of our borders, and further improve our ability to prevent the illicit transit of radiological sources.
- And we must know realistically just how prepared we are to respond, in the case of an actual emergency involving these sources.

There is much work ahead for all of us. And this Conference is the place to start.

I hope that historians will someday write that our deliberations signaled a turning point - that on March 11, 2003 we began to forge an international consensus on the need to deal urgently and decisively with the most dangerous and vulnerable radioactive source threats. Thank you very much. We look forward to a successful Conference.