



H.R. 2631 – NUCLEAR FORENSICS AND ATTRIBUTION ACT

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 2631 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Adam Schiff (D-CA) on June 7, 2007. The bill was ordered to be reported, as amended, by voice vote of the Committee on Homeland Security on May 20, 2008.

H.R. 2631 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on June 18, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 2631 amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 110-53) to develop and implement within the Department of Homeland Security, with the approval of the Secretary, methods and capabilities to support the attribution of nuclear or radiological material to its source.

The bill also establishes a National Technical Nuclear Forensics Center, within the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO), to provide planning, assessment, exercises, improvement, and integration of all Federal nuclear forensics activities.

H.R. 2631 establishes a National Nuclear Forensics Expertise Development Program to develop and maintain an academic pathway from undergraduate to post-doctorate study in nuclear and geochemical science specialties directly relevant to technical nuclear forensics. This provision also makes available certain undergraduate, post-graduate, and faculty scholarships, fellowships and awards for work directly relevant to technical nuclear forensics, under certain conditions.

The Secretary is required to report annually to Congress on the activities of this Act. This legislation also authorizes \$30 million for each of the fiscal years 2009-2011 for the purposes of the Act.

H.R. 2631 further states that it is the sense of the Congress that the President should:

- Pursue bilateral and multilateral international agreements to establish, or seek to establish under the auspices of existing bilateral or multilateral agreements, an international framework for determining the source of any confiscated nuclear or radiological material or weapon, as well as the source of any detonated weapon and the nuclear or radiological material used in such a weapon;
- Develop protocols for the data exchange and dissemination of sensitive information relating to nuclear or radiological materials and samples of controlled nuclear or radiological materials, to the extent required by the agreements entered into; and
- Develop expedited protocols for the data exchange and dissemination of sensitive information needed to publicly identify the source of a nuclear detonation.

BACKGROUND

Nuclear forensics is the scientific method for identifying the source of nuclear material. Typically, nuclear specialists use a unique "isotopic signature" found in radioactive material much like a fingerprint to track down the origin of the nuclear matter.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-296) was introduced by Rep. Dick Armev (R-TX) on June 6, 2002. President Bush signed the legislation into law on November 25, 2002. The Act established DHS as an executive department headed by the Secretary of Homeland Security, to be appointed by the President. The purpose of DHS is to prevent terrorist attacks within the U.S., reduce the vulnerability of the U.S. to acts of violent terrorism, and assist in the recovery from any such attacks. Additionally, DHS



is tasked to protect the overall economic security of the U.S. and ensure that it is not threatened or affected by terrorist or other such efforts against it.

The Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO) was established within DHS in 2005. The Office's mission is currently to improve the Nation's capability to detect and report unauthorized attempts to import, possess, store, develop, or transport nuclear or radiological material for use against the Nation.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that implementing H.R. 2631 "would cost \$90 million over the 2009-2013 period, subject to appropriation of the authorized amounts."

[Full CBO Cost Estimate](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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