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**Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

***The Domestic Nuclear Detection Office: Can It Overcome Past Problems and Chart a New Direction?***

September 30, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology subcommittee hearing entitled “The Domestic Nuclear Detection Office: Can It Overcome Past Problems and Chart a New Direction?”:

“The detonation of a nuclear weapon in the United States still remains the worst-case scenario for an attack against this country by a terrorist group or rogue nation.

Another major concern is the use of a radiological dispersion device, sometimes called an “RDD” or a “dirty bomb.”

While such a device would not cause the same physical damage and loss of life as a true nuclear explosion, the economic and psychological damage could be quite large.

Mr. Stern, in your new role as Director of the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office, your job is to stop such an occurrence.

This Committee recognizes that you are not alone in the effort. There are many other entities, some within the Department, some at other Federal agencies, and some international organizations, that all have important roles to play.

But ultimately, it is the DNDO, and you as the Director, who is responsible for the Global Nuclear Detection Architecture, intended to find and intercept illicit nuclear or radiological material.

You are responsible for the deployment of thousands of portal monitors at our ports of entry.

You are responsible for improving the technology and the operational practices we use for detection.

You are responsible for enhancing our nuclear forensic capabilities so that if materials are interdicted, or, in the worst case, if we are attacked, that we can quickly ascertain who is responsible.

This is a large job, and the organization that has been tasked with that job – your organization – has had its difficulties.

But despite that, you were willing to take on this responsibility. And for that, we thank you. We have a lot to talk about today.

The difficulties with the high-profile Advanced Spectroscopic Portal (ASP) Program are well known.

This subcommittee held its first hearing on ASP over three years ago, and we will continue to provide oversight on this project and others so that we are sure that we are deploying the best technology possible to detect radiological and nuclear materials that could be in transit into our country.

While I applaud the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office for its aggressive pursuit of new detection

technologies, and the Secretary's decision last year to adjust the target for ASP to secondary screening only, we are still not there.

We need a resolution on this program. We need to have the Secretary make a certification decision – one way or the other – in the very near future. I hope you can give us a reasonable timeline on that, and I hope you can stick to it.

This will essentially be the first test of your credibility as DNDO Director, Mr. Stern. This Committee wants to see you succeed. We want to support you. But we, and the American people, expect results.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

**United States House of Representatives**  
Committee on Homeland Security  
H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499  
<http://homeland.house.gov>