

# NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Michal Freedhoff

December 2, 2004

David Moulton

(202) 225-2836

## **Markey Notes Lax Security for Dirty Bomb Materials**

*NRC response to Markey letter confirms fears that regulations are inadequate*

**Washington, DC:** Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the Homeland Security Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the panel which oversees the regulation of nuclear materials, today released a letter the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) sent in response to his August 2004 letter regarding numerous security gaps associated with the regulations used to safeguard materials that could be used to construct dirty bombs, such as cobalt-60 and cesium-137.

“In the face of overwhelming evidence that Al Qaeda is trying to obtain nuclear materials, the NRC still hasn’t beefed up its rules to the point where we can be sure these materials can be kept out of terrorists’ hands,” said Rep. Markey. “We need stronger domestic and international regulations to deal with the ‘atomic Ebay’ in which any buyers or sellers can bid on and buy the deadly substances that could be used by terrorists to inflict massive damage on our country.”

Rep. Markey’s letter was motivated in part by information that indicated that radioactive sources were being offered for sale or trade online, that other such sources were available overseas, and that minimal controls appeared to be in place to ensure that transactions involving these materials were taking place in accordance with NRC and international laws and regulations. The NRC response to the Congressman’s letter indicated the following:

- The NRC does not monitor or attempt to educate the operators of websites such as <http://www.logwell.com/tech/ssexchange/index.html>, <http://www.frontlinedesignsolutions.co.uk/source/>, [www.afabtechnology.com/uscob60sys.html](http://www.afabtechnology.com/uscob60sys.html), and <http://www.nats-usa.com/> that advertise used radioactive devices for sale or trade to ensure that radioactive sources are not provided to unauthorized recipients.
- Currently, NRC regulations do not require that the NRC be notified prior to the export of a radioactive source, even to countries such as Saudi Arabia. While the NRC is in the process of revising its regulations, they will not apply to all dangerous radioactive sources, and will not apply to domestic sales of any radioactive source. This leaves open the possibility that a terrorist could continue to obtain some dangerous materials overseas, and could continue to obtain the most dangerous materials inside the U.S.
- The NRC was unable to respond to Rep. Markey’s request for a list of medical devices containing radioactive sources that have been exported because it had no idea how many of these devices have left the U.S., or to which country they were sent.
- There are six missing Gammator devices containing dangerous amounts of radioactive cesium. The devices were thought to have been provided to Montville Township High School in NJ, Aberdeen High School in MD, Mother Cabrini High School in New York City, Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY, New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury, NY, and an unknown entity named “Nippi” located in either NY or NJ. An additional 10 Gammator sources are unwanted by their owners but have yet to be secured by the Department of Energy (DOE).
- While the NRC requested that licensees of radioactive materials provide information regarding what materials were in their possession to the NRC, it did not make the provision of this information mandatory, and therefore continues to lack a complete inventory of where the dangerous materials that could be used to make a dirty bomb are located. While an NRC/DOE working group recommended the establishment of a National Source Tracking System in May 2003 (see [http://www.zyn.com/flc/meeting/presentations/Chavez\\_Radioactive.pdf](http://www.zyn.com/flc/meeting/presentations/Chavez_Radioactive.pdf)), it won’t be complete until early 2007.

Rep. Markey is the author of the Dirty Bomb Prevention Act and has repeatedly attempted to prod the NRC into action on the problem of unaccounted-for dirty bomb materials. For a copy of the NRC response released today or more information on the Dirty Bomb Prevention Act and the problem of missing dirty bomb materials, please go to <http://www.house.gov/markey/dirtybombs.htm>.

# # #