

JOURNAL OF CIVIL DEFENSE

Volume 37, Issues #8-9

August/September 2004

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Al-Qaeda Plotting Attacks to Impact U.S. Elections

ISLAMABAD: Al-Qaeda operatives captured in Pakistan were plotting terrorist attacks aimed at influencing the US presidential elections in November, a senior Pakistani intelligence official told AFP.

The terrorist network was looking to pull off major attacks in the United States, Britain or Pakistan in the run-up to the polls but its capacity has been crippled by recent arrests in Pakistan, said the official.

"The network was looking to strike a major blow ahead of the elections. Al-Qaeda was looking to strike in the United States or its chief allies Great Britain and Pakistan," said the official, asking to remain anonymous.

"The period before the U.S. presidential elections was very critical," said the official, who has played a key role in a crackdown against Al-Qaeda in Pakistan over the past month which has netted over 20 suspected operatives.

The alleged head of a British-based Al-Qaeda cell, Abu Eisa Al Hindi, who was recently arrested after a tip-off from Pakistan, was probably involved in the plots against the United States, said the official.

Information extracted by Pakistani investigators from Al-Qaeda suspects detained in recent weeks has led to a spate of arrests in Britain and caused a major terrorism alert in the United States.

Most of the information came from 25-year-old Pakistani computer whiz Naeem Noor Khan, who was arrested in a house near Lahore airport on July 12, said the official.

Khan's computer files contained detailed photos and surveillance records of key financial institutions in New York, Newark and Washington as well as London's Heathrow airport.

His capture led to the July 25 arrest of a Tanzanian suspect in the 1998 East Africa US embassy bombings, Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, another key terror planner in Osama bin Laden's network.

"This group in Pakistan was in close contact with the network in Britain, run by Abu Eisa Al Hindi," the official said.

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[The Journal of Civil Defense is the official monthly newsletter of The American Civil Defense Association.]

"Al Hindi was probably helping in targeting the United States."

The official believed the network's ability to carry out the planned strikes had been crippled by the recent wave of arrests and interrogations.

"Never before have Al-Qaeda suffered such huge setbacks. The arrest of Naeem Noor Khan opened up a floodgate of information. On the basis of that information Al-Qaeda's plans have been dealt a very serious blow," he said.

"Their ability to strike in the United States or in Britain during the critical period is effectively crippled."

"They may still strike in Pakistan but that is also now very difficult."

Ghailani, who had fled Pakistani army raids in the northwest tribal region bordering Afghanistan earlier this year, was found living in the crowded eastern industrial town of Gujarat, which straddles the busy Great Trunk Road between Islamabad and

Lahore.

He had been renting a house with two South African Al-Qaeda suspects and several women and children since June.

While in Gujarat he had been training suicide bombers to attack high profile Pakistani figures at Islamabad airport and the nearby Chaklala air force base, investigators have said.

Within 24 hours of the announcement of Ghailani's arrest, a suicide bomber struck the car of prime minister-designate Shaukat Aziz after a by-election rally in Attock, west of Islamabad. Aziz survived but his driver and eight other people were killed.

An Al-Qaeda suspect said to have been involved in two December attempts to assassinate President Pervez Musharraf was recently arrested in Dubai and handed over to Pakistan.

Pakistani authorities are questioning Qari Saifullah Akhtar over "many terrorist cases," Information Minister Sheikh Rashid told AFP.

Source: www.channelnewsasia.com

Analysts Warn of Small-Plane Terrorism Threat

The threat of terrorists using small planes to attack American targets does exist and requires immediate action by the government, according to a Washington think tank that is nearing completion of a study of general aviation's vulnerabilities.

"It's a threat that can't be ignored any longer," said David Heyman, the director of the homeland security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Heyman said the nonpartisan research group has been working with the federal government on the study this year to evaluate intelligence out of Pakistan that presents specific scenarios in which Al-Qaeda has looked at using small planes and helicopters for attacks on American soil. He said this intelligence was actually discovered "several years ago" but is now beginning to get attention.

"We've also heard threat warnings from Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge and the intelligence community about the interest of Al-Qaeda to use general aviation assets for an attack," said Heyman. "We need to consider the use of smaller aircraft in our threat analysis. There are legitimate scenarios which we need to be concerned about."

Phil Anderson, a senior associate at the center who specializes in homeland security issues, said the possible scenarios include situations in which Al-Qaeda members could use a small aircraft, such as a single-engine, four-seat Cessna 172, to cause a catastrophe. One potential target could be a stadium packed with tens of thousands of people.

"The no-fly zones over these stadiums are loosely enforced," said Anderson.

Despite concerns expressed about general aviation after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, there are still no safety restrictions on these smaller planes, no metal detectors or screening of luggage.

Anderson said terrorists could load a plane with explosives, add shrapnel and possibly chemical or biological materials, and then detonate a bomb inside a stadium.

"You just roll in low and go over the top of the rim of that stadium and you can slow it down to about 45 knots so it's very manageable, put it on the 50-yard line, and push the button," said Anderson.

Any stadium could be a potential target. "Just look at the stadium where the Washington Redskins play," he said. FedEx Field, in Landover, MD., seats more than 90,000 people. "There's a flight path that runs right by it and it's just right out there in the middle of an open area, crimson and gold, just the perfect target."

Another scenario presented by Anderson details how a terrorist could pack radiological material into a small aircraft, add several hundred pounds of explosives, and then target a stadium or other outdoor venue with a large crowd. "You would have a radiological effect . . . like a dirty bomb," said Anderson.

Recently, the Food and Drug Administration approved two injectable drugs to treat radiation exposure. "The approval of these two drugs is another example of the FDA's readiness and commitment to protecting Americans against all terrorist threats," said Dr. Lester M. Crawford, the acting FDA commissioner.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, officials discussed improving security measures for general aviation, which accounts for 77 percent of domestic flights. But the Federal Aviation Administration said security rules for private and charter planes weighing less than 12,500 pounds were not changed.

"It just sort of died on the vine. It was too much of an impact on the general aviation industry to impose the restrictions they talked about imposing," said

Jim Juras, a procedures specialist with the FAA. "It would have cost too much to do this around the country, so it was dropped."

Mike Fierberg, a spokesperson for the Transportation Security Administration, said background checks of pilots and screening of passengers or baggage is still not required for small planes.

"You can just drive up to your plane, load it with whatever you want and be off in 15 minutes," said Fierberg. "These planes aren't a focus for us. We take risk assessments and analyze that information and then focus the resources where the risks are higher. We don't have unlimited funds to deal with everything."

But Heyman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies said the intelligence from Pakistan shows these smaller planes are indeed at risk of being used by Al-Qaeda in a terror attack.

"People need to take this seriously," Heyman said. "The civil aviation and commercial aviation has been looked at, now we need to spend more time looking at general aviation."

Yet Heyman questions the timing of focusing on general aviation now, given that the Pakistan intelligence was collected several years ago.

"With helicopters, along with other types of general aviation planes, we've known about the threat for some time," Heyman said. "Why weren't they taking it seriously earlier? It's a very serious question."

The center said it started working on its "General Aviation Threat Vulnerability Study" in January and plans to release the results to the government by the end of the month.

Funding for the study came from many sources, including the private transportation industry, which has worked with the center on other research.

Source: www.boston.com

Antiterrorism Device Inspired by Near Miss

By Mary K. Pratt, Globe Correspondent - August 26, 2004

LEXINGTON -- Michael Y. Lu and Jonathan Moron, two Boston area businessmen, planned a meeting at the World Trade Center in New York on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001. But Morrone had a last-minute scheduling change, and they both missed the appointment.

The terrorist attacks and a subsequent rash of anthrax-laced letters spurred the two men into action. Today, they are top executives of Lexington-based BioDefense Corp., which has developed a machine that can kill a number of deadly substances, including anthrax, botulism, and smallpox.

This invention, called the MailDefender, is gaining widespread attention from government officials, corporate giants, and even the United Nations. Independent supporters said they see the MailDefender becoming an essential piece of office equipment.

"It's something that for major corporations or government offices, in a post 9/11 world, is now becoming a necessity. And for little money, you could protect your entire office staff," said state Representative Vincent A. Pedone, a Worcester Democrat on the House Science and Technology Committee. "We plan on having conversations with people during the state budget process in purchasing something like this."

Already, the United Nations and the US attorney's office in Virginia have placed provisional orders for the MailDefender. BioDefense executives said they expect to deliver their first three units in September or October, and they're meeting with other potential government and corporate customers interested in buying this technology.

Following the Sept. 11 attacks, Lu, an engineer who also founded Laser Medical Corp. of Burlington, began developing ideas on how to improve the nation's security. Then, after the spate of deadly anthrax-tainted letters in the fall of 2001, he turned his focus toward protecting people from that threat. By November, he was thinking about using microwave energy to kill biological agents.

"As a citizen here, I want to protect my own family, my friends," Lu said, emphasizing that his first interest in developing the technology was ensuring safety, not making a profit. Lu is chairman and chief executive officer of BioDefense and Morrone is senior vice president.

Early versions of the MailDefender sit at the end of a hall in BioDefense's simple offices in a Lexington office park. Senior vice president Paul Jurberg called it "a little museum," a collection of microwaves and a clothes dryer refitted in Lu's quest.

Engineers work on the current model in a large, beige-colored office where work benches, drills, and tools have replaced cubicles, computers, and other standard office supplies.

The current version, the one set to hit the market this fall, looks similar to the discarded models. The steel MailDefender is about the size of a commercial clothes dryer with an internal tumbler used to toss around the mail. A front door is used to load mail, while a rear door is used to unload it, a design that reduces the chances of decontaminated letters mixing with unprocessed ones.

The MailDefender can handle about 10 pounds of mail per 25-minute cycle, Jurberg said. BioDefense plans to sell and/or lease the machines.

BioDefense is also developing an emergency response vehicle, equipped with a MailDefender and clean suit, to sell to the public safety agencies that respond to calls about suspicious mail.

The 300-pound MailDefender uses a combination of microwaves, ultraviolet light, and an antimicrobial solution to decontaminate mail. The process creates a misty environment that can penetrate paper. However, the mail comes out dry, warm, and undamaged. The process sets it apart from current competitors, according to company officials and outside experts.

"They've really achieved a level . . . I've never seen before," said Hong-Liang Cui, a professor of

physics at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, N.J., who has tested the MailDefender.

Cui said his tests show the technology works and it's safe; he said he's confident that the MailDefender will gain approval from the Underwriters Laboratory, which tests products for compliance with UL standards and nationally recognized codes, and the Federal Communication Commission, which regulates anything that emits rays.

Although BioDefense has competitors in the marketplace, security specialists said most other technologies only detect bio agents. And those that do decontaminate can only decontaminate surfaces; they can't penetrate envelopes and packages like the MailDefender can. "And they're much more expensive," Jurberg said.

Meanwhile, irradiation decontaminates, but is a costly and lengthy procedure that can scorch paper, experts said. Plus, the federal Department of Health and Human Services has reported that individuals handling irradiated mail complained of transient headaches, dry throat, and nausea.

That's why terrorism expert Edith Flynn said she sees promise in the technology developed by BioDefense.

"This is really an emerging technology," said Flynn, professor emeritus at Northeastern University. And it's needed to address what's expected to be a growing problem: "We do think that biological terrorism attacks will evolve, and it doesn't come from only Al-Qaeda, but from our own home-grown groups."

She added: "It's terribly important to keep our commerce going, our travel unimpeded, to keep our economic equilibrium balanced."

BioDefense executives acknowledged the business prospects for the MailDefender are significant.

"There is some mail bioterrorism that takes place all the time, we just don't hear about it," Jurberg said.

In fact, more than 28,000 cases of mail-based bioterrorism were reported in the United States in 2003 alone. "Most are hoaxes, but hoaxes can be just as disruptive as the real thing," Jurberg said.

Offices have to shut down, workers need to be decontaminated, suspicious packages have to be isolated and tested -- even if the threat turns out to be nothing stronger than powder detergent. Consider that authorities in July sealed off the Washington, D.C., building that housed Senator John F. Kerry's presidential campaign headquarters after a package with white substance arrived; it turned out to be garlic powder.

"There's a lot of interest in what they're doing," said George DeBakey, global sales director for E.J. Krause & Associates Inc., a conference and management company in Bethesda, MD., and an adviser to BioDefense.

And that has brought early growth to this startup. While executives said they're working essentially without pay at this privately funded company, they're already creating jobs. The company has about 20 workers and plans to hire 150 more when the MailDefender officially hits the market this fall, Jurberg said.

BioDefense uses Ken-Mar Co., a precision metal fabricator in Salem, N.H., and Contract Assembly Inc. in Lawrence to construct the MailDefender. Officials at both companies said they would need to hire dozens of workers to meet the orders expected once MailDefender is ready for sale.

Expectations for orders are high. "I think there's a big market potential in this area. They're filling a void that has not been addressed," said DeBakey, who was a deputy assistant secretary at the Commerce Department under President Ronald Reagan. "I think government will be the initial market for this. But . . . I also think every company needs it. We live in a different world."

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Studying the Impact of the Detonation of a Dirty Bomb

A radioactive "dirty" bomb detonated at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach could cause a \$34-billion loss to the nation's economy, according to researchers at a two-day symposium that focused on the economic impact of terrorism.

The scenario was one of many discussed by experts Saturday at the conference, which was hosted by USC's new Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events.

Researchers from about a dozen universities and think tanks debated the potential costs, including the effect a radiological attack would have on the nation's power grid, the impact on transportation if bridges in Seattle were destroyed and the progress of U.S. efforts to upgrade port security.

Professors from USC and Texas Southern University in Houston created a mathematical model to predict the cost of a dirty bomb at the L.A. and Long Beach ports, the third-largest port complex in the world and the largest in the nation. That model, they said, could eventually be applied to other locations.

Howard Shatz of the Public Policy Institute of California described the complex overhaul of the country's port security, which relies heavily on cooperation with other nations and on additional training for U.S. agencies.

"The Coast Guard has to learn new things it has never learned, like a live boarding of a hostile ship," Shatz said.

Clark Abt, who runs a social and economic policy research and consulting firm, said it was imperative that the United States pay for overseas scanners to detect nuclear weapons before they reach the U.S. coastline.

"The Coast Guard and Customs are used to drugs," Abt said. "Getting most of it is good enough. But they can't afford to allow a single nuke into New York Harbor."

But Chip White, a professor of transportation at the Georgia Institute of Technology, said rigorous inspections overseas were already hampering exports.

"Containers are missing [connecting with] sailings to be inspected," said White, who studied inspections at Singapore's port. "Ships don't wait for containers."

The terrorism center at USC received a \$12-million grant from the federal Department of Homeland Security in March to develop tools to assess the possible outcomes of an attack.

"9/11 was a failure of imagination," said Randy Hall, co-director of the center, on why the attack was not predicted and prevented. "This university center has a mission to exchange ideas to look at long-term threats."

Source: www.latimes.com

Agencies Urged to Develop Teleworker Corps for Emergency Situations

By Daniel Pulliam

The Office of Personnel Management released updated emergency guides last week, emphasizing the need for agencies to have plans for employees to work from home during emergencies. OPM also released guides for the families of federal employees and managers.

The updated emergency preparedness guides (*see www.opm.gov/emergency*) from OPM stress the need for agencies to have plans that allow "the business of government to continue during emergency situations." The guides stress that telework is an effective method that would allow employees not selected to go to the Designated Continuity of

Operations facilities during an emergency to continue their work.

Agencies are supposed to develop a cadre of teleworkers who will learn to work off-site electronically and supervisors who can manage employees remotely. Eliminating paper and automating reports whenever possible will help employees to experience functioning in a virtual office.

"With telework in place during emergencies, experienced teleworkers won't need to master new computer programs, and, managers will learn to supervise a 'virtual workforce' by doing it under normal conditions," the guides stated.

The guides also include direction on the designation of emergency personnel and mission-critical emergency workers as well as shelter in place protocols if the evacuation of a federal building is deemed too dangerous. An OPM spokesman said the new emergency preparedness guides emphasize the importance of federal employee awareness of security plans.

An Aug. 27 memorandum to department and agency heads from OPM Director Kay Coles James declared that effective human capital management requires agencies to keep employees prepared for foreseeable emergencies, and in an accompanying press release, she encouraged federal employees to download the new guides to "re-familiarize themselves with safety protocols."

A letter from James in the employee guide noted that the emergency guides are intended to provide general information and that other Web sites provide more comprehensive information, including the emergency sites of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Occupant Emergency Program Guide of the General Services Administration and the Homeland Security Department.

"Keep in mind, it is very likely that numerous steps have already been taken to secure your building that are not subject to open discussion," James wrote. "Trust your manager - this information may be held more tightly to better protect you from individuals who may seek to cause harm."

Source: www.govexec.com

Beslan Terror Tragedy - A U.S. Possibility

In the next year or two, it is entirely possible that a dozen or so Islamic terrorists (which may include men, women and some non-Arab recruits) will take over an American school and hold a couple of hundred children and their teachers hostage, vowing to kill them all if their demands – for the release of imprisoned terrorists, or American withdrawal from Iraq, or whatever – are not promptly met.

There is nothing impossible, or even unlikely, about this. In fact, it has already happened, in Russia. The ghastly drama was played out in Beslan, a small city in southern Russia, a couple of weeks ago. When it was over, 150 children, together with an equal number of teachers and other adults, and all but one of the hijackers, were dead.

Most of the aspects of the tragedy weren't even new. Terrorists willing to commit suicide on behalf of their objectives have been around for years:

Osama bin Laden deployed 19 of them in Al-Qaeda's attacks in New York and Washington on Sept. 11, 2001. The only novelty in Beslan was the diabolical tactic of seizing children. (The rebels threatened to kill 50 children for every terrorist slain by the authorities.)

The Russian government has been criticized for ineptness in its handling of the episode, and perhaps it was guilty as charged. But it was negotiating with the hijackers, and had even managed to persuade them to release about 20 of the youngest children, when some unexplained occurrence set off two huge bombs that collapsed a large section of the school's roof. After that, both sides began killing everyone they could.

How would Americans – the children's parents and the public at large, not to mention the government – respond to such a crisis? We could forgive the

parents if they demanded immediate surrender to the terrorists' demands – human beings are simply not designed to acquiesce nobly in the killing of their children for a higher cause. But the government would be duty-bound to reject the hijackers' demands, even at the cost of the children's lives, lest it encourage other terrorists to turn America into a charnel house of the youngest and most innocent among us.

And what about the public at large? If the crisis extended over several days, there would be time for many people to reason the matter through, and see the grim wisdom of the government's position. But you can bet that there would also be an articulate minority of college professors, deracinated intellectuals and the usual crackpots who populate protest demonstrations, arguing that President Bush (or Kerry, as the case may be) brought the whole tragedy on us by reason of his vicious policies.

In a way, the determination of these dissenters to politicize such a ghastly scenario is the mirror image of the terrorists' determination to create it in the first place. There is no one more horrible than the person for whom political goals transcend all other considerations.

If such an event as the one at Beslan occurs in the United States, it will remind us, as nothing else can, of the nature of the evil we are facing. The terrorists who have organized and spread across the face of the world in recent decades are the radical fringe of Islam, and they are fueled by despair. Their culture has simply failed to come to terms with modernity; or, as they would more proudly put it, it rejects modernity. They cannot possibly defeat, in military terms, the great nations of the Western World – most notably, the United States. But their faith is strong, and they believe that in its name they can make world dominion simply unendurable for the West.

To that end, they are ready to sacrifice their own individual lives, and even the lives of innocent children. And a readiness to commit suicide does, unquestionably, give tactical advantages to an attacker. We cannot possibly eliminate all such foes, but we can and must resist them. They will disappear only when radical Islam, in the fullness of time, has made its peace with the modern world.

Source: www.worldnetdaily.com

People Puffers' Sniff Explosive Molecules on Air Travelers

NEW YORK, — One of the biggest dangers for airline travelers is a suicide bomber who brings onboard a block of explosives the size of a cake of soap. Screening devices would be hard-pressed to find it, unless the airport is using a new type of explosive detector that filters air to find traces of combustible materials.

England's Heathrow Airport is using them; so are airports in Germany, Canada and Senegal, to name a few. And now some American airports may install them as early as this month. These 'people puffers' are also being considered for use at sports arenas and railway stations.

The National Park Service put these sophisticated sniffer machines into use at the Statue of Liberty when it reopened last month after a period of renovation.

Relatively unobtrusive, the machine sniffs particles and detects trace explosives even if they are hidden inside a cake, sausage or stuffed grape leaves.

Similar to current metal detectors at airports, a person enters a security portal where a robot voice warns: "Air puffers on!"

Jets of air shoot out of the device, and dislodge microscopic particles from the person, which then sifts the particles for traces of explosives.

The average human body has a 'heat signature' equivalent to that of a 60-watt light bulb. Puffs of air dislodge body particles and the machine then provides a 'convection plume' to vacuum them and convey the particles up to a built-in laboratory where a sophisticated computer tests the molecular weights of the trapped particles.

As the puffers shut down, the robotic voice instructs the person to "Wait for green light." Once the person is certified explosive free, the voice instructs the person: "Exit."

The advantage to all this is that there's no touching, no invasion to one's privacy.

These 'people puffers' are already in place at secure, often classified facilities, including military bases, prisons and nuclear power plants both here and abroad.

Two machines seem most popular: One is the EntryScan, by General Electric which costs \$40,000, and Sentinel II, by Smiths Detection & Protection Systems, part of a British conglomerate, which — with all the bells and whistles — can cost up to \$150,000.

These devices make it possible to screen people with the most advanced explosives detection equipment available," said Ken Wood, president of Barringer Instruments. "Given the reality of actual and potential suicide bombers, people must be screened thoroughly. The recent shoe bomber incident is just one example of the necessity to screen people using this technology."

Both machines have a walk-through portal that is programmed to screen about seven people per minute for a variety of substances. Smith says it scans people in 9 seconds per person, whereas G.E. needs 15 seconds.

The Transportation Security Administration is currently testing the devices at various airports throughout the US.

Source: www.arabnews.com

New Study Predicts Up to 44,000 Prompt Fatalities and 518,000 Long-Term Deaths

A recent study finds that the potential health consequences of a successful terrorist attack on the Indian Point nuclear plant could cause as many as 518,000 long-term deaths from cancer and as many as 44,000 near-term deaths from acute radiation poisoning, depending on weather conditions. The study was commissioned by Riverkeeper, a Hudson River-based environmental group.

Dr. Edwin Lyman, a senior staff scientist in the Global Security Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, authored the report entitled "Chernobyl-on-the-Hudson?--The Health and Economic Impacts of a Terrorist Attack at the Indian Point Nuclear Plant."

Dr. Lyman performed the calculations in the study with the same computer models and methodology used by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Department of Energy to analyze the health and economic impacts of radiological accidents. The study updates a 1982 congressional report based on Sandia National Laboratories' CRAC-2 (Calculation of Reactor Accident Consequences) study.

CRAC-2 found that a core meltdown and consequent radiological release at one of the two operating Indian Point reactors could cause 50,000 early fatalities from acute radiation syndrome and 14,000 latent fatalities from cancer.

Dr. Lyman's report found that the potential for early deaths -- 44,000 cases -- is comparable to the 1982 CRAC-2 estimate and the peak number of latent cancer fatalities -- 518,000 cases -- is over 35 times greater than the CRAC-2 estimate, corresponding to a scenario where weather conditions maximize the rain-related fallout of radioactivity over New York City.

"The study's findings confirm what Riverkeeper and hundreds of the region's elected officials have said all along: Indian Point poses an unacceptable risk to the 20 million people -- including all New York City residents -- who live and work in the New

York metropolitan area," said Alex Matthiessen, Riverkeeper's executive director. "The time for our elected officials to take their heads out of the sand

has passed. Federal and state officials are effectively shielding the nuclear industry from what has become an obvious new reality since 9/11: nuclear plants are sitting ducks and need substantially more security than is currently required - none more than Indian Point which lies just 24 miles up the Hudson from New York City. The time has come for the government to move immediately to impose stringent security measures for Indian Point and begin planning for the plant's early retirement."

"The data clearly show that a terrorist attack at Indian Point could have a catastrophic impact on the health of New York City residents, yet the Nuclear Regulatory Commission does not require the development of emergency plans to protect this vulnerable population," said Dr. Lyman. "A thorough and honest evaluation of the feasibility and effectiveness of protective actions such as sheltering, evacuation and administration of potassium iodide is badly needed for individuals living far beyond the 10-mile emergency planning zone around Indian Point."

The prospect of a terrorist attack at the Indian Point nuclear power plant has been a source of great concern for residents and elected officials of the New York metropolitan area since the Al-Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001 -- particularly since one of the hi-jacked planes flew over Indian Point on its way to NYC. The recently released 9/11 Commission Report revealed that Mohammed Atta, the plot's ringleader who piloted one of the planes that hit the World Trade Center, "considered targeting a nuclear facility he had seen during familiarization flights near New York." Given that the reconnaissance flight paths used by the terrorists included the Hudson River corridor and that the next closest nuclear facility to New York City is over 70 miles away, the plant in question was almost certainly Indian Point.

Although the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has recently required marginal security enhancements at Indian Point and other U.S.

nuclear power plants, the plants remain highly vulnerable to air and water- based attacks as well as to ground assaults by large and sophisticated terrorist teams with paramilitary training and advanced weaponry. Of special concern is the vulnerability of facilities that contain equipment vital for safe plant operation, yet are insufficiently hardened against attack.

The poorly protected spent fuel pools at Indian Point are another source of great risk to the New York area. As alarming as the results of Dr. Lyman's study are, they do not include the consequences of an attack that would damage the spent fuel pools as well as the reactors.

Among the report's key findings are:

- * Up to 44,000 near-term deaths from acute radiation poisoning could occur in the unlikely event of a complete evacuation of the 10-mile radius zone covered by current emergency plans. This number could be even higher for more realistic evacuation scenarios. These deaths could occur among people living as far as 60 miles downwind of Indian Point.

- * Up to 518,000 people could eventually die from cancer within 50 miles of Indian Point as a result of radiation exposures received within seven days of the attack.

- * Hundreds of billions to trillions of dollars of economic damages could befall the New York City metropolitan area, leveling a major blow to U.S. and world economic stability.

- * Millions of survivors could be permanently displaced because of extensive radiological contamination of their property.

A copy of Dr. Lyman's study is posted on Riverkeeper's website at www.riverkeeper.org.

Preventing a Nuclear 9/11

The recent hostage tragedy in Russia is a stark reminder of the potent terrorist threat that country still faces -- a threat that could result in a nuclear Sept. 11 if terrorists manage to gain access to Russia's nuclear stockpiles.

Unfortunately, the recent claim by Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov that inadequately secured nuclear stockpiles in Russia are only a "myth" is far from the truth. There has been a decade of improvements in Russia, but the work remains dangerously incomplete and the threat to nuclear facilities is terrifyingly high. While many of the best-known thefts of nuclear material occurred a decade ago, it was only last year that the chief of Russia's nuclear agency testified that nuclear security was under funded by hundreds of millions of dollars. At nearly every site U.S. experts visit, they reach quick agreement with Russian experts on the need for substantial security upgrades. Russia's decision to send additional troops to guard nuclear facilities in the wake of the most recent terrorist attacks belies the notion that these facilities were adequately secured before. Moreover, that heightened troop presence is not likely to last and will do little to reduce the danger of theft by insiders.

Meanwhile, terrorists are zeroing in on these nuclear stockpiles. Top Russian officials have confirmed at least two cases in 2001 of terrorists carrying out reconnaissance at Russian nuclear warhead storage sites. The 41 heavily armed, suicidal terrorists who seized hundreds of hostages at a Moscow theater in 2002 reportedly considered seizing the Kurchatov Institute instead -- a site with enough highly enriched uranium (HEU) for dozens of nuclear weapons. In 2003 proceedings in a Russian criminal case revealed that a Russian businessman had been offering \$750,000 for stolen weapon-grade plutonium for sale to a foreign client. Al-Qaeda has been actively seeking nuclear material for a bomb and has strong connections to Chechen terrorist groups.

Comprehensive U.S.-funded security upgrades have been completed for only 22 percent of Russia's potential nuclear bomb material; upgrades for tens

of thousands of bombs' worth of material are still incomplete. Disputes over access to sensitive sites, liability, and other bureaucratic and political obstacles have been allowed to stymie progress for years.

This is a global problem. More than 130 research reactors in dozens of countries still operate with HEU fuel, and many have no more security than a night watchman and a chain-link fence. Pakistan's heavily guarded nuclear stockpiles face huge threats, from both insiders and outsiders, including large remnants of al Qaeda and the Taliban in the country.

The good news is that this is a solvable problem. Plutonium and HEU -- the essential ingredients of nuclear weapons -- are too difficult for terrorists to make. If the world's stockpiles can be locked down and kept out of terrorist hands, nuclear terrorism can be prevented.

Many of the needed programs are in place. In addition to continuing efforts to secure Russia's stockpiles, the administration has been exploring similar cooperation with Pakistan and others -- and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham has just launched a Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI) designed to remove potential bomb material entirely from the world's most vulnerable sites rapidly.

Three steps are urgently needed if the world is to win the race to lock down these stockpiles before the terrorists get to them.

First, it will be crucial to implement GTRI as quickly, flexibly and comprehensively as possible -- with a target of removing potential bomb material from the world's highest-risk facilities within four years. Congress should give Abraham both the explicit and flexible authority and the additional funds he needs.

Second, the United States and Russia must drastically accelerate their efforts to secure Russia's stockpiles. The next U.S.-Russian summit should

focus on agreements to sweep aside bureaucratic and political obstacles and set an agreed deadline for getting the job done. President Bush needs to make clear to Russian President Vladimir Putin that locking down these stockpiles quickly and permanently is central to U.S.-Russian relations and to Russia's own security.

Third, the United States must expand the security upgrade effort to the rest of the world, forming a fast-paced global partnership to quickly lock down all the vulnerable nuclear caches that cannot simply be removed or eliminated.

Making all this happen will require a sea change in the level of sustained White House leadership, no matter who is president. A full-time senior official

is needed -- one who has the president's ear -- to lead the myriad efforts in many agencies meant to

block the terrorist pathway to the bomb. This official must also keep the issue on the front burner at the White House day in and day out. Only then will we have done all we should to reduce the risk of a nuclear Sept. 11.

[Matthew Bunn and Anthony Wier, of the Managing the Atom Project at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, are co-authors of "Securing the Bomb: An Agenda for Action." Bunn worked on programs to secure nuclear materials in the Clinton administration and Wier helped to develop budgets for some of these programs in the Clinton and current Bush administrations.]

Source: www.washingtonpost.com

September is National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month. Throughout the month, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, American Red Cross, the America Prepared Campaign, the National Association of Broadcasters, the U.S. Department of Education and other partners, will host a series of events to highlight the importance of citizen emergency preparedness.

National Preparedness Month will provide Americans with a variety of opportunities to learn more about ways they can prepare for an emergency, get an emergency supply kit, establish a family communications plan, and become better aware of threats that may impact communities. It will also provide them with several opportunities to volunteer or get first aid or CPR training.

To find out more about preparing for emergencies, visit: www.firstgov.gov

Letter to Members

Dear Member,

First of all, I would like to personally extend my deepest apologies for the delays in getting this issue out. As I am sure you are aware, hurricanes Charlie and Francis, as well as effects from Ivan have put Florida in a difficult situation, reeking havoc over most of the state, and hence the delay in the August issue. However, we have attempted to compensate by publishing a double issue of the Journal of Civil Defense for August and September. We hope that you find the materials and issues addressed in this special issue both educational and informative.

Secondly, as more and more individuals are coming online via the Internet, we have been contemplating transforming the Journal of Civil Defense into an online

media format, as opposed to producing a paper version. This would allow TACDA to communicate with our members on a more timely and efficient bases. We would like to hear from you concerning this idea, as well as any other thoughts or ideas that you may have for improving TACDA membership benefits, as well as helping TACDA to continue its promotion of disaster preparedness activities at all sectors of American society. We encourage you to contact us via email at info@tacda.org with your comments and ideas.

We are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kathy Eiland
Executive Director