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Jet Rolls Off Runway

A Boeing 737 owned by Delta Air Lines ran off a runway at Atlanta's international airport early Tuesday after it had a braking problem during an engine test. No passengers were on board.

Hospitals With Radioactive Materials Expose Weakness in Antiterror Rules

By MATTHEW L. WALD

WASHINGTON — Ten years into a campaign to make radioactive materials harder for terrorists to steal, Congressional auditors have found one hospital where cesium was kept in a padlocked room but the combination to the lock was written on the door frame and another where radioactive material was in a room with unsecured windows that looked out on a loading dock.

In testimony prepared for delivery on Wednesday to a Senate Homeland Security subcommittee, an official from the Government Accountability Office plans to say that people with responsibility for security told the auditors that they were trained as physicists or radiation health technicians and were being told to enforce regulations "that they did not believe they were fully qualified to interpret."

The materials in question cannot be used to make a nuclear bomb, but if incorporated into a device with conventional explosives they would make a "dirty bomb" that could contaminate significant areas of a city with measurable amounts of radiation, some of it worrisome.

Gene Aloise, the director of natural resources and environment at the Government Accountability Office, said in prepared testimony that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which is in charge of regulating radioactive materials used for medical diagnoses and cancer treatment, had written very flexible rules in order to avoid adding to hospitals' costs, but that the result was "a mix of security controls and procedures that could leave some facilities' radiological sources more vulnerable than others to possible tampering, sabotage or outright theft."

After the terrorist attacks of

Sept. 11, 2011, security experts said that poor controls over radioactive materials could allow terrorists to enter the country unarmed and obtain the ingredients for attacks locally. Metal fabrication, food processing and other industries use radioactive materials. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission set out to tighten its rules, and the National Nuclear Security Agency, which is part of the Energy Department, offered grants to buy security equipment.

There are about 1,500 hospitals and medical buildings that use radioactive materials, according

Those entrusted to enforce regulations believed they were unqualified to do so.

to the Energy Department, which has spent about \$96 million to secure them.

Mr. Aloise's testimony did not identify hospitals by name or location, for obvious reasons. But at the 25 sites that inspectors visited, many had quantities of cesium 137, the most common radioactive form of the element, in the same range as in a medical device that was inadvertently discarded in the Goiania region of Brazil in 1987. That accident resulted in four deaths and \$36 million in cleanup costs.

At the hospital where the combination was written on the door frame, according to the testimony, "the door is in a busy hallway with heavy traffic, and the security administrator for the hospital said that he often walks around erasing door combinations that

are written next to the locks." At another place, a university hospital, the radiation safety officer told the auditors that he did not know how many people were allowed unescorted access to the radioactive sources, because the computer program that the hospital used could not count beyond 500. At a similar storage space at a military hospital, the auditors noted, the number of people allowed unescorted access was four, plus security personnel.

At the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Brian J. McDermott, director of the Division of Materials Safety, said that "the combination written on the door jamb would be a clear violation," but he said that the Government Accountability Office had not provided any detail to the commission that would allow a follow-up. "Hopefully when we see the report we'll have more context," he said.

Mr. McDermott said the commission had issued new rules in 2005, in response to the 2001 terrorist attacks. Before that, he said the rules were geared to preventing inadvertent exposures. Commission officials say about 22,000 entities hold licenses to possess radioactive materials. In 37 states, the rules are administered by the states, typically by health departments; the commission regulates about 3,000 licensees directly.

Senator Daniel K. Akaka, the Hawaii Democrat who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, which will hold the hearing on Wednesday, said the country remained "alarmingly vulnerable" to nuclear terrorism. "We must strengthen domestic radiological security requirements to prevent unauthorized access to these materials," he said in a statement about the testimony.

New Interest in Hacking as Security Threat

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cost the nation billions of dollars.

"I think General Dempsey said it best when he said that prior to 9/11, there were all kinds of information out there that a catastrophic attack was looming," Ms. Napolitano said in an interview. "The information on a cyberattack is at that same frequency and intensity and is bubbling at the same level, and we should not wait for an attack in order to do something."

General Dempsey told the senators that he had skipped a meeting of the National Security Council on Iran to attend the briefing because he was so concerned about a cyberattack, according to a person who had been told details of the meeting. A spokesman for General Dempsey said the chairman had "sent his vice chairman to the meeting on Iran so that he could attend the Senate meeting and emphasize his concern about cybersecurity."

"His point was about his presence at the cyber exercise rather than a value judgment on the 'threat,'" the spokesman, Col. David Lapan, said.

Experts say one of the biggest problems is that no part of the government has complete authority over the issue. The Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency give the government intelligence on potential attacks, and the F.B.I. prosecutes hackers who break the law. The Department of Homeland Security receives reports about security breaches but has no authority to compel business to improve their security.

"Nobody does critical infrastructure of the dot-com space



LUKE SHARRETT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Janet Napolitano, the secretary of Homeland Security, asked senators last week to pass a cybersecurity bill co-sponsored by Senators Joseph I. Lieberman and Susan Collins, below.



STEPHEN CROWLEY/THE NEW YORK TIMES

where America now relies on faith healing and snake oil for protection," Mr. Lewis said. "The administration wants it to be the

Department of Homeland Security, but the department needs additional authorities to be effective."



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My name is Madeleine Ryan. I am 14 years old and passionate about saving the sharks. Every year, as many as 80 million of these creatures are brutally killed to satisfy demand for shark fin soup. The result is that this vital part of our marine environment might become extinct within 20 years. We must not let that happen. **Join me in my stance to ban shark fin in New York.**

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