



## **Radiological Warfare Suspicions Point Up Need for Materials Accounting and Reporting to Enhance Security**

### **Press Release**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Takoma Park, Maryland, 10 June 2002:* The arrest of a suspect who allegedly sought to acquire radiological materials in order to make radiation weapons (commonly called “dirty bombs”) points up the need for a more stringent and comprehensive reporting and accounting for all radiological materials, according to the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research. These materials include:

Nuclear weapons usable materials — notably [plutonium-239](#) (and associated isotopes) and highly enriched uranium. Radioactive materials that could be used to make dirty bombs or other dispersal devices. This larger category of materials includes cesium-137, cobalt-60, [plutonium-238](#), americium-241, and strontium-90. (Plutonium-239 and associated isotopes could also be used to make “dirty bombs.”)

“The most important measure to reduce the risk of a radiological attack and to mitigate its consequences, should one occur, does not seem to be a high priority at present,” said Dr. Arjun Makhijani, president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research in Takoma Park, Maryland. “All institutions, whether commercial academic, governmental, or non-governmental, that possess radiological materials should be required to report their inventories periodically — once every three to six months — to local, state, and federal bodies, as well as to the International Atomic Energy Agency. That would not only ensure that the licensees authorized to hold these materials are verifying that they actually possess them, but it would provide authorities with early response information that would enable faster detection should any materials be missing. It is urgent that such a system should be put into place as a very high priority.”

The risk of materials being stolen would be greatly reduced if regular reporting were required, according to the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, because the possessors would know they would be held accountable for missing materials. Moreover, the authorities would be able to more easily detect the location from which materials were missing. That is currently impossible because the needed registries of radiological and nuclear materials do not exist at all levels. Emergency responders would also be better equipped and informed, reducing risks to them.