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Dirty bomb secret is out

Don Davis West Central Tribune
Published Monday, July 16, 2007

ST. PAUL — advertisement
The ease of making a “dirty bomb” from nuclear material no longer is a dirty secret.

“There are gaping holes in the system,” U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman, R-Minn., said, adding that federal officials promise to change that.

At a hearing last week, Coleman talked to Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials about a Government Accountability Office report showing it was easy to obtain nuclear material for use in a dirty bomb.

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Coleman warned.

The accountability office ran a sting and found its agents could obtain a federal license allowing them buy enough nuclear material. The sting came at Coleman’s request.

“It was as easy to get this material as a DVD at Netflix,” Coleman told the Washington Post. “If al-Qaeda had set up a phony corporation in the U.S., they could have gathered enough material to make a dirty bomb.”

McCain down

Arizona Sen. John McCain’s presidential campaign is struggling, and Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty admits

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there are problems.

"Obviously, it has not gone as well as he had hoped," McCain's national co-chairman said on WDAY radio's "Hot Talk."

Pawlenty said he still thinks McCain would be a good president and offered hope that he can "restart" the campaign.

The governor may have a big title, but Pawlenty said his co-chairmanship "is really a ceremonial job." His only role has been to fill in when McCain cannot speak at an event, about once a month, Pawlenty added.

No session

The prospects for a Minnesota special legislative session this year are dim.

"Everybody agrees we're not going to have one unless all the caucus leaders and all the caucuses agree, and they don't," Gov. Tim Pawlenty told reporters.

The GOP governor said he has met with legislative leaders and individual lawmakers, but there is not consensus on what issues would be addressed if he called a special session.

After this year's Legislature failed to pass a public works funding bill, and Pawlenty vetoed wide-ranging tax legislation, a number of interest groups, local governments and lawmakers have asked him to call a special session.

The Legislature's next regular session begins Feb. 12.

Walz: 'No'

Freshman U.S. Rep. Tim Walz, a Democrat serving southern Minnesota, says there is no way he will challenge U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman next year.

"No means no," he said, reacting to repeated rumors that he will enter the race against Democrats Al Franken, Mike Ciresi and others.

But, Walz said, he understands why people ask him: "There is somewhat of a concern right now that none of our candidates have won a federal race."

"The frustration with Sen. Coleman is almost so thick you can almost cut it with a knife," he added.

Coleman is a first-term Republican who sits atop national Democrats' hit list for 2008.

Pawlenty of support

A new blog boasts accomplishments of Minnesota's Republican governor, Tim Pawlenty.

The blog, www.partyofpawlenty.com, touts "one of the conservative movement and Republican Party's most significant new voices," said one of its authors, Chris

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Tiedeman.

If you visit, expect rhetoric like this Tiedeman comment: "Some say great leaders are defined by their time; by a particular moment in history. Others say great leaders transcend their time. Tim Pawlenty does both."

Pawlenty often is mentioned as a national candidate in 2008 or 2012. He is one of the few prominent Republicans across the country to win in last year's Democratic election rout.

Minnesota Capitol reporter Scott Wentz contributed to this report.

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