

COALITION TO SPUR PLANS FOR DIRTY BOMBS



by Mickey McCarter

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Alerting public to radiological threats, developing emergency plans among priorities

The Radiological Threat Awareness Coalition (R-TAC) has assembled a team of US experts on radiological threats to educate the public on specific terrorist possibilities and to create plans for the prevention of specific scenarios, Chairman James Pinkerton told HSToday.us.

R-TAC will plan public education initiatives that would consist of putting videos on YouTube, drawing up lists of best practices, and offering conferences and seminars as well as perhaps creating games and simulations on radioactive threats and even a graphic novel.

"This is an example of an issue where extremely urgent public policy comes together with something that is very cinematic and visual. We are still exploring all of that, but I definitely feel the burden to communicate the urgency of the situation as vividly but also responsibly as I can," Pinkerton stated.

In addition, the advisors of R-TAC will examine recommendations for the Department of Homeland Security to determine plans and procedures best suited for dealing with radiological threats. For example, the coalition may examine Operation Sentinel in New York City to draw conclusions as to whether elements of the operation might be applicable to other US urban areas.

"We will take things slowly. When we go to DHS with specific elements of a plan, we want to make sure we thought through all of the wrinkles in advance before we waste anyone's time," Pinkerton noted.

Pinkerton was inspired to form the coalition by a longstanding concern that radiological materials to build a dirty bomb or other weapon were readily available within the United States.

"The statistics are kind of sobering in terms of how many containers of nuclear containers have gone missing and so on," he explained. "When the opportunity came to pull together a coalition to raise awareness on this problem, I jumped on it. I thought it was a great opportunity to warn my fellow humans about this danger, including the substantial danger that exists inside the United States—even from readily available materials found in medical equipment to smoke detectors. There are all sorts of dangers that an evil person or group could unleash on the rest of us."

R-TAC recognized that other organizations and personnel within the United States are working on the problems posed by radiological threats, but the coalition feels it can contribute fresh thinking and ideas to the challenges of securing the country against them, Pinkerton added.



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