

News Release . . .

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden

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Contacts: Carol Guthrie
202/224-5244

Wyden Calls for “Technology Roadmap” to Fight Terror Against America Looks to Private Sector at Joint Hearing on Report from National Academies

Washington, DC -- The Senate Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space convened a joint hearing with the House Science Committee today to receive a report from the National Academies entitled, “Making the Nation Safer: the Role of Science and Technology in Countering Terrorism.” Wyden, chair of the Senate Subcommittee, made the following remarks at today’s hearing:

“I’m glad to be here today. There are few challenges more important than developing the technologies that can disrupt the terrorist networks that threaten our nation. To get a jump on the terrorists, it’s essential to do three things.

“First, I believe America needs a technology roadmap that can strengthen our capacity to fight terrorism. It should consist of everything from the simple-sounding chore of improving the government’s e-mail capability to the exotic science of identifying new bioterror pathogens.

“Second, our government must tap the technology treasure trove that resides within private industry. That priority stands out from all I’ve learned from this report, and from my work as chair of this Subcommittee and the Senate Intelligence Committee. The terrorists are not technological simpletons. At this moment, they are figuring out what the state of the art is in the commercial world. For our government to stay ahead of them there must be a closer alignment with the private sector. Leaders of technology must constantly furnish government their ideas and suggestions for winning this war.

“Third, a new generation of technologies and technology experts must be cultivated to meet future threats. The dearth of science and technology students in our schools today signals a major problem for tomorrow. The lack of students in scientific disciplines is especially troubling when you consider that many women, particularly, feel discouraged and discriminated against as they try to enter these fields. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that of the 2 million

scientists and engineers working in the United States, only 10

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Wyden/Page 2

percent are women. I want to grow the number of women in science and technology, and grow the number of scientists and technologists in this country overall. America's war on terrorism will be won over the long haul. It is vital that America produces enough experts to continue the fight.

"America needs a technology roadmap to fight terror today. Terrorists will try every avenue to identify an open path for attack. This country needs a plan to shut down those avenues one by one. The report being released today is a major step forward in identifying how to do that. Hopefully, it will show where the roadblocks need to be to keep the terrorists out.

"The National Academies jumped in quickly after the events of September 11, to start some deep thinking about areas of technology that ought to be explored. They looked both for technological vulnerabilities and at technology's potential for protection. I am pleased that the Academies convened this expert team to analyze the nation's research agenda in terms of counter terrorism. This joint panel is fortunate to have the team's co-chairs here today.

"I will defer to wiser minds than mine to go over the details of this report. I'm looking forward to our witnesses' testimony today. But I will say that this report is simultaneously troubling and promising. It is troubling because of the challenges these experts found. It is promising because of technology's potential to meet those challenges.

"Our government must tap the technology treasure trove that resides within private industry. I know the great promise this country's private technology sector holds. From my seats on the Senate Commerce and Intelligence Committees, in just a few short months I've heard of many technologies with enormous capabilities. They range from sensors to detect and identify biological agents, to interoperable communications technology that enables first responders from different jurisdictions to talk to each other at a disaster site. Computer database systems can promote information sharing between different intelligence and law enforcement agencies to prevent terrorist strikes before they occur. Better authentication and identification technologies, such as biometrics, can control access to sensitive areas at airports and power plants. Better, cheaper and faster explosives detection technology can help secure our airports as well.

"Technology can even be used to fight fire with fire – securing computer and communications systems from cyber terrorists, and detecting cyber intruders. The country's pool of cyber security experts needs to keep pace with the evolving risks. Congressman Boehlert and I have teamed up on legislation to support basic cyber security research. The Senate Commerce Committee recently approved that bill as well, and it already has passed the House.

"Even as this hearing convenes today, innovative startup companies are developing new ideas. For that matter, someone may be creating a new gizmo in their garage that could eventually save American lives. The government should organize structures to help

creative ideas find their way in. It is essential that our government institutions help, and do not hinder, the movement of these technologies to the front lines against terror.

“To that end, earlier this year I introduced the Science and Technology Emergency Mobilization Act. This legislation would create a Center to serve as a single contact point and clearinghouse for evaluating promising security and emergency response technologies. The Senate Commerce Committee recently reported this legislation, and Congressman Boehlert has agreed to champion this in the House.

“My bill also offers America’s experts in science, technology and medicine the chance to form rapid response teams ready for deployment to disaster sites. This part of the legislation has become popularly known as the National Emergency Technology Guard, or NET Guard. I was glad to see this idea echoed in the report being presented today. Let me read you the excerpt that caught my eye:

‘In the short term, a practical option for providing emergency operational support would be to exploit IT expertise in the private sector, much as the armed services draw on the private sector (National Guard and reserve forces) to augment active-duty forces during emergencies.’ (NRC Report p. 5-8)

“The National Academies’ report, I know, proposes a Homeland Security Institute to aid technology research, development and deployment. One purpose of the Institute mirrors another aspect of my legislation: aiding in the creation of test beds for new technologies. I will be interested today to see how ideas for NET Guard, as well as a technology clearinghouse, can dovetail with the concept of a Homeland Security Institute.

“This report urges various agencies to set aside their institutional pride and collaborate on new solutions. In the same way, folks in Congress have to be willing to blend ideas to fight terrorism efficiently and effectively. I’m ready to do that.

“I am also ready to help address another concern the Academies’ experts have raised. The time is now to grow a new generation of experts to meet the terrorist threats of the future. The Academies’ report notes that there are fewer cyber security researchers today than 10 years ago. To ensure our success in the war on terror, I want this country to have an abundance of experts across the spectrum of the sciences.

“I have already mentioned legislation that Congressman Boehlert and I are promoting. The Cyber Security Research and Development Act has a strong educational component, providing funds to improve academic programs and to offer scholarships to deserving young researchers.

“Just last week, I also announced an initiative to encourage the development of science and engineering expertise.

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Wyden/Page 4

At a Science Subcommittee hearing on NASA and education, I made it known that I want the number of women with degrees in math, engineering, and other hard sciences tripled in the very near future. In fact, I want the overall number of graduates in these areas tripled.

“The young witnesses at our hearing on science education were so eager, from the middle schoolers who built a rocket launcher to the young woman from Oregon working on a NASA project for college. The desire to study and work in the sciences is already there for many young Americans. For others, it just needs to be cultivated. I believe the fact that work in these fields may save American lives can draw much-needed attention to these noble professions. My goal is to ensure that when students want to enter the science and technology sectors, they find the encouragement and the means to do so.

“For those of you already in these noble professions, the work continues today. The National Academies can continue to help the government take full advantage of this country’s great technology capabilities in the fight against terror.

“The committees Congressman Boehlert and I lead will continue to explore this topic as well. I am glad to join my good friend today for this important joint hearing. It is my hope that this bipartisan and bicameral hearing will set the tone for ongoing congressional efforts. The war on terrorism is too important to be hindered by partisan or jurisdictional bickering. Today’s hearing should send the clear message that on our watch, Congressman Boehlert and I will take a collaborative, productive approach.

“I intend to hold a hearing in July to examine technology and counter terrorism a bit further, and I look forward to an ongoing bipartisan and bicameral effort, and look forward to our witnesses’ testimony today.”

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witness testimony from today’s hearing is available online at
<http://commerce.senate.gov/hearings/hearings0202.htm>