



Dirty Bomb Prevention Accelerates Under NDAA Amendment **Nuclear Security Groups Cheer Reps. Jimmy Panetta, Pete Visclosky, Jeff Fortenberry, Chuck Fleischmann, Jim Banks for Bipartisan Amendment**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(August 13, 2018 — Washington) Today, President Trump signed the National Defense Authorization Act ([NDAA](#)). The \$717 billion legislation included a bipartisan amendment by U.S. Representatives Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), Pete Visclosky (D-IN), Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN), and Jim Banks (R-IN) to positively increase domestic nuclear security. The amendment will expedite the process to remove cesium chloride, which can be used to make “dirty bombs,” or radiological dispersal devices, from the public space.

The [amendment](#) works to support the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) efforts to replace cesium chloride blood irradiators by 2027. The replacement of current devices to alternative technology is voluntary, and the NNSA Office of Radiological Security will subsidize the cost of such replacement technology. Moreover, the NNSA will remove the radiological source at no cost to the facility, ensuring secure disposal. According to the legislation, **the transition to alternative blood irradiation technology must be completed by December 31, 2027.**

[In 2013](#), 500 blood irradiators across the country sterilized almost 2 million units of blood. Currently, there are 400 cesium blood irradiators in the United States. While blood sterilization is critical in the medical field, alternative technology provides the same medical benefits without the risk of radiological terrorism.

In a May 2018 [press release](#), the Members explained: “Our amendment directs the NNSA to use existing voluntary programs to incentivize the replacement of cesium chloride blood irradiation devices by 2027. **This amendment was the product of a bipartisan process involving members of the House Nuclear Security Working Group, a caucus dedicated to addressing critical nuclear and radiological security issues, that allowed us to engage across the aisle and find common ground to reduce the risk of a radiological attack and strengthen our national security.**”

“Congress should be congratulated for passing this landmark legislation which builds upon efforts in New York City and California to reduce the threat from dirty bombs,” said Fissile Materials Working Group Chair Miles Pomper, a senior fellow at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

The Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), an FMWG member, has worked with hospitals, governments, and the private sector to encourage the use, where feasible, of safe and effective alternative technologies for eliminating the threat permanently, including in Atlanta, California, and New York City. In October 2017, the New York City Department of Health and

Mental Hygiene [announced](#) a first-of-its-kind, innovative program to replace high-activity radiological sources throughout New York City.

“We applaud the leadership from the U.S. Congress to speed up the process to eliminate risks posed by the most dangerous radioactive materials that could be used in a dirty bomb,” says Laura Holgate, NTI Vice President for Materials Risk Reduction. **“NTI will continue our work to promote permanent threat reduction and the prevention of radiological terrorism.”**

The FMWG commends U.S. Representatives Panetta, Visclosky, Fortenberry, Fleischmann, and Banks in their efforts to reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism. The eradication of cesium blood irradiators has no effect on the quality of medical care in the United States, while alternative technology presents no nuclear security risk. The amendment also supports U.S. commitments made during the Nuclear Security Summit process, during which the U.S. pledged to replace 34 irradiators. While this work is complete, **the complete removal of cesium blood irradiators strengthens the position of the United States as an international leader in nuclear security efforts.**

The amendment increases continued U.S. radiological and nuclear security efforts while upgrading U.S. medical technology used in hospitals, blood banks, and universities across the country.

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The [Fissile Materials Working Group \(FMWG\)](#) is a coalition of 80 civil society organizations from around the world working to provide actionable policy solutions to keep the world safe from nuclear terrorism. For more information, visit <https://armscontrolcenter.org/fmwg/>