



EBTC INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Terrorists could easily carry nuclear materials for a dirty bomb from Canada into the United States; the U.S. Congress was told yesterday, sparking demands for much greater border security.

"With the exception of the U.S., there are more international terrorist organizations active in Canada than anywhere else in the world," Senator Ken Salazar, a Colorado Democrat, said after hearing how government investigators clandestinely carried red bags into the United States from Canada.

"I think about this grave vulnerability we have in the north. It seems to me we have this huge chasm," he said.

On at least three occasions in widely separately locations, agents from the U.S. Government Accountability Office walked from Canada into the United States in broad daylight carrying heavy bags.

In one instance, the crossing was so suspicious that nearby residents telephoned the U.S. border patrol and provided details about the rental car the agents used. But the border agents failed to find the car.

"In these locations, the proximity of the road to the border allowed investigators to cross without being challenged by law enforcement, successfully simulating the cross-border movement of radioactive materials or other contraband into the United States from Canada," the GAO report said.

Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day said the senators are uninformed.

Canada has an aggressive anti-terrorism program, he said in Edmonton, adding that although no country is immune, Canada is safer than it was 1 1/2 years ago.

Mr. Day said Canada has put \$431-million toward improving infrastructure at border points and \$19.5-million to expanding integrated border teams. He also said 21,000 people were stopped from illegally crossing the border last year.

Greg Kutz, the GAO's lead investigator, told a Senate finance committee hearing that the border is porous in both directions.

"We could have gone to the United States into Canada undetected," he said. "But we were trying to go from Canada to the United States. We were focused on the American perspective."

There are "substantial vulnerabilities in the northern border to terrorists or criminals entering the United States undetected," Mr. Kutz said.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper said yesterday that Canada is concerned about the report.

"These particular materials were admitted through American security on the American side of the border. But look, obviously, we have to be concerned," he said. "We work hand in glove with American authorities, dealing with any kind of threats or potential threats."

Mr. Salazar said there's been far too much focus on the border with Mexico and not enough on the Canadian line, calling it "a huge disparity." He noted there are only 1,000 border patrol agents in the north compared with nearly 12,000 at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Ronald Colburn, national deputy chief of the U.S. border patrol, said the ease with which would-be terrorists could carry explosives or other weapons across the largely unguarded border into the United States is well known.

He said a major effort is under way to transform what used to be proudly touted in both countries as the world's longest undefended border.

"We are bringing manpower. We are bringing ... unmanned aerial vehicles. We are bringing aircraft. We are bringing boats, and we are bringing more manpower and sensing systems," he said.