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One Hundred Eighth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Select Committee on Homeland Security
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October 13, 2004

The Honorable Tom Ridge
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge:

At the request of Rep. John Dingell and I, the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General has been conducting an investigation for the last ten months into the circumstances surrounding an ABC News report that in September, 2003, it successfully shipped depleted uranium into the United States in a cargo container from Jakarta, Indonesia. According to ABC News, the shipment of depleted uranium had the same signature as a shipment of the more dangerous highly-enriched uranium that is used in nuclear weapons. ABC News previously reported that it successfully smuggled depleted uranium into the country in September 2002.

The Inspector General recently completed his report on the investigation and a declassified version of the report is being made public tomorrow.

The report raises a number of troubling issues concerning the Administration's ability to detect and prevent nuclear material from entering the United States. As you know, the Department screens only about 5 percent of all cargo containers for nuclear and radiological materials. The Inspector General's report casts doubt, however, on the effectiveness of the inspections the Department conducts on even this small fraction of the containers coming into the United States.

More worrisome still, the Inspector General reports that he is not satisfied with the Department's implementation of the key recommendation for correcting the identified deficiencies in inspections. In light of the fact that this report deals with the grave threat

of a nuclear attack, and the Department has cited the interest of al-Qaeda in such an attack, the report requires immediate action by the Department.

I hope that you will fully implement the report's recommendations, and take other necessary steps to remedy the flaws in our cargo container inspection system that the report reveals. I will be requesting another briefing from the Inspector General next month to review the Department's progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Turner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Turner
Ranking Member