

RADIOACTIVE DHS

There is not one but two articles in the WaPo today suggesting DHS' massive corruption is impeding its efforts to get protective scanners in place at our ports and border. The first article explains that implementation of the big radiation detectors designated for the borders will be delayed, again.

For more than a year, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and others have told Congress that the costly next-generation machines would sharply improve the screening of trucks, cars and cargo containers for radiological material. In announcing contracts in July 2006 to buy as many as 1,400 of the devices, Chertoff said they were ready to be deployed in the field for research. He recently called their acquisition a "vital priority."

But in the face of growing questions by government auditors, Congress and border officials about the machines' performance, Chertoff has decided that they don't operate well enough and need more work. It could be another year before they are ready, officials said.

More intriguingly, it suggests Chertoff's DHS may be meddling with the data surrounding the machines to try to get them approved for use.

In a Nov. 16 letter to Congress, the director of the DNDI said his staff members were looking into allegations that someone there directed personnel from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, who were helping analyze recent results of testing of the machines, to delete some of the data.

"We have also issued a preservation notice to all personnel who have worked on the ASP program directing them to

preserve all documents, e-mail, and memoranda relating to the ASP program," Vayl Oxford, director of the nuclear detection office, wrote to Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.), chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has been examining the program.

Because if you're paying \$1.2 billion for a radiation detectors, you're apparently not paying for a guarantee they'll work, and you've got to fudge with the data to make it look right.

A second article reveals that DHS awarded a contract worth nearly half a billion dollars to a firm incorrectly identified as a small disadvantaged firm. Then, DHS failed to exercise the proper oversight over the firm.

The Department of Homeland Security improperly awarded a half-billion-dollar, no-bid contract in 2003 to a little-known company to maintain thousands of X-ray, radiation and other screening machines at U.S. border checkpoints, incorrectly designating the firm a disadvantaged small business, according to a report by the department's inspector general.

The annual revenue of Chenega Technology Services, a firm owned by Alaska Natives and based in Fairfax County, was too high to qualify for the nine-year, \$475 million contract, the report said. After the contract was awarded, the department's U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency also failed to ensure that Chenega did not pass most of the work to large federal subcontractors, and the company failed for four years—until last month—to deliver a management system that would achieve savings to justify its middleman role.

While the article doesn't say so directly, it strongly suggests that such a corrupt boondoggle—in the name of Alaskan Natives—has the distinct odor of Ted Stevens. Who refused to comment for the article.

I'm hoping to come back to this. But I do believe it's time to start adding up all the corrupt deals running through DHS. Not least, because we know a bunch of ex-Bushies have gone on to lobby in the Homeland Security industry.

An analysis of what ex-Bushies do when they go into lobbying, conducted for Politico by the Center for Responsive Politics, found that while their clients generally track with those of the lobbying community as a whole, there are some anomalies.

Three industries stand out as especially popular: homeland security, alternative energy and beer.

The first two are easily explained.

The Department of Homeland Security is a new agency with a massive budget to disburse, so insider knowledge trades at a premium;

Makes you wonder how much of this is laundry and how much a legitimate effort to protect our nation's borders?