

ANOTHER BREACH OF CONTRACTOR- PROTECTED CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In my never-ending campaign to document all the ways the private sector is a bigger risk to our critical infrastructure than terrorists, hackers, political activists, or average citizens, take a look at the job Raytheon's \$100 million security system for JFK Airport has done.

Daniel Casillo, 31, was able to swim up to and enter the airport grounds on Friday night, past an intricate system of motion sensors and closed-circuit cameras designed to safeguard against terrorists, authorities said.

[snip]

"We have called for an expedited review of the incident and a complete investigation to determine how Raytheon's perimeter intrusion detection system-which exceeds federal requirements-could be improved. Our goal is to keep the region's airports safe and secure at all times," the Port Authority said in a statement.

This comes just weeks after an 82 year old peace activist was able to breach the security provided by failed Olympic security contractor G4S. In response to that failure, POGO is calling out Energy Secretary Steven Chu for his history of outsourcing to poorly-overseen contractors.

Energy Secretary Steven Chu said in a statement provided to the Knoxville News Sentinel on Monday: "The department has no tolerance for security breaches at

any of our sites, and I am committed to ensure that those responsible will be held accountable." But there is no denying that Y-12 [the actual part of Oak Ridge breached] was a giant failure of federal oversight. Now the people being axed are lower-level employees rather than those who have allowed the security standards to fall far below acceptable levels, such as Secretary Chu, himself.

Secretary Chu should be the first on the chopping block. He has been preaching for years that government overseers should get off the back of the contractors and everything will be fine. Then, of course, he is shocked when Y-12 is successfully attacked by an 82-year-old nun.

After only one year in the position, Secretary Chu's deputy secretary, Daniel B Poneman, sent a memorandum (PDF) to the department with a safety and security reform plan aimed at curtailing pesky government oversight. "Contractors are provided the flexibility to tailor and implement safety programs in light of their situation without excessive Federal oversight or overly prescriptive Departmental requirements," the memo said.

It should be clear by now that the current culture at DOE and its semiautonomous National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is to take their orders from contractors and provide little or no oversight. As the previous head of contractor-operated laboratory, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Secretary Chu made clear his disdain for federal oversight, DOE insiders told the Project ON Government Oversight (POGO). In fact, he's been successful in creating a culture of federal hands off

the contractors in the weapons complex.

Now, maybe it's the case that it's just too hard to protect these sites from 82 year old nuns and jet skiers wearing bright yellow life-jackets. Maybe it's the case that there's no such thing as perfect security (though you wouldn't know it from the security theater that we all have to pass through to board a plane).

But it sure seems like private contractors are proving inadequate to the task of securing some of our most obvious security targets.