

January 8, 2010

Obama's Statement Follows Luján's Letter to Napolitano Urging Use of LANL Screening Technology

Washington, DC – Today, President Barack Obama called on the Department of Homeland Security to work “aggressively, in cooperation with the Department of Energy and our National Labs, to develop and deploy the next generation of screening technology.” Earlier this week Rep. Luján sent a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, urging the Department to consider expanding the use of MagViz technology at airports throughout the United States. MagViz—a new technology that has been developed by the scientists at Los Alamos National Laboratory—is a scanning machine that adapts Magnetic Resonance Imaging techniques to identify concealed liquids. As items are screened through MagViz, the machine is able to identify dangerous or suspicious liquids based upon their unique chemical fingerprints.

“I applaud President Obama’s directive to the Department of Homeland Security to work with our National Labs on screening technology,” said Rep. Luján. “Our National Labs are home to some of our nation’s best scientists and most cutting edge technology. As we look to solve the most pressing problems facing our nation, including security at our airports, we should look to our National Labs.”

President Obama made the directive in his [speech](#) yesterday on strengthening intelligence and aviation security.

“As I announced this week, we've taken a whole range of steps to improve aviation screening and security since Christmas, including new rules for how we handle visas within the government and enhanced screening for passengers flying from, or through, certain countries,” said President Obama. “And today, I'm directing that the Department of Homeland Security take additional steps, including: strengthening our international partnerships to improve aviation screening and security around the world; greater use of the advanced explosive detection technologies that we already have, including imaging technology; and working aggressively, in cooperation with the Department of Energy and our National Labs, to develop and deploy the

next generation of screening technologies. (Emphasis added) Now, there is, of course, no foolproof solution. As we develop new screening technologies and procedures, our adversaries will seek new ways to evade them, as was shown by the Christmas attack. In the never-ending race to protect our country, we have to stay one step ahead of a nimble adversary. That's what these steps are designed to do. And we will continue to work with Congress to ensure that our intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement communities have the resources they need to keep the American people safe."

Rep. Luján has advocated for expanded use of MagViz in the past. On February 25, 2009, Rep. Luján encouraged Secretary Napolitano to consider broader use of MagViz technology when she testified before the House Committee on Homeland Security.

FULL TEXT OF REP. LUJAN'S LETTER TO SECRETARY NAPOLITANO BELOW:

January 5, 2010

Hon. Janet Napolitano

Secretary of Homeland Security

Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

The failed Christmas Day attack on Northwest Airlines Flight 253 in Detroit demonstrates the need for constant vigilance in confronting the evolving nature of the threats to air travel security. As we work to address the vulnerabilities this plot has exposed, we must institute systems and technologies that would prevent the specific security breaches on Flight 253 while having the vision and flexibility to deter future threats. An overarching objective of these applications is to get the traveling public through security in a rapid manner.

On February 25, 2009, when you appeared before the House Homeland Security Committee, you may recall that I mentioned the MagViz system to you. MagViz—a new technology that has been developed by the scientists at Los Alamos National Laboratory—is a scanning machine that adapts Magnetic Resonance Imaging techniques to identify concealed liquids. As items are screened through MagViz, the machine is able to identify dangerous or suspicious liquids based upon their unique chemical fingerprints. Additionally, as new substances and threats are uncovered, the devices can be updated to detect them. This technology, which has undergone a trial run at the Albuquerque Sunport, could be ready for implementation at additional airports in the near term once a commercialization partner has been identified.

The technology of the MagViz system represents a clear improvement over our current magnetometer-dependant security scans that can detect only a very limited number of metal objects. As we reform our airport security procedures, it is imperative that we implement new technologies that are capable of detecting new threats and deterring future attacks. I urge you to invest in additional research and consider fast-tracking the implementation of the MagViz program.

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Ray Luján

Member of Congress