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December 9, 2009

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CARDIN CALLS FOR ENHANCED COORDINATION AGAINST CYBERATTACKS AND BIOTERRORISM

Washington, DC – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), chairman of the Judiciary Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee**, today expressed his concerns to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano about the level of coordination among agencies responsible for protecting Americans from the threats of cyber-attacks and bioterrorism. Secretary Napolitano testified today before the full Senate Judiciary Committee.

“The threats to our country are very real and very sobering. We know there are individuals and countries who are actively trying to compromise our security through cyberspace, as well as with biological weapons. The government’s priority is to protect its citizens against threats of violence and/or disruption to our infrastructure, but there are many layers in many agencies and departments who hold some responsibility. I continue to encourage the designation of a single lead official to coordinate our government-wide response to these threats, particularly cybersecurity,” said Senator Cardin.

“Make no mistake -- I think every agency is taking these issues very serious and they are working very hard, but we have to make sure their efforts are coordinated and consistent with our laws. If the laws need to be changed we should review the options. The rapidly changing nature of technology and the deadly biological agents also heightens the government’s responsibility to regularly review whether our laws and structures are adequate to counter the oncoming attacks and whether they are adequate to minimize the invasion of privacy and protect civil liberties.”

In September, Senator Cardin chaired a hearing of the Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee that examined the executive branch’s current efforts to strengthen and improve biosecurity and biosafety at laboratories. A hearing to review governmental and private sector efforts to prevent a terrorist cyber-attack was held in mid-November.

Simultaneous with Secretary Napolitano’s testimony, President Obama released his *National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats*. This Strategy outlines the “President’s vision for addressing the challenges from proliferation of biological weapons or their use by terrorists.”

“I applaud the President for understanding the need to address the looming threat of bioterrorism. I look forward to reviewing his proposal but was encouraged to see that he included as a key priority ensuring that ‘the United States Government is advancing cogent, coherent, and coordinated messages,’” said Senator Cardin.

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