June 13, 2000

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate met at 10 a.m., the Hon. Bill Frist, Majority Leader, presiding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is now in morning business.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, America awakened in the last 24 hours to another very distressing disclosure of an alleged breach of security practices at the Los Alamos Laboratory, again relating what is the greatest threat every hour, every minute of the day to this Nation; that is, from nuclear weapons. We are not here to prejudice any facts at the moment.

From the standing rules of the Senate, rule XXV, I read:

The Committee on the Armed Services has jurisdiction over national security aspects of nuclear energy.

Clearly, this problem falls within our domain. As chairman, in consultation with the ranking member, we will move very swiftly. We will establish a hearing date as soon as we can to develop those facts that can be publicly disclosed and such facts as must remain classified. The Armed Services Committee has dealt with this issue for over a year. In the authorization last year, we had a hard fought debate on this floor about establishing a new entity within the Department of Energy. Indeed, we did it. It was signed into law, and it is ready to go.

Our committee also has jurisdiction over the nominee to head this new entity. I refer the Senate to item 1010 in Nominations, Gen. John H. Gordon, United States Air Force, to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security, Department of Energy. That was May 24.

I am writing a letter to the majority leader today and, indeed, to the distinguished Democratic leader, asking that the nomination be brought up immediately. There are allegations that certain Senators think that the law was passed last year has to be changed. That is a matter that can be brought up before the Senate at any time. But I do not think this Nation should sit 1 minute, 1 hour, 1 day longer on the nomination of this outstanding American, who has impeccable credentials, to take over this whole problem of security, and I am waiting to do so. Let us act on this nomination. I am certain the distinguished majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, will move to see that this is done at the earliest opportunity. I hope it is done today.

I will advise the Senate later today with regard to the hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

This is a matter of serious concern. At the hearing, we intend to call Secretaries Richardson, General Habiger, who is the Chief of Security Operations, and Mr. Ed Curran, Chief of Counterintelligence. It may or may not be a counterintelligence matter. We don't want to prejudice the facts. But action is needed by the Senate on the nomination, and then to look into this situation. There is nothing that poses a greater threat to the United States of America, indeed, to our allies, than that from nuclear weapons. It is ironic. This particular alleged security breach is basically in the same location of the previous incident involving Wen Ho Lee, as I understand it, probably the same floor, same corridor. We have testimony in the record, which I will add to the record, of the Secretary of Energy, who has appeared repeatedly before the committees of the Congress. This incident is clearly on Secretary Richardson's watch; let there be no mistake about that. He has repeatedly advised the Congress that he has put in place such regulations and other measures as to protect the United States, protect this Department from such alleged security breaches it faces this morning.

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CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 4576, the Armed Services Appropriations Act, 2001.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4576) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.

Pending: Boxer/Reid amendment No. 3308, to prohibit the use of funds for the preventative application of dangerous pesticides in areas