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JOHN H. GIBBONS

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Congress of the United States

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-8025

September 12, 1989

To: Technology Assessment Board
From: John H. Gibbons *JH Gibbons*
RE: Proposed Assessment of the Use of Technology in
Countering Terrorism

Last June, OTA met informally with the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs to discuss recent acts of terrorism against U.S. representatives, citizens, and property. In the course of the discussion, the question was raised as to the current status of research and development into technologies that might be useful in preventing or defending against terrorist attacks. Subsequently, on June 22, Senators Glenn and Roth, the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee, sent OTA a letter of request, asking for a study that would "identify and assess those technologies that could provide the Nation with tools in the fight against terrorism." The letter expressed particular interest in the status of work in explosives detectors, incapacitating agents, access and perimeter control, and data exchange on terrorist activities. An unclassified report with a substantial classified annex was requested.

Also in June, discussions were held between OTA and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Interest was expressed, on the part of the Subcommittee in the possibility of using America's technological capabilities to advantage in helping defend its citizens and interests against acts of terror. On July 6, a letter was received from Senator Kerry and Senator McConnell, the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, respectively, of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations, also requesting a study that would provide a comprehensive review of anti-terrorist technologies.

In July, OTA discussed the question of airport security with the Subcommittee on Aviation of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Following this, on August 3, an overlapping request was sent OTA by the Chairmen and Ranking Minority Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and of that Committee's Subcommittee on Aviation. This request was limited to the issue of technology and airport security.

*SL on adv. panel - help liaise
see Drew Fahrenwaldt.
From existence of TOWG - p. 7 was classified*

All three requests asked OTA to investigate whether federal efforts at research in these areas are sufficiently coordinated and focused and to identify areas in which increased resources might bring positive results in the short term.

OTA has also discussed the proposed assessment with the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and a request letter is also anticipated from this source.