Quotes on Chemical Plant Vulnerability to Terrorism

“Of all the various remaining civilian vulnerabilities in America today, one stands alone as uniquely deadly, pervasive and susceptible to terrorist attack: toxic-inhalation-hazard industrial chemicals...To date the federal government has made no material reduction in the inherent vulnerability of hazardous chemical targets inside the United States.” --- Richard Falkenrath, former Deputy Homeland Security Adviser to President Bush before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, April and January 2005

“PBS: Are we getting this right? That these plants in your mind are a vulnerability for America? CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN: Absolutely...People need to know that they’ve taken -- so they may well have taken steps. They may have done a vulnerability study. They may have hardened their targets. But they may not have. And that’s not something you really wanna fool around with. --- NOW PBS July 15, 2005

“Clarke criticized the administration and the Republican-controlled Congress for not giving priority to pushing through legislation yet. ‘Congress has diddled for three years on a Chemical Security Act,’ he said. --- National Security Advisor to the President, Richard Clarke UPI August 31, 2005

“Congress should reconsider Senator Corzine’s proposed provision to end the use of some especially deadly chemicals at plants near high population areas.” Stephen Flynn, Senior Fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations from, America the Vulnerable; How Our Government is Failing to Protect Us from Terrorism, 2004

“You’ve heard about sarin and other chemical weapons in the news. But it’s far easier to attack a rail car full of toxic industrial chemicals than it is to compromise the security of a military base and obtain these materials,” -- Troy Morgan FBI Agent and expert on weapons of mass destruction, June, 2003.

“terrorist attacks in an urban environment can put 100,000 people or more at risk in a 15 to 30-minute time span...lethally exposed people can die at the rate of 100 per second,” referring to a chemical tank car disaster scenario in Washington, DC -- Dr. Jay Boris, Naval Research Laboratory, October, 2003.

“HouseEnergy and Commerce Committee Chairman Barton said that although he’s monitoring the situation, he sees no need for tough new chemical security requirements, ‘The problem you have in an open society is that it’s physically impossible to make any large industrial site terrorist-proof,’” Barton said in an interview. “If there are enough terrorists who are dedicated enough and equipped well enough, they’re going to overwhelm everything that you put up short of some sort of Fort Knox -- which doesn’t make much sense, given the cost and the relatively remote possibility that any specific site is going to be targeted.” --- National Journal, August 2, 2003

“You know, the threat is just staring us in the face. I mean, all you’d have to do is to have a major chemical facility in a major metropolitan area go up and there’d be hell to pay politically,” says Rudman. “People will say, ‘Well, didn’t we know that this existed?’ Of course, we knew.”
“As hard as it is to believe, the chemical industry has refused to take adequate precautions to safeguard its facilities and surrounding communities. Some plants have strengthened on-site security by adding guards, building fences or installing surveillance cameras. Others have committed to reducing or phasing out their use of highly hazardous processes or chemicals in favor of safer ones. Unfortunately, however, it is still business as usual at most plants. They continue to deal with high volumes of dangerous chemicals -- even when safer materials or processes are readily available. That is why the government must require industry cooperation in homeland security.” --- Former Senator Gary Hart (D-CO) Washington Post op ed August 11, 2003

“According to a 1999 study by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), security at chemical plants in two communities was fair to poor.” -- General Accounting Office (GAO-03-439), March 2003

“A previously undisclosed study by the Army surgeon general concludes that as many as 2.4 million people could be killed or injured in a terrorist attack against a US. toxic chemical plant in a densely populated area.” -- The Washington Post, March 12, 2002

“US. chemical plants represent the third highest risk of fatalities from possible terrorist attacks.” -- Protecting the American Homeland, Brookings Institution Press, March 2002

“The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review found in recent investigations that a reporter could easily enter more than 60 plants storing catastrophic amounts of chemicals in Baltimore, Chicago, Houston and western Pennsylvania.” -- The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, June 11, 2002

“There is no chemical regulatory commission that looks at the petrochemical plants and has requirements for security that are inspected by chemical regulatory agency staff, and there are no on-force exercises, and none of the apparatus that we have in place is in place for much of the rest of the infrastructure. It is quite clear that you can get catastrophic consequences in industries other than the nuclear industry. . . ” -- Edward McGaffigan (Commissioner), U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, November 2001

“No one needed to convince us that we could be-and indeed would be-a target at some future date,” said Frederick L. Webber, president of the American Chemistry Council, an industry group representing 180 major companies including Dupont, Dow, and BP Chemical.” -- The Washington Post, November 12, 2001

“...releases of toxic chemicals can kill and injure people located relatively far from the accident...As a result, failure to identify and evaluate opportunities to reduce the risks from these types of relatively rare accidents could ultimately lead to thousands of fatalities, injuries, and evacuations.” -- Argonne National Laboratory, December 2000