

Scope of the Study

This study will focus on improvised and commercial explosives rather than military or plastic explosives that are the subject of Title VI of the Terrorism Prevention Act. Also, black and smokeless powder are excluded from the scope of this study.⁶ This interim report does not include any of the committee's conclusions or recommendations, which will be presented in the final report to be published in February 1998.

Approach to Conducting the Study

The Committee on Marking, Rendering Inert, and Licensing of Explosive Materials was appointed by the National Research Council under the management of the Board on Chemical Sciences and Technology, in collaboration with the National Materials Advisory Board. Four panels, each comprising half of the membership of the full committee, were assigned to address each of the four major tasks (see above bulleted items) in parallel.

The full committee has held three meetings for information gathering purposes, focused primarily on the first two tasks of its charge: detection and identification of taggants. Taggant vendors, stakeholders, and outside experts were invited to brief the committee.

As the study continues, additional experts, including government and industry representatives as well as individuals from the various stakeholder organizations that are concerned with issues of the study, will be asked to meet with the committee. Technical briefings will also be solicited from representatives of international government and private-sector organizations with relevant expertise. Several committee or subcommittee meetings will involve site visits to allow the committee members to gather information about specific technological problems, manufacturing technologies, or proposed technical solutions to some of the issues being studied. One or more of the site visits may involve international travel so that committee members can evaluate strategies that have been adopted by other countries.

⁶ As mentioned above, the ATF has requested that the National Research Council form a separate panel to study the feasibility and practicability of tagging smokeless and black powder for purposes of detection and identification.