

Safety discussed in wake of intercepted parcel bombs addressed to local Jewish sites

CHICAGO, IL (November 8, 2010) – Today Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence and Chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, convened a security briefing with the Jewish community, co-chaired by the Jewish United Fund and the Anti-Defamation League. Participating were Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL), the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Chicago Police Department, the Illinois State Police and the Postal Inspection Service. Safety concerns were discussed along with protective security measures and recommended best practices for securing Jewish facilities and an update on the investigation into the intercepted parcel bombs sent from Yemen and addressed to Chicago Jewish institutions.

Today Schakowsky and Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. [sent a letter](#) to the Chairs of the Committee on Homeland Security and its Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection requesting public hearings on the explosive devices addressed to Chicago Jewish sites originating from Yemen.

Partial remarks from speakers at tonight's security briefing are below.

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky:

"We were all shocked to learn that Chicago area Jewish institutions may have been the targets of terrorists. I can assure you that I will use my position as Chair of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee to remain on top of this situation and to protect the Jewish community and all our communities.

"We all must remain absolutely vigilant. Coordinated efforts and strengthened security are two important components in keeping the Jewish community safe. Secure Community Network serves as a central location for the Jewish community concerning matters of communal safety, security, and all-hazards preparedness and response. Additionally, a number of nonprofits at risk of terrorist attacks in my district received grants through the Department of Homeland Security's Urban Area Security Initiative to support security enhancements and my office supported their applications. This is an important program and I will work to ensure that this program is fully funded for FY 2011."

Bill Flynn, Department of Homeland Security Deputy Assistant Secretary:

“As part of our ongoing, regular stakeholder outreach, DHS has coordinated closely with faith-based and community groups—including the Jewish community in Chicago and across the country—to provide the latest information on the recent Yemen terror plot, answer questions, and share security best practices. This type of engagement is a critical part of the Department’s mission to get tools and resources out of Washington, D.C., and into our communities. As always, we encourage our partners to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to local law enforcement authorities.”

Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation:

"The attempted bombing plot discovered last month, which prompted the community forum being held tonight, continues to be aggressively investigated both here and abroad. Given the many international borders over which the plot unfolded, the concerted effort of law enforcement and intelligence agencies from many countries will be required to identify and bring to justice those involved. This plot should remind everyone that we are still threatened by a determined adversary and we need to remain observant for persons and situations which are unusual or suspicious."

Jay Tcath, Senior Vice President of Jewish United Fund:

“Assisting Jewish communal facilities – synagogues, community centers, schools and agency buildings – is a JUF priority. We are proud to partner with our friend, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, to bring as much security information to our communal institutions as possible. From helping groups secure DHS capital grants to convening security seminars like tonight, we are anxious to help make our community more secure while maintaining the same warm, welcoming environment that is the hallmark of our institutions. And we of course stand ready, after this seminar is over and after the headlines have moved on to other issues, to help. Please call us at 312-346-6700 or visit us at www.juf.org.”

Lonnie Nasatir, Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League of Chicagoland/ Upper Midwest Region:

“We thank the Congresswoman for her leadership in supporting this important security briefing. Having the heads of key law enforcement entities present was vital; their presence sends a strong message of support to our community that we have partners who are committed to our safety. I recommend the community visit our website (www.adl.org), which has a great security section that has helpful tips and a thorough, downloadable manual entitled, “Protecting your Jewish institutions.”

Bruce Rottner, Deputy Chief, Bureau of Patrol Area 3, Chicago Police Department:

“Protecting the Jewish community is something that the Chicago Police Department has taken very seriously for a long time, including a stepped up police presence on the High Holidays and putting a Shabbos car on patrol from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday when observant Jews don’t place phone calls. People need to understand that they’re never bothering the police and that the most insignificant seeming thing could be helpful to us.”

Cindy Blank, Postal Inspector, Chicago Division Security Team:

“Tip-offs that a package or piece of mail is suspicious include: excessive postage; strange return address or no return address; marked with “Personal,” “Confidential” or “Do not x-ray;” or a powdery substance felt through the package, oily stains or odor. If a suspicious package or envelope arrives at your home or workplace, the best course of action is to get people away from potential danger. Isolate the package by leaving it in a room, for example, and don’t handle the package. Call 9-1-1 immediately. You can follow up with a call to the Postal Inspection Service at 877-876-2455.”