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Colorado Springs Testing Radiation Monitors

(AP) COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. Monitors designed to detect and help track down radiation sources such as "dirty bombs" will be installed on traffic-light poles in an early test of a homeland security system.

The devices, made by Mobile Detect Inc. of Toronto, will transmit radiation levels to the city's traffic control center. High radiation levels will trigger cameras to start filming in an attempt to find clues to the source.

"I think this could change the way we do homeland security," said John Merrick, the city's lead traffic engineer.

The city is paying for the \$48,000 trial, which will include four detectors. If they are deemed a success, Merrick said, he will propose expanding the network to cover 100 intersections for an estimated \$2.5 million.

Merrick said he would ask the federal Department of Homeland Security to pay if the system is expanded.

The federal government allocated about \$7 billion for high-tech defenses against potential terrorist attacks with biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. The Department of Homeland Security got \$1 billion for research, and one of its long-term goals is a national sensor system to monitor the air for hazards.

That concept is a long way off, but Merrick wanted the city to determine whether his idea could work locally.

Merrick said Colorado Springs' five military bases could be terrorist targets, especially the U.S. Northern Command, the nation's homeland defense nerve center, at Peterson Air Force Base.

Mobile Detect's devices are being installed at Ottawa International Airport and in vehicles used by the Canadian National Police Force, said company president Chris Clarke.

The company is a year old.

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