

**Written Statement**

**of**

**Shawn Reese**

**Analyst in Emergency Management and Homeland Security Policy**

**Before**

**The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee**

**March 21, 2013**

**“The Department of Homeland Security at 10 Years: A Progress Report on  
Management”**

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Coburn, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the Congressional Research Service I would like to thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) at its tenth anniversary.

Today I will discuss the implications of the absence of a federal government-wide national homeland security strategy, the use of multiple definitions of homeland security in national strategic documents, the lack of comprehensive national homeland security priorities, and the funding of these priorities. Specifically, my statement will address how the absence of clear definition and concept of homeland security affects DHS' ability to prioritize and manage the department's missions. This written statement is drawn largely from my CRS report *Defining Homeland Security: Analysis and Congressional Considerations*.

Accordingly, my statement summarizes key portions of this report, and addresses key findings which include the absence of an agreed upon comprehensive definition and concept of homeland security. This absence, then affects how DHS, and the federal government, prioritize homeland security missions. My statement concludes with an analysis of the potential consequences stemming from the lack of a consensus homeland security definition and concept, the absence of homeland security priorities, and how this may affect the funding and execution of critical homeland security activities.

## **Current Homeland Security Environment**

Congress and policymakers are responsible for funding homeland security priorities. Generally, these priorities need to exist and be clear in order for funding to be most effective. Presently, as DHS itself has stated,<sup>1</sup> the department does not prioritize its homeland security missions across DHS mission areas. Many argue, in an ideal scenario, there would be a clear and comprehensive definition and concept of homeland security, and a consensus about it; as well as prioritized missions, goals, and activities that emit from this comprehensive definition. Policymakers could then use a process to incorporate feedback and respond to new facts and situations as they develop. However, more than ten years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, policymakers continue to grapple with a comprehensive definition and concept of homeland security. For example, the U.S. government does not have a single definition for "homeland security." Currently, different strategic documents and mission statements offer varying missions that are derived from different homeland security definitions. Of course, over time it is expected that definitions and concepts change and evolve in response to changing conditions. The question is what is the comprehensive definition of homeland security today. This is more than an issue of what words describe "homeland security," it is instead an issue of how policymakers understand what homeland security is and how it is accomplished.

---

<sup>1</sup> Alan Cohn, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Policy, statement before the House Homeland Security Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management, "Is DHS Effectively Implementing a Strategy to Counter Emerging Threats?" hearing, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., Feb. 3, 2012.

Historically, the strategic documents framing national homeland security policy have included national strategies produced by the White House and documents developed by DHS. Prior to the 2010 *National Security Strategy*, the 2002 and 2007 *National Strategies for Homeland Security* were the guiding documents produced by the White House. In 2011, the White House issued the *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*.

In conjunction with these White House strategies, DHS has developed a series of evolving strategic documents that are based on the two national homeland security strategies and include the 2008 *Strategic Plan—One Team, One Mission, Securing the Homeland*; the 2010 *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* and *Bottom-Up Review*; and the 2012 *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan*. The 2012 DHS strategic plan is the latest evolution in DHS's process of defining its mission, goals, and responsibilities. This plan, however, only addresses the department's homeland security purview and is not a document that addresses homeland security missions and responsibilities that are shared across the federal government.

Today, 30 federal entities receive annual homeland security funding excluding DHS. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) estimates that 48% of annual homeland security funding is appropriated to these federal entities, with the Department of Defense (DOD) receiving approximately 26% of total federal homeland security funding. DHS receives approximately 52%.<sup>2</sup>

Currently, DHS is developing the 2014 *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR)*, which is scheduled to be issued in late 2013 or early 2014. Given the anticipated issuance of this latest QHSR, this might be an ideal time to review the concept of homeland security, the definition of the term "homeland security," and how the concept and definition of homeland security affect congressional appropriations and the identification of priorities as established by DHS and the Administration.

## **Evolution of the Homeland Security Concept**

The concept of homeland security is evolving. The evolution of the homeland security concept has been communicated in several strategic documents. Today, strategic documents provide guidance to all involved federal entities and include the 2010 *National Security Strategy* and the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*. There are also strategic documents that provide specific guidance to DHS entities and include the 2010 *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review*, the *Bottom-Up Review*, and the 2012 *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan*. Prior to issuance of these documents, national and DHS homeland security strategic documents included the 2002 and 2007 *National Strategies for Homeland Security* and the 2008 *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan*. All of these documents have varying definitions for "homeland security" and varying missions have been derived from these definitions.

---

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2013: Analytical Perspectives, February 2012*, "Appendix – Homeland Security Mission Funding by Agency and Budget Account," [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2013/assets/homeland\\_supp.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2013/assets/homeland_supp.pdf).

While the definitions and missions embodied in these strategic documents have commonalities, there are significant differences. Natural disasters are specifically identified as an integral part of homeland security in five of the seven documents, and three documents—the 2008 and 2012 DHS *Strategic Plans* and the *Bottom-Up Review*—specifically include border and maritime security and immigration in their homeland security definitions. All of these mentioned issues are important and involve significant funding requests. However, the lack of consensus about the inclusion of these policy areas in a definition of homeland security may have negative or unproductive consequences for national homeland security operations. The inclusion or exclusion of a particular mission in the homeland security concept does not mean that the mission is not being funded or perhaps even being funded adequately. It means that it is more difficult for policymakers to prioritize across mission areas and answer the question of what future homeland security appropriations ought to fund. A consensus definition could be useful, but may not be sufficient. A clear prioritization of strategic missions may help focus and direct federal entities' homeland security activities. Additionally, prioritization affects Congress's authorization, appropriation, and oversight activities. Ultimately, DHS' current efforts to design and issue the forthcoming QHSR may be important in the debate on a comprehensive homeland security strategy.

The continued absence of distinct national homeland security priorities may be the result of competing or differing definitions of homeland security within national strategic documents and the evolving concept of homeland security. However, prior to 9/11 such entities as the Gilmore Commission<sup>3</sup> and the United States Commission on National Security<sup>4</sup> discussed the need to evolve the way national security policy was conceptualized due to the end of the Cold War and the rise of radicalized terrorism. After 9/11, policymakers concluded that a new approach was needed to address the large-scale terrorist attacks. A presidential council and department were established, and a series of presidential directives were issued in the name of "homeland security." These developments established that homeland security was a distinct, but undefined concept.<sup>5</sup> Later, the federal, state, and local government responses to disasters such as Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy expanded the concept of homeland security to include significant disasters, major public health emergencies, and other events that threaten the United States, its economy, the rule of law, and government operations.<sup>6</sup>

One may argue, however, that homeland security as concept or policy might be waning as a separate and distinct policy concept. Evidence for this viewpoint can be found in the current Administration's incorporation of the homeland security staff into the national security staff and the inclusion of homeland security priorities within the 2010 *National Security Strategy*. There has not been a national homeland security strategy since 2007. Additionally, the Office of

---

<sup>3</sup> For information on the Gilmore Commission, see <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/terrpanel.html>. The Gilmore Commission was established prior to 9/11; however, it released its fifth and final report in December 2003.

<sup>4</sup> For information on the U.S. Commission on National Security, see <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/nssg.pdf>. The U.S. Commission on National Security was established in 1998 and issued its final report in February 2001. The commission did reference the idea of "homeland security" in early 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Harold C. Relyea, "Homeland Security and Information," *Government Information Quarterly*, vol. 19, 2002, p. 219.

<sup>6</sup> Nadav Morag, "Does Homeland Security Exist Outside the United States?," *Homeland Security Affairs*, vol. 7, September 2011, p. 1.

Management and Budget (OMB) has questioned the value of federal departments and agencies identifying homeland security funding with their FY2014 budget request submissions.<sup>7</sup>

## Definitions and Missions<sup>8</sup>

Definitions and missions are part of strategy development. Policymakers develop strategy by identifying national interests, prioritizing missions to achieve those national interests, and arraying instruments of national power to achieve national interests.<sup>9</sup> Strategy is not developed within a vacuum. President Barack Obama's Administration's 2010 *National Security Strategy* states that strategy is meant to recognize "the world as it is" and mold it into "the world we seek."<sup>10</sup> Developing a homeland security strategy, however, may be complicated if the key concept of homeland security is not succinctly defined, and strategic missions are not aligned and synchronized among different strategic documents and federal entities.

Some common themes among homeland security definitions in national strategic documents are:

- the homeland security enterprise encompasses a federal, state, local, and tribal government and private sector approach that requires coordination;
- homeland security can involve securing against and responding to both hazard-specific and all-hazards threats; and
- homeland security activities do not imply total protection or complete threat reduction.

Each of these documents highlights the importance of coordinating homeland security missions and activities. However, individual federal, state, local, and tribal government efforts are not identified in the documents.

The competing and varied definitions in these documents may indicate that there is no succinct and comprehensive homeland security concept. Without a succinct homeland security concept, policymakers and entities with homeland security responsibilities may have a hard time successfully coordinating or focusing on the highest prioritized or most necessary activities. Coordination is especially essential to homeland security because of the multiple federal agencies and the state and local partners with whom they interact. Coordination may be difficult if these entities do not operate with the same understanding of the homeland security concept. For example, definitions that do not specifically include immigration or natural disaster response and recovery may result in homeland security stakeholders and federal entities not adequately resourcing and focusing on these coordinated activities. Again, it is not about whether mission areas are funded or not, it is about how DHS prioritizes the funding across mission areas, and how policymakers choose between DHS priorities and the priorities of other agencies tasked

---

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.performance.gov/sites/default/files/tmp/\\_List\\_of\\_Reports\\_Required\\_by\\_P\\_L%20\\_111-352.xls](http://www.performance.gov/sites/default/files/tmp/_List_of_Reports_Required_by_P_L%20_111-352.xls)

<sup>8</sup> A table summarizing homeland security definitions and missions can be found in CRS report *Defining Homeland Security: Analysis and Congressional Considerations*.

<sup>9</sup> Terry L. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Executive Office of the President, *National Security Strategy*, Washington, DC, May 2010, p. 9.

with homeland security responsibilities. Additionally, an absence of a consensus definition may result in Congress funding a homeland security activity that DHS does not consider a priority. An absence of a national list of priorities could result in DHS being unable to identify where to spend future homeland security dollars.

Varied homeland security definitions, in numerous documents, result in homeland security stakeholders identifying and executing varied strategic missions. Homeland security stakeholders include federal departments and agencies, state and local governments, and non-profit and non-governmental organizations. The strategic documents mentioned earlier and listed in the CRS report identify numerous homeland security missions such as terrorism prevention; response and recovery; critical infrastructure protection and resilience; federal, state, and local emergency management and preparedness; and border security. As noted earlier, none of these documents specifically tasks a federal entity with the overall responsibility for homeland security.

These strategic documents all identify specific missions as essential to securing the nation. All of the documents state that the nation's populace, critical infrastructure, and key resources need protection from terrorism and disasters. This protection from both terrorism and disasters is a key strategic homeland security mission. Some, but not all, of the documents include missions related to border security, immigration, the economy, and general resilience. Members of Congress and congressional committees, however, have sometimes criticized these documents.

Senator Susan Collins—former ranking member of this committee—expressed disappointment in the 2010 *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* and 2010 *Bottom-Up Review* arguing that they did not communicate priorities and did not compare favorably to the most recent *Quadrennial Defense Review*.<sup>11</sup> The *Quadrennial Defense Review* identifies national security and U.S. military priorities through a process “...from objectives to capabilities and activities to resources.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* missions are different from the 2007 *National Strategy for Homeland Security*<sup>13</sup> missions, and neither identifies priorities, or resources, for DHS, or for other federal agencies. Since the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* and the *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* missions are differing and varied, and because the *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* does not specifically identify a strategic process to achieve the missions, it could be assumed that this document was meant to be solely operational guidance. Additionally, some critics found the *Bottom-Up Review* lacking in detail and failing to meet its intended purpose.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Charting a Path Forward: The Homeland Security Department's Quadrennial Review and Bottom-Up Review*, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., July 21, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, Washington, DC, February 2010, p. iii.

<sup>13</sup> The 2007 *National Strategy for Homeland Security* is the most recent national strategy specifically on homeland security.

<sup>14</sup> Katherine McIntire Peters, “DHS Bottom-Up Review is long on ambition, short on detail,” *GovernmentExecutive.com*, July 2010.

Further congressional criticism included an observation on the absence of a single DHS strategy. At a House Homeland Security Committee’s Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations and Management hearing, Chairman Michael McCaul stated that “...DHS needs a single strategic document which subordinate agencies can follow and make sure the strategy is effectively and efficiently implemented. This single document should conform to the National Security Strategy of the United States of America. If the agencies do not have a clearly established list of priorities, it will be difficult to complete assigned missions.”<sup>15</sup>

## **Quadrennial Homeland Security Review**

In August 2007, Congress enacted the Implementing 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act<sup>16</sup> which required the DHS Secretary to conduct a quadrennial review of homeland security. This review was to be a comprehensive examination of the homeland security strategy of the Nation, including recommendations regarding the long-term strategy and priorities of the Nation for homeland security and guidance on the programs, assets, capabilities, budget, policies, and authorities of the Department.<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, the DHS Secretary was to consult with the “heads of other Federal agencies” and

*delineate and update, as appropriate, the national homeland security strategy, consistent with appropriate national and Departmental strategies, strategic plans, and Homeland Security Presidential Directives, including the National Strategy for Homeland Security, the National Response Plan, and the Department Security Strategic Plan.*<sup>18</sup>

These updates were to “prioritize the full range of the critical homeland security mission areas of the Nation.”<sup>19</sup> Many knowledgeable observers concluded that the 2010 *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* did not accomplish these requirements. For example, David Maurer, Director of the Government Accountability Office’s Homeland Security and Justice Team stated before the House Committee on Homeland Security’s Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management on February 3, 2013, that the 2010 QHSR identified five key DHS missions but did not prioritize them as required by the 9/11 Commission Act.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Alan Cohn, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Policy, DHS, stated, in February 2012, that the department was

---

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management, *Is DHS Effectively Implementing a Strategy to Counter Emerging Threats?*, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., February 3, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> P.L. 110-53.

<sup>17</sup> 121 Stat. 544, 6 U.S.C. 347.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> David Maurer, Government Accountability Office, statement before the House Homeland Security Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management, “Is DHS Effectively Implementing a Strategy to Counter Emerging Threats?” hearing, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., Feb. 3, 2012.

still in the process of aligning resources with priorities. However, that process was not completed for the 2010 QHSR.<sup>21</sup>

## Congressional Considerations

Policymakers are faced with a complex and detailed list of risks, or threats to security, for which they then attempt to plan. However, some have argued that managing those risks correctly 99% of the time may not be good enough when even a single failure may lead to significant human and financial costs.<sup>22</sup> Homeland security is essentially about managing risks. The purpose of a strategic process is to develop missions to achieve that end. Before risk management can be accurate and adequate, policymakers ideally coordinate and communicate. That work to some degree depends on developing a foundation of common definitions of key terms and concepts. It is also necessary, in order to best coordinate and communicate, to ensure stakeholders are aware of, trained for, and prepared to meet assigned missions. At the national level, many believe there is yet not an alignment of homeland security definitions and missions among disparate federal entities. DHS is, however, attempting to align its definition and missions, but does not prioritize its missions;<sup>23</sup> there appears to be clarity lacking in the national strategies of federal, state, and local roles and responsibilities; and, potentially, some may argue that funding is driving priorities rather than priorities driving the funding.

There is no evidence in the existing homeland security strategic documents that supports the aligning and prioritization of the varied missions, nor do any of the documents appear to convey how national, state, or local resources are to be allocated to achieve these missions. Without prioritized resource allocation to align missions, proponents of prioritization of the nation's homeland security activities and operations maintain that plans and responses may be haphazard and inconsistent. Another potential consequence of the absence of clear missions is that available funding then tends to drive the priorities.

It has been argued that homeland security, at its core, is about coordination because of the disparate stakeholders and risks.<sup>24</sup> Many observers assert that homeland security is not only about coordination of resources and actions to counter risks; it is also about the coordination of the strategic process policymakers use in determining the risks, the stakeholders and their missions, and the prioritization of those missions.

---

<sup>21</sup> Alan Cohn, Department of Homeland Security, statement before the House Homeland Security Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management, "Is DHS Effectively Implementing a Strategy to Counter Emerging Threats?" hearing, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., Feb. 3, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Donald F. Kettl, *System Under Stress: Homeland Security and American Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Washington, DC, CQPress, 2007, p. 82.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Cohn, Department of Homeland Security, statement before the House Homeland Security Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management, "Is DHS Effectively Implementing a Strategy to Counter Emerging Threats?" hearing, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., Feb. 3, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Without a general consensus on the physical and philosophical definition and missions of homeland security, achieved through a strategic process, some believe that there will continue to be the potential for disjointed and disparate approaches to securing the nation. From this perspective general consensus on the homeland security concept necessarily starts with a comprehensive consensus definition and an accepted list of prioritized missions that are constantly reevaluated to meet risks of the new paradigm that is homeland security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These varied definitions and missions, however, may be the result of a strategic process that has attempted to adjust federal homeland security policy to continually emerging threats and risks.

Congress may decide to address the issues associated with homeland security strategy, definitions, and missions, in light of the potential for significant events to occur similar to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. Specifically, Congress may choose to consider a number of options addressing the apparent lack of a consensus homeland security definition that prioritizes missions by requiring the development of a more succinct, and distinct, national homeland security strategy. Three options stand out for congressional consideration.

First, Congress could require a distinct national homeland security strategy which would be similar to the Bush Administration's 2002 and 2007 strategies. Second, Congress could require a refinement of the National Security Strategy that would include succinct risk based homeland security priorities. Finally, Congress may focus strictly on DHS activities. This option would entail DHS further refining its quadrennial review which it is presently doing.