

SENATOR JOE LIEBERMAN
AGENDA FOR STRENGTHENING AMERICAN SECURITY
FEBRUARY 14, 2003

FACT SHEET

The Bush Administration has been “too slow, too protective of the status quo, and too stingy in improving our homeland defenses,” Senator Lieberman said in a speech at the Elliott School for International Affairs at George Washington University.

Pointing to the urgent gaps in our homeland defense, he called for a minimum investment of \$16 billion in new funding, government-wide, above the \$41.3 billion requested by the Administration. Lieberman’s proposal includes \$11 billion for first responders, 7.5 billion above the Administration’s request for \$3.5 billion.

Lieberman offered three major responses to three pressing homeland security needs that have not yet been adequately addressed by the Administration:

FRONTLINE INITIATIVE

Lieberman proposed an immediate Frontline Initiative to get first responders the funding, training, and information they need to deter and respond to terrorist attack:

FUNDING

- Provide \$7.5 billion beyond the \$3.5 billion proposed by the President, to help local first responders fund new technology; hire, support, and train professionals; update computer networks and integrate communications systems.
- Pass the SAFER Act -- which will provide \$7 billion over six years to local communities to hire thousands of additional firefighters needed across the country.

TRAINING

- Direct the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense to expand training for local first responders on chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weaponry and provide greater access to military bases for that training.
- Establish a National Homeland Security Academy, under the authority of the Department of Homeland Security, to cultivate future leaders in domestic defense.

INFORMATION

Accelerate a Smart Intelligence Sharing Strategy to break through the outdated barriers to information sharing that have hobbled effective emergency response. The system should include:

- Instant and integrated access for state and local police departments to all 58 federal terrorist watch lists;
- Creation of 24-hour operations centers in each state to link local and federal law enforcement, as recommended by the Hart-Rudman Commission; and
- Overhaul of the security clearance process to speed up approval and give officers the status they need to work effectively.

SHORE UP PORTS, BORDER AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Lieberman called for urgent action to stop dangerous materials from getting into and traveling around America, proposing that the government:

- Work with the private sector to make sure that all containers have their contents verified, and securely sealed, then logged and tracked with a transponder;
- Strengthen port security by boosting spending for new guards, gates and monitors;
- Speed the modernization of the Coast Guard fleet by doubling the President's budget request for fleet upgrades;
- Hire thousands of new border personnel to help make America's borders less porous to illegal goods and people; and
- Broaden the Transportation Security Administration's scope beyond air travel to all forms of transportation and commit necessary resources to protecting roads, rails, bridges, tunnels, buses and subways.

REFOCUS ARMED FORCES

Lieberman called for a recalibration of the National Guard to serve both the national and homeland defense, by harnessing the Guard's existing assets and knowledge in the following ways:

- Tap existing National Guard State Area Commands to train first responders in catastrophic response;
- Make Guard engineers available to assist with rebuilding domestic infrastructure in the event of a catastrophe, as they currently do abroad;
- And use National Guard units to protect the most sensitive chemical, nuclear, facilities as an immediate stopgap.

Lieberman also called for strengthening the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) and adding domestic defense to its curriculum. Participants who enlist in selected National Guard units would receive a special enlistment bonus, guaranteed homeland security training, and increased GI Bill entitlements.