

Senator Joe Lieberman
Safe and Sound: Strengthening American Security Today
Anser Institute for Homeland Security and Elliott School for International Affairs and George
Washington University
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AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Thank you, President Trachtenberg.

Ever since 1958—when our country was in the midst of a very different kind of conflict against a very different kind of foe—Anser has informed and improved the common defense. You’ve seen around corners as the road we’re traveling has taken unexpected turns—and helped America remain secure. And the Elliott School, in just fourteen years, has built on GW’s long history of leadership in international affairs—with a strong sense of the current challenges we face and a clear vision for the future.

These have been difficult days for Americans’ sense of security at home. Last week, the terror alert rose to code orange. This week we heard bin Laden’s voice on the tape, calling again for his followers to kill. Combined with warnings from the Directors of the FBI and CIA that another terrorist attack on America could occur as early as “this week”—and urgings from other officials for Americans to create safe rooms in their homes and buy three days’ supply of food and water—that has understandably heightened the anxiety of millions of people.

David McIntyre, Deputy Director of the Anser Institute for Homeland Security, perfectly framed the question this way: “Will orange become the color of confusion and fear, or the color of national resolve? We can decide.”

Looking back at the Bush Administration’s record on homeland defense, over the 17 months that have passed since September 11th, 2001, I do not see “the color of national resolve.” The Administration been too slow, too protective of the status quo, and too unwilling to back up tough talk with real resources when it comes to improving our homeland defenses. As a result, we remain in too much danger today. Our borders and ports are too porous, our first responders are under-supported, our infrastructure is under-protected, and our supply of vaccines and antidotes is far too limited. We can and must do better.

The best measure of the problem is the budget the Administration just put forward. This is more than a statement of accounting. It’s a statement of the nation’s priorities, a statement of our values. And the fact is, this Administration has not made homeland security the funding priority it must be.

In a time of war—facing a fierce and ruthless enemy that targets us here at home as well as overseas—this Administration would spend far more of our national treasure on ineffective

and unfair tax cuts than on homeland security. The proposed budget recommends total homeland security spending of \$41.3 billion for the next fiscal year, an increase of only about \$300 million—or less than one percent over what the Administration approved for homeland security for this year. But at the same time the budget would have us spend \$102 billion—more than 300 times that amount—to enact tax cuts next year, on the way to \$695 billion in new tax cuts over the next 10 years.

Leadership is about choices as well as intentions. And this Administration is not putting its leadership and our money where our needs are. Its choices favor the wallets of the few over the safety of us all. This is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact, in the black and white of this budget.

America has the greatest military in the world because we pay for it. If we want the best domestic defenses, we'll have to pay for them, too. But consider this comparison. Between this year's and next year's budgets, the Administration recommends increased defense spending of \$19 billion. I will support that increase. But over the same period, the Administration only thinks we need \$300 million more to improve our homeland defenses, which are far less prepared to protect our people today than the Pentagon is.

Homeland security demands many times the \$300 million increase this Administration proposes. After extensive review and consultation with many independent experts, I have determined that at a minimum, to meet our urgent homeland security needs, we need to invest \$16 billion more than the President proposes for our homeland security—including \$7.5 billion more than the President wants for our local first responders. I ask the Congress and the President to work together to provide these additional resources.

And next year's budget is only part of the problem. Before we start celebrating about the spending bill for this year that passed last night, let's make one thing clear. There is little new funding for local first responders in this year's budget. In this Code Orange status, our job now in Washington is to get the money that has been appropriated, which was tied up in the bureaucracy for far too long, out to local communities immediately—and at the same time, to turn our attention to securing desperately needed additional funds.

We are at war. Our local first responders are in need. We must act with urgency today.

These are not ordinary times, and they must not be met by ordinary politics. We have too many urgent priorities to meet. We must rise above rote partisanship and rigid ideology and put America's homeland security first.

That means investing more now—and deploying those resources swiftly and smartly. It is in that spirit today that I want to offer three proposals to meet three homeland security needs that have not yet been adequately addressed. I hope the White House and members of Congress will seriously consider these proposals and then join in supporting them.

1. A Frontline Initiative to Support First Responders

The single most glaring gap in federal leadership and support is for those who need it most. America's local firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical technicians are not getting the assistance they need to protect us in the war against terrorism.

That is shameful. Our 9 million first responders, who are on the front lines of our defense in the war on terrorism, need more than gratitude and moral support. They need real resources. But the Administration is asking for the same \$3.5 billion for first responders this year as it did last year. And even that is misleading—because the budget also proposes cutting funds for local law enforcement by 42 percent. The COPS program, which has hired more than 100,000 police officers, is being eviscerated by an 85 percent cut in support.

Today I am proposing an immediate, Frontline Homeland Defense Initiative to get first responders the four things they most need now to stop terrorism: training, communications, information, and funding.

Funding. I've never believed that money alone solves a problem. But here we are trying to spearhead a vast new national effort to protect ourselves from an unprecedented new threat. That will take money. To buy new technology. To hire, support, and train professionals. To develop and deploy new vaccines and antidotes. To update computer networks and integrate communications systems.

In a recent U.S. Conference of Mayors study, three quarters of mayors nationwide reported a funding shortfall for threat detection and emergency response equipment.

According to a top local official, Los Angeles needs more than \$11 million this year alone to better prepare its first responders and \$19 million for training to protect against weapons of mass destruction. Those are for immediate, stop-gap measures—not long-term solutions.

To meet the urgent need for additional firefighters throughout America, we should pass the SAFER Act—which will provide \$7 billion over six years to local communities to add thousands of additional firefighters who are needed in the war on terrorism. In some communities, the number of firefighters is actually being reduced because of the budget crises localities are facing. That couldn't come at a worse time.

State and local authorities desperately need better training. So today, I ask the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense to offer first responders throughout the country expanded access to special training by the U.S. military on chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weaponry, and expanded access to our military bases to receive that training. This hasn't happened—because, according to reports, the Defense Department is reluctant to foot the bill. It's time for the President to make it happen.

And to make sure that first responders and all counterterrorism professionals get the full range of skills they need for the future, I suggest the establishment of a National Homeland Security Academy under the new Department—a kind of West Point for domestic defense to train the best and brightest future leaders.

First responders also need far more help communicating with one another. In New York on September 11th, we lost firefighters because their communications equipment wasn't compatible with what the police were using. A new federally financed study by the National Fire Protection Association shows the problem is widespread; only a quarter of our fire departments nationwide have equipment for easy communication with state and federal emergency response agencies.

The Public Safety Wireless Network, a joint Treasury and Justice Department policy group, has estimated the cost of replacing all state and local communications equipment

nationwide to allow our first responders to talk to each other in a crisis to be \$18 billion. That's a long-term figure, and not every single state, town, and city will necessarily need new equipment. But there's no question the requirement is wide and serious. Communities around the country also need federal guidance, training, and standards to put their own communication plans in place and make their own investments. I would give them \$4 billion in additional funds in next year's budget to help meet this communications challenge rapidly—as part of the \$7.5 billion over the President's proposal that I recommend for first responders.

Our local law enforcement officers need swift and accurate information if they are to be effective first preventers as well as first responders. Now, they're at the short end of the sharing stick. Last October's Hart-Rudman report said that police officers on the beat are effectively operating “deaf, dumb, and blind.”

Today I call on the Administration to accelerate a Smart Intelligence Sharing Strategy to break through the antiquated barriers to information sharing between federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies and local first responders. Some of this is already in the Homeland Security Act signed by the President last December—but it just won't get done without clear direction from the White House.

Local officials need to find out about threats rapidly and routinely from the feds—not from the headlines. Today, they're being kept at arm's length. In October 2001, the federal government received a credible threat that a ten kiloton nuclear bomb was being smuggled into Manhattan and might be detonated—but not even Mayor Rudy Giuliani was told.

As we speak, local law enforcement officials are still not getting all the information they need about ongoing terrorism investigations in their jurisdictions, not to mention basic background information on terrorism. If we in Washington expect them to do their job effectively, we have to give them the tools and the information.

That means state and local police departments must get instant and integrated access to all 58 federal terrorist watch lists so that they can check those lists when making routine stops. And we should enact a recommendation of former Senators Hart and Rudman and create a 24-hour operation center in each state to provide a real-time link between local and federal law enforcement.

The new information sharing strategy must also include an immediate overhaul of the security clearance process so that state and local officials have the status they need to do what their jobs—and our safety—demand. As of June 2002, secret clearance investigations took over six months to complete, and top secret clearance investigations typically took between 12 and 18 months. There are some initial indications this has started to improve—but we need to drive hard for permanent progress. Bureaucratic barriers to local law enforcement and prevention breed danger for us all.

2. Shoring up Ports, Borders, and Transportation Systems

My second proposal is aimed at better protecting our ports, borders, and transportation networks.

As you probably know, less than 2 percent of all containers coming through our 361 ports are inspected. Far too much truck and rail traffic also comes into and across America through without being scrutinized or scanned.

With the vast volume of merchandise passing through our ports and over our borders, we simply cannot inspect every container by hand. But we can use Customs officials and advanced technology to inspect containers before they might become a threat. The Administration has started this work, but with inadequate funding, it's going too slowly.

We should work with the private sector to make sure that, beginning as close as possible to their point of origin, all containers have their contents verified and are securely sealed, and then are logged and tracked with a transponder.

And we must quickly shore up the physical security of our home ports. The Coast Guard has estimated that doing that—just adding guards, gates, and monitors—will cost about \$4.4 billion, starting with a billion dollars this year. Industry will inevitably foot some of that bill. But so far the federal government has contributed a paltry \$92 million—less than a tenth of this year's need and just two percent of the long term cost. I will fight in Congress for \$1.2 billion more for the physical security of our ports this year.

In the same way, as the same time, as the tide of danger rises, we can't maintain the pre-September 11th pace for modernizing our Coast Guard fleet. What was scheduled to take twenty years must now happen in ten at most. To do that, we need to at least double the \$500 million the President has requested for Coast Guard modernization next year.

So too now slip into America illegally with far too much ease. To plug the gaps, we need at least 2,000 to 3,000 additional border personnel, along with new technology to create smart borders. Together, these priorities will require at least \$1 billion in additional funding in next year's budget.

What comes through our ports and over our borders gets right on our roads, rails, and other modes of transit. We've made progress since September 11th in safeguarding air travel. Luggage is being screened for explosives; air marshals are riding more flights; and armored cockpit doors are being installed—and will be on all domestic and U.S.-bound international planes by April.

But just as terrorists constantly change their means and mode of attack, the TSA must broaden its scope of defense—and rapidly. I challenge the Administration to commit the real resources necessary to protect the roads, rails, bridges, tunnels, subways, and all other modes of transportation. TSA's appropriation is actually decreased in the President's budget for next year—which will make it difficult to keep pace with their current responsibilities, much less take on new ones. TSA needs an additional \$1.7 billion in this budget to do the job we need it to do for our security.

3. Refocusing our Armed Forces

Today around Washington, anti-aircraft missiles have been deployed by the Pentagon. That will be a critical part of our homeland defense if our enemies use similar methods to the September 11th attack. This new terrorist age of danger demands a bold and comprehensive new strategy to systematically focus more of our mighty military's strength right here inside our borders.

We don't need to reinvent our military for this purpose, but we do need to do some redirecting and reengineering to meet the new homeland threats. Let me give you a few

examples. Some capabilities—like medical units, detection and decontamination units, power generation and aviation units—may need to be increased. Others will need to be tailored. Anti-aircraft missiles can guard more critical sites. Today, fewer combat aircraft patrol our skies than in the immediate aftermath of September 11th; perhaps more should now be dedicated to that task. And our military can help us develop better protocols for communication, medical response, and chemical, biological, and radiological decontamination of large areas and populations.

And as a part of this overall new effort, we should add domestic defense as one of the primary missions of our National Guard.

This should not overlap with the critical role of local police. The Guard and police have different strengths, expertise, and capabilities.

But in the immediate near-term, selected guard units can be dispatched to defend underdefended chemical plants, as well as biological and nuclear facilities. Their eyes, ears, minds, and muscle can protect those sites while we develop a longer term public-private security strategy.

In the months to come, careful planning can focus the Guard's strengths on addressing other major needs. For example, National Guard State Area Commands should help train local first responders in catastrophic response; and, in the event of another attack, Guard engineers must be ready to assist with rebuilding infrastructure, just as they currently do abroad.

To encourage young Americans to help us meet this challenge, I will introduce legislation to expand the ROTC and add domestic defense to its curriculum. Young Americans who enlist for service in one of the selected Guard units would get a special enlistment bonus, guaranteed homeland security training, and increased GI Bill entitlements to be used by themselves or any member of their immediate family.

Conclusion

Of course, strengthening our security in an age of terrorism is not government's job alone. We've been reminded in recent days that the warnings hit not just close to home—they literally go inside our homes. For most Americans, daily life has not changed much since September 11th. Now, duct tape and safe rooms tell us that we are a nation at war, and that, with inhumane enemies like Al Qaeda who want to harm us, we must change our lives if we are to stop them from changing our way of life.

Our government needs to provide clear and concrete guidance that ordinary Americans can act upon to help protect themselves. Checklists and videos, available for free in Post Offices and other public places, would prepare families, businesses, schools, congregations, and associations for every terror level and potential emergency. Secretary Ridge should go on network television one evening soon and talk us through the realities and possibilities of our current Code Orange threat. Professionals should advise parents what to tell their children. We shouldn't spread fear. We should clarify and educate.

This is a case where a little knowledge causes a lot of fear. A lot more knowledge might well reduce the fear and better prepare us all.

And we can and must go further to bring out the patriot in every American. Everywhere I go, I meet people hungry to help and to serve. In the months to come, I'll talk more about my

vision of how we can better engage ordinary American citizens to protect ourselves and help us win this war.

But it all starts with leadership and resources from Washington. It all starts with the right priorities and the right choices from those of us privileged to lead. Lacking that, even the best intentions of millions of Americans cannot produce a safer nation or a more secure people.

Halfway around the world today, the American military is preparing to join with allies to disarm a dictator who has failed to comply with the will of the world. If we must fight, our victory will be decisive—and I know that when it is, the world will be a safer place. Here at home, to guard the land beneath our feet, the freedom that has defined America since the beginning, we are engaged in a different kind of war. One that we have been too slow and too miserly in organizing to fight.

We owe it to our nation and ourselves to do better. On September 3, 1939, shortly after Britain declared war on Germany, Winston Churchill said, “Outside, the storms of war may blow and the lands may be lashed with the fury of its gales, but in our own hearts this Sunday morning there is peace... Our consciences are at rest.”

Our consciences as Americans—and as mothers and fathers to our children—will only rest when we demonstrate the leadership and invest the resources to counter the fury the terrorists seek to bring upon us.

Protecting the American people in an age of terrorism demands strong leadership and enormous resources—and it demands them now.

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