

Department of Homeland Security Second Stage Review
Senator Joe Lieberman
July 14, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for appearing today to discuss the top-to-bottom departmental review you commissioned when you were confirmed as Secretary of Homeland Security five months ago. Although the Department has made our country safer, we know that its first two years have also had their share of obstacles and missteps and that many critical homeland security gaps remain. I commend you for identifying the need to step back and consider whether the Department is performing as well as it could be and should be.

It appears that you have done a thorough and constructive job that will help you fulfill your responsibilities and fully take advantage of this opportunity to guide the department into the critical second stage of its post-9/11 development.

I was encouraged by several of your recommendations—including improving strategic policy planning capabilities to move DHS forward effectively and efficiently. This was a key topic at our oversight hearing earlier this year, and I'm pleased you're moving ahead to create an office that can help forge a clear strategic vision for the Department.

Intelligence is a critical function of the department, and although we made a number of significant improvements across the intelligence community when we passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act last year, I don't think the Department's Office of Information Analysis has to date received the support it needs. Therefore, I see the separating out of the intelligence director as a step in the right direction.

I also think your proposal for a Chief Medical Officer makes a lot of sense and is something I've been interested in myself. In the Bioshield II legislation I introduced earlier this year, I proposed a similar position to coordinate and galvanize preparedness for a biological attack.

I do have questions about some of the other reorganization proposals. I want to hear more about the rationale for separating FEMA from the Department's preparedness programs, and for eliminating the Directorate of Border and Transportation Security. Generally, as I heard your remarks, I was concerned about the extent to which you feel limited by financial resources. We have said this to the Pentagon, and I will repeat it to you today, "don't let your decisions be budget-driven."

There has been a lot of controversy over statements you've made in response to questions about transit security—an Associated Press story from this afternoon quotes you as saying, "The truth of the matter is, a fully loaded airplane with jet fuel, a commercial airliner, has the capacity to kill 3,000 people. A bomb in a subway car may kill 30 people. When you start to think about your priorities, you're going to think about making sure you don't have a catastrophic thing first." The article continues: "Asked if this meant

communities should be ready to provide the bulk of the protection for local transit systems, Chertoff said, 'Yep.'”

This has alarmed a lot of us who have mass transit running through our states. This has to be, at least in part, a national responsibility.

Thank you again, Mr. Secretary, and I look forward to hearing your plans to move ahead on different substantive homeland security challenges.

Thank you, Madame Chairman.