



United States Senate

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
“Ten Years After 9/11: A Report From the 9/11 Commission”
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
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As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning and welcome to this first in a series of hearings where we will examine the many counterterrorism changes enacted since the attacks of 9-11 with an eye towards building on what has worked and fixing what hasn't.

Today's hearing will be a general overview. In future hearings we will examine progress on specific challenges and security gaps exposed by the 9-11 attacks, including intelligence reform, aviation security, terrorist travel and emergency communications.

The attacks of 9-11-01 took place almost a decade ago but its memories are still so searing.

The nation watched on television as the mighty twin towers of the World Trade Center collapsed into a pile of smoking rubble, taking thousands of innocent lives with them.

American Airlines Flight 77 smashed into the Pentagon and set it ablaze.

And in the fields near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, we saw the smoldering crash site of United Flight 93, whose brave passengers fought to retake the plane from the terrorists who had targeted Washington, DC – saving hundreds if not thousands of lives by sacrificing their own.

In all, nearly 3,000 people died on what started out as a beautiful blue autumn morning.

But even as we mourned, we began to ask what went wrong and ultimately created the 9-11 Commission – legislation Sen. McCain and I sponsored – to investigate the flaws in our security and make recommendations to protect our nation against the terrorist enemy.

The Commission and its staff reviewed 2.5 million pages of documents, interviewed 1,200 individuals in 12 countries – including every relevant senior official of both the Clinton and George W. Bush Administrations – and held 19 days of public hearings across the country with 160 witnesses testifying.

The Commission's recommendations were sweeping, recommending both immediate actions we needed to take to defend our nation against further attack along with long-term actions we could take to blunt the terrorists' message and dry up their recruitment.

In response to the Commission's recommendations, this Committee authored and Congress enacted the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 that created the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), whose job was to bring unity and coordination to the efforts of our nation's 16 separate intelligence agencies, and made the sharing of crucial intelligence at all levels of government the new standard operating procedure.

It also created the National Counterterrorism Center as the focal point for information-sharing and analysis of counterterrorism intelligence.

That Act was the most sweeping intelligence reform legislation since the creation of the CIA more than half a century before.

This Committee was deeply involved in drafting these and other pieces of counter-terrorism legislation to implement the Commission's recommendations and further strengthen our security against terrorism.

But a lot of the hard work in identifying, recommending and then lobbying for specific reforms was done by the two men sitting in front of us this morning – Governor Tom Kean and Congressman Lee Hamilton, the chairman and vice chairman of the 9-11 Commission and now co-chairmen of its successor, the Bipartisan Policy Center's National Security Preparedness Group.

Welcome, gentlemen. And thank you again not only for your hard work and dedication to public service, but for providing our nation with a compelling reminder of what we can accomplish when we put aside party labels and work together for the national good.

I look forward to hearing your perspective on our nation's counterterrorism defenses, which I regard as a roadmap for future hearings and legislation this Committee should take up.

We're going to cover a lot of ground today, but there are three items of particular interest I would like to highlight.

One is your recommendation that we set aside the "so-called" D Block of the broadband spectrum for public safety departments – legislation Sen. McCain and I sponsored last year and will reintroduce in the near future.

Setting this broadband spectrum aside would allow us to build a robust, resilient and secure nationwide network for emergency communications that first responders could use to send video, maps and other large data transmissions over their mobile devices.

Police chiefs, fire chiefs, sheriffs and emergency managers across the nation overwhelmingly agree this is needed for them to save lives and protect property, and we should get that done in this Congress.

I was also pleased to see you are addressing cybersecurity in your newest recommendations. We have been working closely with Sen. Reid to develop a cybersecurity bill the Senate will consider this year.

"Cybercriminals" and "cyberspies" look at the Internet and see electronic pipelines that lead directly into everything from our personal bank accounts to government and industrial secrets.

And we have to prepare for the very real possibility of "cyber-war" and "cyber-terror" – the possibility, for example, that an adversary could take down our electrical grid or financial infrastructure from across the ocean with just a series of keystrokes.

Another question I'd like to explore in more detail with our witnesses relates to the powers of the Director of National Intelligence. I believe it is essential to have a strong Director of National Intelligence who can marshal the full capabilities of the Intelligence Community, and I am encouraged by some of the recent changes that the current director, Gen. Jim Clapper, has made toward further integration.

But I have been concerned for some time about bureaucratic resistance from the 16 intelligence agencies ostensibly under the control of the DNI and what that means for effective and efficient intelligence gathering and sharing. I see you both have the same concerns and I'd be interested in your specific recommendations.

Let me sum up as follows:

Since the 9-11 reforms, we have had many successes in our battles with the terrorists.

We've also had many close calls – like the shoe bomber and the Christmas Day bomber.

And we've also had some outright failures, like Maj. Nidal Hasan who radicalized right under the noses of the FBI and the Department of Defense and then murdered 13 people at Fort Hood.

We must continue to learn from our successes and our failures so we are not just constantly reacting to the last attack or attempted attack, but are taking the fight to our enemies.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses' recommendations and then working with them on future legislation.

We are also joined this morning by family members of three of the those 9-11 victims who went on to become leading advocates for the creation of the 9-11 Commission and the implementation of its recommendations.

They are Mary Fetchet, whose son Brad died at the World Trade Center; Carie Lemack, whose mother Judy was killed on American Airlines Flight 11 that crashed into the World Trade Center, and Abraham Scott, whose wife Janice was killed in the Pentagon.

Your work helped get the 9-11 reforms through Congress and I believe I can speak for the entire Committee when I thank you for your work.

Senator Collins.