

**WITNESS LIST****Statement on Homeland Security**

**The Honorable Lee H. Hamilton**  
**Testimony before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs**  
**October 12, 2001**

Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Thompson, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this morning.

I commend you for your examination of ways to strengthen our homeland security, a challenge of great importance to this country and its citizens. Across this great land, Americans are worried about their personal security and anxious that you act to improve it.

The United States remains highly vulnerable to terrorist attacks -- despite our mobilization of recent weeks.

We are preparing well to protect against the type of attack that occurred on Sept. 11 -- but are we preparing well for the many other possible types of attack, including those from nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, or from information warfare?

The core of our national security strategy must be defense of the homeland.

We must invest far more resources in strengthening the security of our borders, transportation hubs, and cities, and in protecting the crucial infrastructure of our economy, financial systems, energy supplies, and computer networks.

We also must improve our capacity to respond to terrorist attacks so that the loss of life in any attack is minimized.

There are many political, economic and military actions that must be taken to improve the security of Americans, and your focus in this hearing is an important one: how do we organize the federal government to meet the terrorist threat to the country?

The threshold question is: how serious of a threat to national security is terrorism? If it is the No. 1 threat, as the Hart-Rudman commission found, the federal government should be organized, and the federal budget should be allocated, to assure that homeland security is the highest priority.

**Czar or agency?**

Two schools of thought on organizing for homeland security are emerging.

-- 1) One school envisions a White House office of similar authority to the National Security Council or the National Economic Council. Its primary job would be coordinating the activities of the various federal agencies and state and local authorities involved in homeland security. This is the approach President Bush has chosen in establishing a Homeland Security

Office headed by Tom Ridge.

-- 2) The second school envisions a cabinet official with direct control over a department, budget, and staff. This department would have responsibility for planning, coordinating, and integrating all U.S. programs involving homeland security. This is the approach recommended by the Hart-Rudman commission, which I served on, and by the legislation introduced by Sen. Lieberman.

President Bush's establishment of the Homeland Security Office is a step in the right direction, but greater steps are required.

### **Clout, money, and staff**

The key question in organizing for homeland security is: Will the new government office or agency have sufficient clout, money, and staff to do what is necessary to protect our security?

Will Gov. Ridge be able to give orders to the many disparate agencies involved in homeland security, many of which have long histories of bureaucratic rivalry? For instance, will he be able to tell the Department of Defense to alter its budget or tell the CIA to rearrange its priorities?

The administration has emphasized that Gov. Ridge will have access to the President and strong support from him. But that is not enough. Dozens of people have access to the President. Without a legislative framework providing budgetary authority and staff, his power will be uncertain and subject to the vagaries of this President's (or future Presidents') attention to homeland security, which may wax and wane in the years ahead.

It looks like Gov. Ridge will have borrowed staff and uncertain power over other department budgets. If he has little control over the counterterrorism budgets of the more than 40 agencies he is supposed to oversee, he will lack the tools necessary to force those agencies to carry out his plans and work together.

It is also unclear whether Gov. Ridge will have sufficient access to intelligence, which is necessary if he is to prevent and respond quickly to attempted terrorism.

Within the White House there are two other new senior officials for anti-terrorism, who report to Gov. Ridge and Condoleezza Rice. How will they relate to the Homeland Security Office?

Gov. Ridge needs a permanent statutory framework to establish a clear and strong line of authority and to gain budgetary control over other agencies.

### **A Homeland Security Agency**

My view is Congress should establish a homeland security agency or department whose director is a cabinet official.

Congressional legislation is needed to make the agency permanent.

For the agency to be effective it must have the power to force the various federal agencies involved in homeland security -- from the FBI to the Department of Defense -- to act.

The head of the agency should have budget and line authority over the

agencies under him. He must be more than a coordinator if he is to do his job as well as it can be done.

I have always been skeptical of interagency cooperation and coordination. I recognize that much government work in ordinary times is done in that manner. But these are not ordinary times. We are at war, and the business of homeland security is an urgent national priority. The head of the homeland security agency must have the power to act, not just to advise and coordinate.

The head of the agency must also have the energetic and sustained backing of the President. Bureaucracies do not cooperate with each other unless they are forced to do so by the President. The President must force bureaucrats to meet political goals.

The homeland security agency should be built upon the Federal Emergency Management Agency, with the three organizations currently on the front line of border security -- the Coast Guard (currently in the Department of Transportation), the Customs Service (currently in the Department of Treasury), and the Border Patrol (currently in the Department of Justice) -- integrated into it.

The agency should not have police or military authority. Nor should it be an intelligence collection agency. However, it should be the central coordinating agency for anticipating, preventing, and responding to attacks on the homeland. It should coordinate and oversee efforts by the military and the intelligence community to beef up homeland defense.

A primary mission of the National Guard should be to reorganize, train, and equip itself to defend the homeland against terrorist attack.

Our homeland security effort should include more research into effective anti-terrorism strategies and regular exercises to prepare us to respond to any kind of attack.

We should invest in programs to protect against the wide range of serious threats that we face. That will mean spending more on protection against terrorism and chemical, biological, or nuclear attack.

The director of a new homeland security agency should begin his work by setting priorities.

-- He must determine what kind of attacks are most likely, and what we can do to prevent them.

-- He must determine where we should focus our homeland security personnel and resources.

-- He must educate the American people about security threats and give them practical advice.

He may not get it all right. The United States has so many possible targets that it is extremely difficult to protect them all. But we must try to protect as many potential targets as possible.

**Immigration:** Our homeland security effort must include tighter monitoring of immigration and other cross-border traffic. Last year 489 million people, 127 million cars, and 211,000 boats passed through our borders. Once in the U.S. foreign nationals who have overstayed their visas -- numbering

over 3 million at any time -- easily escape notice of the INS. Monitoring the movement of all of these people and goods is a monumental task.

The U.S. has a proud tradition of openness to foreign visitors. For years efficiency has trumped security. We should not close our borders or put up excessive barriers to entry, but we must improve our monitoring of cross-border traffic and of foreigners already in the U.S. We must screen visa applicants with greater scrutiny and pursue foreign nationals who have overstayed their visas more aggressively.

### **The role of Congress**

Congress has an important role to play in establishing the legislative framework for a homeland security agency and overseeing all homeland security efforts.

Congress should reorganize itself to deal with homeland security more effectively. It should form a joint select committee for homeland security, or individual committees in the House and Senate, to provide congressional support and oversight.

A homeland security committee would simplify the job of the director of the homeland security agency -- for instance, by reducing the number of times he must testify on the Hill -- and would provide a centralized body for homeland security deliberation and legislating in Congress.

### **Conclusion**

Strengthening our homeland security is the most important national security challenge we face. It is critical that the government entities established to deal with homeland security have sufficient clout, resources, and staff to take the necessary steps to protect us.

A homeland security agency or department headed by a cabinet official, and overseen by a select congressional committee on homeland security, is the best means to protect our homeland.

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