

PRESS STATEMENT

**Press Conference on Homeland Security Legislation
Statement by Senator Joseph Lieberman
October 11, 2001**

Good morning. A month ago to the day, America suffered devastating attacks at the hands of terrorists with whom we are now at war. Our nation has struggled to adjust to the frightening realization that our citizens are vulnerable to hostile acts on the part of adversaries whose methods are as murky as their goals, and for that very reason difficult to anticipate and defend against.

Shortly after the attacks, the Governmental Affairs Committee held a hearing to explore how government could better organize itself to defend against threats to our homeland. Some of the most compelling testimony was delivered by former Senators Hart and Rudman, co-chairs of the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century. They proposed the establishment of a homeland security agency as the most effective means to address terrorist and other threats on American soil.

Today, based largely on the commission's recommendation, Senator Arlen Specter and I are introducing legislation to create a Department of National Homeland Security. The cabinet level agency would bring under one umbrella, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Customs Service, the Border Patrol, the Coast Guard, and various offices with responsibility for critical infrastructure protection.

The new department would be organized into three directorates responsible for securing our borders, protecting our critical infrastructure, and preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters when they do occur.

The purpose of the legislation is to bring operational focus to the mission of homeland defense. Responsibility for this mission is fragmented in various offices, agencies, and departments throughout government. The bill breaks out those key entities whose activities are most clearly related to the prevention, protection, and response framework I just mentioned.

One problem that the Hart-Rudman panel identified was that agencies responsible for protecting our borders, coasts, and ports of entry – the Customs Service, the Border Patrol, and the Coast Guard – don't necessarily share information or coordinate their activities. Another problem is that their homeland security functions tend to get lost in the welter of other missions that they and their current parent organizations are responsible for. This bill would help address those concerns by bringing these key agencies under single operational control and emphasizing the priority of their homeland defense activities.

The Secretary of the new department would, of course, be subject to Senate confirmation. Like other secretaries, he would have line authority over personnel and programs, and he would have budget authority over his department's spending priorities.

To anticipate your questions, I foresee the Secretary of National Homeland Security working closely with the Director of the Office of

Homeland Security, the position created for Governor Ridge. Governor Ridge would continue to coordinate information and policy across government, and he would have budget certification authority over the Department's budget.

In short, this bill simply consolidates key homeland defense functions under one umbrella, and provides an executive framework for the prevention, protection, and response functions I mentioned. Thus, I see the legislation complementing the work that Governor Ridge is doing.

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