

## Blogger Roundtable on the State and Future of DHS



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**Moderator:** Could you guys maybe just quickly identify yourselves so the Secretary can put a face with a name?

**Question:** I'm Dan Fowler from *Congressional Quarterly*.

**Question:** Rich Cooper, Security News.

**Question:** I'm Joel Johnson, with BoingBoing.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Boing Boing?

**Question:** That's it.

**Question:** Michael Santarcangelo, Security Catalyst.

**Question:** Mary Mosquera, *Federal Computer Week*.

**Question:** Chris Dorobek, Federal News Radio and my own blog, Dorobek Insider.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Okay. All right, well, first let me say -- I guess -- how many of these blog - these blogging roundtables have been done? Five, six?

**Moderator:** Five or six now.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, this turned out to be a really, really good innovation. I'm sorry we didn't do it earlier, you know, a couple years ago. You know, we've tried to get into the new wave of media. I've done my own blog. We've done a little bit of social networking with the disasters, which I think worked pretty well, but maybe hasn't fully been realized due to the capability.

But I think actually, in many ways, this was, of all the new media things we tried, this was the best. I think it's gotten - it's been a great opportunity to get accurate, in-depth stories about what we do, as opposed to sometimes what you get in classic media, which is kind of a little snippet of something. So I'm not trying to fawn on you, but this I will recommend to my successor, if she's not already doing this -- I don't know if she is - that she continue this. It's been very worthwhile.

Touch wood, as I always do. We're seven-plus years without a successful attack on the United States, and I do think it's fair at this point to look back and ask why it is we have succeeded in preventing or disrupting attacks, whether it was the shoe bomber; there was the Faris effort to blow up or plan to blow up apartment buildings and bridges; some of the plots up in Northwest, the Northwest United States; some of the things that are currently being tried; of course, the August 2006 airline plot; and I'd say that, you know, it reflects the President's -- maybe the most significant challenge of his administration, which was to protect the country.

It's degrading the capability of the enemy by killing and capturing leadership and putting them in a position where first they were thrown out of Afghanistan, and second, where they have to be mindful about their own safety as opposed to the, you know, planning that they want to do. I think much better intelligence collection at every level. It's much more sophisticated now. It's much more granular now than it was when I started out in 2001, and even than it was in 2005. Our ability to connect the dots and to perceive relationships is much more refined than it was five, six, seven, eight years ago.

At our own border, we're now taking biometrics from everybody who comes in. We have much better visibility into the travel patterns of people who are coming in, and we have the ability to look at some commercial data that shows relationships. And that's directly resulted in our ability to identify people who are coming into the country

who deserve, at minimum, a closer look.

I think all of these things -- what we've done to scan virtually 100 percent of the radioactive or containers that come into the country for radioactivity, what we've done in terms of chemical plant security, rail security for the transportation of chemicals; all of these things taken together have yielded real results.

We know the enemy continues to be active because Mumbai two weeks ago; Islamabad; failed efforts to attack in 2007 in Germany and Britain; 2006 airline plot; 2005 London bombings; Madrid 2004, and a whole host of another plots, successful and unsuccessful, have demonstrated the enemy's continued intent.

So I think we have to fairly credit our decreased vulnerability. Now, this doesn't mean that the job is done. It just means that we should continue to work to stay ahead of the evolving enemy, because the enemy evolves, too, and they become more sophisticated.

In terms of transition, I think we're well along. We've prepared all our briefing materials. I've prepared and gave my successor a memorandum that gave a kind of an overview of what I felt the major looming issues were. I've met with my successor. We've had many meetings at multiple levels. I know the plan is to have some kind of an exercise for the new people early in January before we have the transition on January 20th and the transfer of power, and I think that's going to go a long way to preparing them.

Most important, we have experienced career people in all of our components who are prepared to be acting until their permanent heads of the various directorates and divisions come into place.

Just to put it in perspective, we have approximately 80 political appointees who you would consider to be senior employees out of a department of 220,000. So contrary to some of the myths, we have a percentage of political employees in leadership jobs. That's essentially the same as you get per capita with most departments.

And in terms of very senior leadership positions, Coast Guard and the Secret Service are career; they'll stay the same. The acting heads of Customs and Border Protection and ICE are experienced career people, as is the acting -- is the deputy and presumably the acting head of TSA. My undersecretary for management will stay by operation of law until her successor is confirmed. And so I think we're leaving the place in good order, and I want to make sure that we make this as smooth a transfer as possible.

We'll be very focused, obviously, on the inauguration. Not just the security planning in a kind of narrow sense, but I want to make sure that we work very closely with state and local government to ensure that the whole weekend is a smooth weekend.

There are all kinds of stories about, you know, a lot of people coming in, maybe more than we've had before. We need to make sure, you know, some of the prosaic stuff: Is there enough housing for people? Are people's expectations about what they should do and not do, you know, properly addressed? What's the traffic management plan? How are we going to deal with some of those issues? Particularly if you get people who haven't been in Washington, they may be uncertain about what to expect. So I think I want to work hard with my state and local counterparts and others to try to focus on preparation for that event.

**Question:** Have you had conversations with the D.C., Virginia, Maryland folks already on this?

**Secretary Chertoff:** There's been a lot of planning that's been done already. I am actually going to be speaking to each of the governors and the mayor myself in the next day or so in order to make sure we're at our level, we have full visibility, and address any concerns and make sure we continue to stay closely engaged as we move forward.

**Question:** What are you going to miss about this job?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Blogging roundtables.

**Question:** The question, really.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, it's actually been fun, because you guys generally ask good questions and enjoy the dialogue.

I'll miss the -- some of the terrific people I've worked with. I've had some great opportunities. Stuff I've loved the most is getting out on horseback at the border with the Border Patrol or Motor Lifeboat school with the Coast Guard out in Astoria; or in the arctic, overnighing on a cutter with Admiral Allen and Heeley; going to Iraq, going

to Afghanistan and meeting with our personnel and the troops there.

You know, all of that's been a tremendous amount of fun, and just even in Washington, dealing with the fine men and women who make up this department. It's really been -- that's, I think, what I'll miss the most.

**Question:** When you got approached for the position, you had something in your mind, what you expected. How did it measure up?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, I mean, some of it was what I expected. I know -- I had had the experience of dealing with threats and responding to threats through my experience at the Department of Justice. I think that was not a surprise to me. I had experience dealing with the inter-agency from my prior federal service; that was not a surprise. I dealt with Congress and I had worked with Congress, so that was not a surprise.

I think the -- I understood what the management challenge was and I wasn't surprised by that. I think that some of the, obviously, Katrina was an extraordinary circumstance, so that was an unexpected thing.

**Question:** Aren't they all unexpected?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, but I mean unexpected in the sense that we'd been through a terrorist attack, so you know, in a sense, one was foreseeable. Hurricanes are foreseeable. The collapse of the levy wall and the subsequent flooding due to structural failure is not, you know -- I mean, it's always within the range of possibility. It wasn't something that had happened in recent memory and there certainly wasn't anything in my briefing books about engineering of levy walls.

So I guess in thinking about it, I don't think I was terribly surprised. It's always instructive to see how challenging it is to move a large organization, and some of the inertia that operates within government in general.

But I also have to say, unlike some people, I didn't come in with the view and I don't leave with the view that government is always bureaucratic, bad and clumsy, and the private sector is nimble and wonderful. I've been at both. The truth is that both the private sector and the public sector are populated by human beings. Some of them are excellent; some of them are not so good.

Every institution has its own advantages and handicaps, and I've found the federal employees I've worked with in all my jobs, but particularly here, to be every bit as good as the people who I've worked with in the private sector. I mean, I'm not a person who -- it's easy to say, you know, kind of have a picture of bureaucrats and everybody thinks of, you know, people sitting around with eye-shades on shuffling paper, or like that scene in Indiana Jones where they wheel the ark into that big file room and it can never be found again.

But that's not my -

**Question:** -- polyester ties.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Yeah. But that's not my experience. My experience with the government agents is the border patrol; customs inspectors who catch things; the TSA screeners who have to deal with a stressful situation but stay alert; the remarkable Coast Guard rescues; even the really hard work on some of the management issues that people did. It's not glamorous, but have really transformed us, for example, in the information security area in FISMA, from what started off as an F to what was a B-plus last year. I mean, that's not like a -- they're not going to make a movie out of that, but that's a great tribute to a lot of hard work.

And I always found the people in this department dedicated to the job, and really all in tune with our philosophy of protecting the country. That's been really gratifying.

**Question:** What are you most proud of during your time as secretary, and also what is your greatest regret?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, I think I'm most proud of the fact that - it's not entirely our doing, but we share in the fact that there hasn't been a successful attack. I think I'm very proud of the fact that we have reversed the tide on illegal immigration. We haven't, obviously, ended it, but we've started to move it in the other direction. I am proud of the fact that when we said we were going to do something, we got it done, or at least as far done as humanly possible, which I think is important for government to do.

In terms of things that, you know, I'm unhappy with, I mean, obviously, Katrina was a very, very difficult time for the Department. And yeah, I think there are some valuable lessons that were learned in truth. I guess I still feel what I said in July of 2005 was right: we had not built a planning capability in the civilian domain, including

federal, state and local authorities that was remotely like what was necessary dealing with a catastrophic event. It's just never been done before. And unfortunately, August 2005 came only a month later. So we were forced to live the perception that I had achieved a month before without enough time to fix it.

But out of that came, I think, a real change in the way we plan and prepare, which I think you saw in hurricane Gustav, which was a very, very effective evacuation, even one where we had some bumps in the road, but we were able, because we had done enough planning, to improvise the go. So you know, I think sometimes you learn most from things that don't go well, and that's been a -- you know, part of my philosophy.

Oh, the other big disappointment is I'm disappointed we didn't get comprehensive immigration reform. I think that -- I think the agreement we reached to get everybody from Ted Kennedy to John Kyl to come to a compromise was remarkable. And I think it was a great tribute to the leadership of senators on both sides of the aisle, and I'm sorry it was just not possible in the process to get that to become the law.

**Question:** When you talk about your July 2005 comments about creating an integrated planning capacity, part of that, obviously, is FEMA. And there are International Association of Emergency Mangers and others who are talking about taking, you know, that portion away from DHS. If they're successful in doing that, what does that mean for -- what do you see that meaning have for the rest of the department? Do you see other portions of the department breaking off and becoming autonomous again?

**Secretary Chertoff:** No, I don't think it's -- I mean, that would just create a lot of extra, you know, floundering around. I think that taking FEMA out would return us to the days when the police and the fire and emergency people didn't talk to each other. Everybody did their own thing, and then they had a fight during an event. And frankly, there was a little bit of that on 9/11, where it was two independent groups, both excellent at what they do, but not integrated tools of their planning.

If you look at open-source reporting from Mumbai, there was a complaint about lack of coordination, including between emergency services and police. Let me even take, as I'm looking at planning we're doing for the inauguration, I have to look at, and the state and local governments are going to have to look at, the whole spectrum of things. It's going to require prevention, protection, law enforcement and emergency response if something happens.

Isn't it better to have all that in one place? And more than that, to have interoperable tools, so that when FEMA needs air support to scope something out, we've already planned and trained for that because we're part of one department; or when you need to have extra bodies or extra boots on the ground to distribute food, we can get TSA to do that for FEMA. That is much easier within a single department than if you have to work between departments.

And, you know, I think in my reading of the history of the Defense Department, for thirty to forty years, people in the Navy were saying, pull the Navy out of DoD, we don't want to be tied together with the Army. And of course, I think it wasn't until Desert 1, that failure, that everybody finally said, you know, we ought to get serious and put that to rest; we ought to really integrate the Defense Department. And I think that that's the lesson for here as well.

**Question:** Mr. Secretary, looking forward, perhaps you've given some advice to the next administration, but what are the next IT system projects that you think need to -- that they need to keep the most eye on so that they can continue or get to the point of being successful and effective?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, we have a reengineering and an upgrading of our CIS information systems. We're creating, of course, a second backup system for all of our systems, which is a project that's underway, as part of our larger cyber security initiative, obviously, reducing the number of trusted internet connections, deploying the next generations of Einstein. All of these are part of what I believe is important.

In general, IT investment tends to get less attention because it's not glamorous, it doesn't make a good press release. But as we saw with CIS, without getting the money and beginning the upgrading, it just makes it harder to provide customer service.

**Question:** What's the biggest misconception that Joe Public has of this agency?

**Secretary Chertoff:** A sprawling, 22-agency conglomerate.

So first, where does 22 agencies come from?

As near as I can figure, someone counted up the direct reports to the Secretary under the original plan. But the truth is, most of the direct reports were very small offices, like the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties or the Privacy Office. Those weren't large agencies. They're basically supporting elements.

There are really eight major operating elements in the department: the seven operating components and the National Protection and Programs Division, which is where we put the cyber security and the infrastructure protection, where we do, you know, some of our regulatory aspect.

And if you think about it, all of the pieces -- and I would argue FEMA fits here too -- are integrated. They fit together thematically. Most of our operating elements deal with some element of the border or transportation, how do you keep bad things out, how do you make sure that when things are moving around they don't become a threat or they don't become a target. And then when you add FEMA in, that gives us the response and mitigation piece, which rounds out the prevention and protection piece.

So yeah, we've gotten a little bit into this. You know, there's kind of an intellectual laziness. It's like some people, maybe some reporters, they have a paragraph that was written in 2003 about the department and when they're rounding out the story, they hit the button and that paragraph is always in paragraph eight.

We wind up seeing things like, you know, the Department is being criticized for XYZ, and it happened in, like, 2004. And I go, geez, it's been four years since then. And I think we ought to get a fresh look.

By way of example, there was a study done by the Partnership for Public Service that was released yesterday, or the day before yesterday. They asked the public, of all the services the government performs, what do you think -- or, which ones do you think are excellent or good? The number one -- 70 percent excellent or good -- was aviation security. Sixty-nine percent, number two, was defending the country. I thought, wow, that is -- you know, I would have never have imagined that, reading some of the stuff that's been written.

There's a lot of you, -- you know, I've seen this both in terms of the border and the aviation system. Other than maybe IRS, we deal with more individuals day in, day out, than any other agency of government. Much of what DoD, for example, does is overseas. What State Department does is overseas. We deal with -- we have hundreds of millions of transactions a day. No matter how good we are, some, even if only a tenth of percent or a hundredth of a percent are inconvenient or problematic, that's still going to be, in absolute terms, a fairly large number if you do the math.

**Question:** So how many -- what's the number of direct terrorist actions that have been interfered with by TSA screening, for instance?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, I can -- here's what I can tell you. I can tell you that we've kept -- you know, I don't have them all in my head. We had a case where somebody had bomb components in a piece of luggage they were going to take on. Now, do I know that they would have found some way to assemble it, or do I know that at some stage of the -- of the person's flight path, it would not have become the bomb? I don't know that. I do know that you probably wouldn't want to get on that plane and I wouldn't want to get on that plane.

I know that we've kept off weapons. Now, do I know the person who had the weapon was going to use it? No, maybe not. But I know that I'd rather not have that on a plane. Do I know how many people I've deterred? I don't know that because I don't know how many people have said, I'm not going to try to do something because I know there's a high likelihood I'm going to be caught. What I can tell you is that in the period prior to September 12, 2001, it was a regular, routine issue to have American aircraft hijacked or blown up from time to time, whether it was Lockerbie or TSA -- or TWA 857 or 9/11 itself. And we haven't had even a serious attempt at a hijacking or bombing on an American plane since then.

So, you know, it's a little bit like getting vaccinated against a dangerous illness. You know, we all took polio vaccine when we were kids. Maybe you may not be old enough. I can't tell you that if I hadn't taken the vaccine, I would have gotten polio. But I can tell you that it is a sensible thing to do. And that's kind of how I view TSA.

**Question:** Down that path, then, how do you separate out going after real risks versus perceived risks? Right? Because as humans, we're not real good at judging risk.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Yeah. That's a really important question. We try to manage risk by being disciplined and balanced. You know, I'll give you an example.

We put a lot of effort into scanning and screening cargos that come into the United States, cargo containers that

come in, because of the concern of a nuclear device or something like that in a cargo container. I think that's been good. It's drawn down the risk to a reasonable level. There's a lot of push to do that, all that, overseas, even before it gets on -- on a ship. And there's a lot of cost and difficulty in that.

So to my view, that may be, at least if you're talking about a port of embarkation like Southampton in a country like Britain, which has a very good intelligence service, that strikes me as perhaps a little bit of overkill. On the other hand, many people who argued for that said not a word about general aviation. And yet a couple years ago I had a senior executive in a jet leasing service come to me and say, I don't know really who leases my jets. For all I know, someone could get on with a bomb and it could fly into the United States from overseas, detonate the bomb over a city, and that's that. So as a consequence, we started to say, let's raise the bar on general aviation. So we put rules out on advanced screening of passengers, and we're setting up agreements to do preclearance overseas.

I try to balance, you know, and I think we all try to do the best we can, reasonable -- with a sense of reasonableness. We don't try to make the architecture of the New York subway system, in terms of screening, be the same as the -- as the airport.

Now, with all of that, I have to say perception is not entirely inadmissible. A lot of what is important in security is public confidence, and visible security adds a certain dimension to public confidence which I don't think you can underestimate. And so I think we have sometimes been visible in doing things. I mean, I raised the question at some point, like, why did the National Guard get posted at the airport? Particularly we do less of that now. And, you know, part of it is I guess if someone were to act out, you'd have an additional show of force. But part of it is public confidence, the public being confident.

The flip side of it is if you look at Katrina, I think one of the issues in Katrina was the lack of a lot of visible presence of the authorities on the ground and that creating a sense of disorder. So one of the lessons I learned is the perception of order and security is actually an important operational element in establishing order and security. It's a kind of a corollary of what Rudy Giuliani did in New York with the broken windows theory, that if you establish that breaking windows and graffiti will not be tolerated, you actually generally drive down crime because you create a sense of order.

**Question:** Sir, I was really trying to avoid using this term at all. But are you actually saying that security theater is an important aspect of actual security?

**Secretary Chertoff:** No. I don't -- I don't think it's theater because I think the person who says this is kind of unrealistic and is kind of trying to be provocative. I don't think they're doing things for no reason to make sense, but I think understanding that visible security has a role to play is important. It is a deterrent.

**Question:** Well, sure. But theater also means -- theater has a purpose, too, to express a meaning. And so --

**Secretary Chertoff:** Yeah. I mean, the problem is, I think the term is not meant to be -- it's meant to be pejorative. It's meant to be suggesting -- suggest that it's like a puppet show. But I would have to say I think visible security does have a role to play because I think it does inspire a sense of confidence.

It also is a deterrent because, generally speaking, people, whether they want to smuggle things in or commit crimes or commit acts of terror, are deterred if they think there's a reasonable likelihood of apprehension, and therefore, particularly if you mix it up, if you do random things, if you change things so they're unpredictable, I think that that actually enhances security.

**Question:** But if the point of terrorism is to scare people, and if the easiest way to scare people is by killing them randomly, if you don't have the ability to put security everywhere, I mean, it still seems like you're ultimately inconveniencing people with a lot of useless screening and useless -- or, most of the time, useless security, but not actually able to ever stomp down the threats.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, first of all, you do try to stomp down the threats because you try to eliminate them overseas. You try to catch the people when they come in. But what layered security recognizes is that no one layer is perfect. So what you do when you have screening is, first of all, you do find things. I mean, we do find -- we find people bring on things, and we have found people coming in across the border with things like how to make an IED. And, you know, it's important to catch that. But we also deter people because we raise the barrier to them carrying out an attack because they worry about it.

Now, is it perfectly successful? No. So I'll give you an example that I sometimes use.

The best police chiefs in America, guys like Ray Kelly and Bill Bratton, they have not eliminated crime in their cities. Does that mean that having police is useless? It scares people, you know, because you have a lot of police presence, and it costs a lot of tax money because you haven't stomped out crime? No. You've reduced it. We have reduced the risk of terror. We have not eliminated the risk. And an argument that I find fallacious is one that challenges all security measures because none of them is a perfect security measure.

**Question:** No, no. And that makes perfect sense. I mean, you have to have some security.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Right.

**Question:** No, I think we all agree on that.

**Question:** How do you -- so on that, though, I mean, it's still back to the perceived versus real. And I like your explanations of it. But then -- so how are you measuring it? So you come back and say, oh, that was a good decision or that wasn't.

**Secretary Chertoff:** You know, it's a little hard to measure deterrence. I will say that we challenge certain things. For example, on the issue of selectee status when we move to secure a flight, you know, part of our reasoning was that we might -- this puts us on a path to be able to allow people who are not actually no-flyers, and I've publicly said, now, that's really -- I think it's less than 2,000 -- they have -- people who are selectees but aren't no-flyers get their ticket at the kiosk without having to go and identify themselves each time as long as they can give a frequent flyer number or a birth date.

So that was an examine of where we really analyzed, did we think that what was -- we were able to achieve by making selectees go and identify themselves, was that tradeoff worth it in terms of the inconvenience? So we concluded it wasn't. There wasn't -- the marginal security benefit was not there.

**Question:** Now, are you employing like economists and mathematicians? Like how -- I don't mean to belittle the question --

**Secretary Chertoff:** No.

**Question:** -- other than saying how serious is like the measurement of risk?

**Secretary Chertoff:** I think it's very serious. I mean, you get into, like, for example, chemical security, how we measured risk there.

**Question:** Sure.

**Secretary Chertoff:** They've got a whole battery of people who are -- have an economics background, who have other kinds of risk management background. There are formulas that you can use, and you can tier things. That's true in other areas as well. We have a system called High Track, which does risk analysis of different kinds of targets and different kinds of threats. We've done a lot of that in identifying particularly the highest consequence events.

But I also have reserved the right sometimes to use judgment as an override. So, for example, when we -- three years ago we got a very complex system for allocating grants that involve counting a lot of different things. And it led to a lot of quibbling about whether you had miscounted the number of buildings, or did you leave this building on or that building on. And I asked everybody to run the analysis reducing the variables to some basic core principles -- population, population density, you know, high value infrastructure, a few things like that.

It turned out that there was actually very little difference, and that by doing a lot of counting of little things, we were not actually adding value in terms of risk. We were simply over-complicating for something that therefore became less transparent. So I'm always a little hesitant about the tendency of professionals to try to make -- you know, the guild mentality, make everything really complex and arcane.

And so one of the things I've tried to do is reserve the right to ask a lot of hard questions about what does this really add? And to simplify, and we ultimately simplified the measurement on the grants thing. And for the last two grant cycles, everybody was basically happy. I mean, people --

**Question:** I was going to ask about that because you actually caught -- I thought you caught a lot of flak for it when you did it. And I actually applauded it because it felt like somebody was actually measuring it as opposed to throwing money at everything.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Right. And I think it's worked out pretty well.

**Question:** And so that said, what would -- going into it now, knowing what you know, looking back, I mean, hopefully you would recommend that the new administration continue that.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Yeah.

**Question:** What was the biggest lesson from that? I mean, it sounds like simplifying the factors --

**Secretary Chertoff:** I think that the biggest lesson is not to be reticent to challenge experts on things. It's important to listen to experts, but sometimes there's a tendency for experts to guard their prerogative by making it so arcane that you're afraid if you challenge it, you're going to be accused of like not, you know, paying appropriate deference to expertise. I was lucky, and I think my successor has the same background so maybe she can do -- will do the same thing, that I had had a lot of experience cross-examining experts in the courtroom, so I was a little less reticent to ask hard questions. And I could be persuaded, but I didn't necessarily, particularly as I got more acclimated to the department. I think sometimes the best value I brought was stepping back and saying, let's think out of the box. Let's look at it differently.

**Question:** How did you bring people back into the fold, then? I mean, a lot of the mayors that were upset that they weren't getting their funding and their grants, I mean --

**Secretary Chertoff:** You know --

**Question:** -- was there a lot of personal connection there?

**Secretary Chertoff:** I spent a lot of time talking to mayors and governors. I found generally I've enjoyed -- mayors and governors have a very practical, real set of responsibilities. They understand that you have to make tradeoffs. They fight vigorously for what they want, but I think they understand, sometimes, if you can -- if you can explain it to them in a way that is clear and makes sense, they may not be happy with it but they'll accept it.

I think the one thing that we've really proven, and it was validated in an article which we can get you, is that we are totally apolitical in the way we make these decisions. And I think that in a short period of time, everybody, whether they liked it or not, recognized that we were not political. They might disagree, but they didn't think there was politics coming into it.

And I also want to pay thanks to our appropriators, in the House and the Senate, both the Republican and the Democrats, because they all -- and we had a switch in the middle of my tenure -- honored the principle of not messing with our grants and earmarking. And so they really were supportive of us in terms of this, and I think that they deserve a lot of credit for that.

**Question:** There was -- the relationship between state and locals and this organization is still somewhat strained.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Uh-huh.

**Question:** And particularly I've dealt with this wonderful program called Virtual Alabama, which they feel was a little bit of -- it wasn't invented here, and therefore everyone up here says, we don't -- it doesn't play a role. And that's not an unusual feeling from folks outside the Beltway.

**Secretary Chertoff:** It's a hard balance because we get a lot of suggestions. There are a lot of different suggestions. We can't -- sometimes they're inconsistent. We can't always, therefore, audit them all because they're not necessarily -- they're not necessarily consistent. I think we've learned over time to have more and better engagement with state and locals, and I think that's something which I'm sure is going to continue.

Initially, when you're first setting up the department, you're just so focused on making the basic stuff work that you do tend to be very focused on your own missions. But I think we're broadened it out now. We're now working a system that Los Angeles launched on suspicious activity reporting, which is now being networked to other cities. And our role, which I've said we should play here, is to be the -- house the federated servers and the federated systems. We don't just still have to control it all. We want to enable networking at the state and local level. We want visibility into what's going on so we can learn about it and add value to it. But we don't necessarily have to be the traffic cop.

Another example of a lesson that we learned, and sometimes the best thing is to get out of the way. And this is part of what happens when you're a mature organization. When we had Katrina, and like everything was like

sending stuff to FEMA, in-kind contributions that might or might not been useful, and then people wanted things, and we had no way to connect them up. And we wound up with warehouses full of stuff, and people get irritated, and et cetera.

So we said, well, you know, why are we in the middle here? We're in the world of eBay and all this, you know, internet facilitation. And it turned out there was an virtual Aidmatrix that had the ability to register you know, state-validated charities or groups that needed items. And they could go online, and we could tell people, if you -- other than money, cash, if you want to give something, get online to Aidmatrix. Say, I've got this to give. See who wants it, and get it there. And it's worked very well over the last round.

So that was an example of taking a look at something and saying, you know, instead of fighting about what's a better way to get the stuff in the warehouse and catalogue and then find people to use it, let's just get out of the way. Let's let the network work. I think as we continue to mature as an organization, we will find more opportunities to get out of the way and facilitate as opposed to be the actual switch, and therefore potentially the clog in the flow.

**Question:** You talk about relationships. Do you see building capacity, that we break the country literally into regions? I mean, FEMA already has its ten regions, and Customs and the other department components also have theirs. Do you see that we will really reach a point where we will start to really regionalize how we manage some of these particular efforts?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, some things led itself to that. The problem is the regions, I guess, are configured identically. I mean, the Border Patrol obviously does not have a lot of activity in Kansas, so their regionalization is a little different.

But I do think increasingly we want to get the components at the -- at the regional level working together. We've done that, particularly in the domain of maritime activity with Customs and Border Protection and Coast Guard and TSA. They have, in some of the ports, put together joint centers and joint activities. And I think that's a good lead into regionalization.

I would say more localization. Not every region fits all. Some are more intense in the maritime. Some are more intense in other things. But I think that the more we can decentralize, again, as we get more mature, the better we are.

**Question:** When you look at, using your term, localization, the new administration is talking about spending literally billions on new infrastructure. Do you see this department, you know, looking to provide some guidance as to some of the -- those infrastructure investments, whether those be new utilities, roads, bridges, et cetera?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Here's -- I actually gave a speech about this six months ago, so -- which I say on that I'm not a Johnny-come-lately to this. I said, we have about 2- to 3,000 critical infrastructure from a security standpoint that we identified through I think is a disciplined process. I think that a comparable process would probably produce very similar sets. Already been done for infrastructure, so that when you are prioritizing what you're spending your money on, you are putting it into things that have the most value. For example, what are the kinds of infrastructure that you need to maintain or repair or enhance in order to prevent another levee failure of catastrophic breach failure.

But that doesn't mean every bridge in the country. It doesn't mean every little levy in the country. And the hard thing will be this, which I've experienced in my job dealing with grants. If you -- unless you have a limitless amount of money, and I don't think we do, if you spend on -- if you dole it out or spread it around like peanut butter so every congressional district or state gets a little bit, that'll make jobs or people. But what it won't do is necessarily add informs that will have a real productive value. At the end of the day, I don't necessarily think painting murals is the best way to use -- to develop jobs and to have the economy moved.

What you want to do are build things that you would build in any event, because they have independent value and then you want to use your money to do that so if, you know, strengthening the levies around Sacramento to prevent a catastrophic problem up there, you know, that's a value add that if you could accelerate might be helpful. Or widening the ports of entry so that there aren't long delays which cause time and effort in international travel and also pollute the air because people are idling their engines. That's the kind of thing.

So, and I'm sure there are others who have ideas. I think the challenge is going to be a disciplined non-political process for distributing the money in a way that is productive. That's going to be hard thing to do.

**Question:** How would you assess the management of this agency? How well managed is it?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, here's what we try to do and I think we've succeeded to a significant degree over the last four years. When we came in it was brand new. I take my hat off to Tom Ridge who did a very good job standing up literally from a cubby hole, but we were immature. We had independent systems. Every agency tended to focus on its own task.

In addition to condensing some of the IT systems and the financial management, we do see our material deficiencies from a larger number to a smaller number. What we're able to do is build a joint planning and execution capability through our office of planning and coordination that enabled us to analyze a problem and then across components, and this is the value of the department, and then build a plan across components and have metrics that would show we are able to achieve the plan. And that also got people focused, not so much on just doing their own task, but on producing an outcome so that it's not like, I've done my job, I'm going home. But it's I've done my job, what can I do to make sure we reach the outcome.

The best example, or the first example, is what we did at the border because we looked at the whole process and we realize that success at the border was not just an issue of how you catch people, but how do you detain them, how quickly can you return them, how quickly can you free the beds.

And we wrote the joint plan with CBP, ICE and to some extent CIS to streamline that process and then we built metrics, so we measure every week or every two weeks what's our bed space, what's our turnover. And that helped us identify where there were problems and we use this now to map the border. Where's the flow greater? Where's the flow less?

Not terribly different from what guys like Bill Bratton did in New York with COMSTAT. You can use the numbers -- numbers don't tell all the story, but they're a good tool in many respects in terms of measuring how you do.

**Question:** You mentioned that you met with Janet Napolitano. When did that meeting take place and what was the most important piece of advice that you gave her?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, it was last week. I'm not going to share my advice with her because she's entitled to have it be private and I'm sure I'll meet with her again. I've known her for a long time and I think very highly of her.

I think in general other than, you know, I mean there's a lot of written stuff about programs and I wrote a memo which tried to put some of these things in perspective, but there are a number of things that, as a secretary alone, you do that I think are worth sharing, you know, about the inter-agency process, thinks of that sort and that's the kind of thing you have to talk about --

**Question:** One of the recommendations that you've talked about is sort of not making significant changes to the agency and letting it as it is. Why?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Because every time you threaten a reorganization, let alone carry one out, everybody stops. They don't know who the boss is going to be. They don't know what they ought to do. Everybody has their own idea.

You could always go back and say, well, in a platonic, ideal world we could have organized things differently. No organizational structure is perfect and no matter which unit you put in, that will have its imperfections too.

At some point people need stability to have a system that is predictable and works and, you know, after you've had stability for a period of time you may choose to eliminate something or combine something or add something. But I think it's -- you know, one of the reasons people in Washington love to reorganize is two things.

First of all they can create jobs for themselves; and secondly it's easy and dramatic. It's not the kind of day in, day out implementation which requires spending a lot of time on the details and chasing them down, but it's a sweeping thing and new titles and new boxes and it's, you know, other than spending money it's the kind of thing that is maybe the most pleasurable, you know, from a kind of a big picture standpoint. But in the end it creates its own instability.

**Question:** Just going back to the reorganization idea if you could go back to when DHS was created would you have -- I know that you don't want FEMA to come out now but would you have put it in to begin with?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Yeah, I think it makes sense. I mean, I think that I probably have been more skeptical

before than I am now because I've seen that we have been able to support FEMA using the rest of the department, using the air assets, the communications assets, the boots on the ground.

If FEMA had been separate what would have happened is we would have let them prevention and protection. We would not have been that focused on response. That would have been someone else's job. They would have been focused on response.

When problems came up that span the issue like a biological attack where there's a prevention element and a response element, it would have been harder to get us to connect together, and most important when you manage an incident you are someone who can manage the whole spectrum.

So let me come to the inauguration day. You want to have the ability to manage the prevention side. That's like the Secret Service, which runs all the prevention and protecting. You want the infrastructure protection pieces like the TSA, which is able to make sure there is air security. You want to have the Coast Guard out looking at the waterways. And you want to have FEMA because if there is something you need to be able to get the ability to manage the emergency and get people to a medical facility and things of that sort.

So that's exactly the -- having one operational department that in a civilian domain can manage an incident is, I think, what would get the civilian domain into the space that the defense department got into after Goldwater-Nichols, which was truly integrated joint activity.

**Question:** And if you remove it? Again, we go back to the prevention piece that you were talking about.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Then what's going to happen is I suspect FEMA's going to spend a lot of its time focused on what it's traditionally done, hurricanes, disasters, things of that sort. DHS will spend a lot of time on prevention and protection which it's planning to do. And if something happens -- and they'll be a big seam right between them; and that seam will be what do you do when something can be attacked or addressed by both trying to prevent it, but also mitigating the damage in terms of response. And there will be no one who has ownership or responsibility for that. It will be something which everybody will say that's that person's job. And I think that the reason to integrate is to have on that spectrum all -- you know, the ability to do all these things.

To put it a different way, if there had been a problem in Gustav as there was with the last minute decision by the hospitals to evacuate and if FEMA had been by itself, who would have had to then go and scare up assets to try to move people? And that would have taken a bit of time whereas, because we were working together throughout the process and planning and exercising and because I was literally on the ground, not just with FEMA, but with Coast Guard, I could simply tell the Coast Guard, I could tell Customs and Border Protection do it. Let's do what we have to do and it was immediate execution. So that speed makes a big difference.

**Question:** A lot of people, many people I think are in agreement that FEMA was pretty successful during the 90s when DHS wasn't even here. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Secretary Chertoff:** The question is this: What was the big challenge during the 90s? I mean, FEMA could stand alone doing routine things, but I mean let's take Katrina. There never was a plan written for a mass evacuation of New Orleans that the federal government would do.

Now in the 90s was alone, did they write that plan? They were lucky. There wasn't a big hurricane in the 90s, but it's not like there was a plan and somebody threw it out. In fact, they began writing a plan after FEMA became part of DHS like in 2004, I think it was called hurricane Pam. That was the first cut at doing a plan for something like this.

I'm not denigrating the people prior to that, but I think there's a little bit of a tendency to -- and then of course we're probably starting back to Andrew -- it just depends on to some degree the luck of the draw of what you get in terms of do you get an extraordinary event.

The FEMA, prior to DHS, hadn't done any real work on a radiological bomb or what would happen if there was a pandemic flu and you needed to have some kind of massive ability for mortuary work.

I just think, you know, there's -- here's my observation having been in two governmental departments for a good year of my professional life. There's a natural tendency of every department to revert to that to which it knows best, which is to do its thing because that's what people join to do, they're good at it, they're comfortable with it and when you stretch them into another area or you try to bind them together, break the stove pipes down, there's a natural resistance.

It's like what we had right after 9/11 when there was resistance to the information sharing initially because, we don't do that. That's a law enforcement thing or this is an intelligence thing. This is what we do. It's not what you do.

And what we had to do over time was change that. And it took a few years. It took a few years to fully get to the point that now I never hear from the FBI, I can't tell you that. That's an operational matter.

I never hear that. But I heard that a lot in 2002 and I was at the Department of Justice. So I think, you know, the desire of people to revert back to their independence is the kind of stove piping, and again, look at Mumbai. I'm not being critical, but the press reports were a failure to fuse; a failure to have unity of effort and I think that that's a reminder about the fact that we need to continue to move in that direction rather than move backwards.

**Question:** What skills do you need -- everyone goes into a job and learns a tremendous amount. When you leave this job in the afternoon of January 20th, what skills do you walk out that you didn't have?

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, I had managed organizations, but I think I'm now one of the comparatively few people who has managed a \$50 billion 220,000 person start-up. It has not always been easy and I've made my share of mistakes, but I've actually enjoyed it quite a bit largely because as I've been able to recruit a very talented group of people to work with me and that's given me the opportunity to be strategic in terms of how we direct the organization. I would say that's kind of the biggest new skill or enhanced skill I've developed.

**Moderator:** We've got time for two more questions.

**Question:** What keeps you up at night?

**Secretary Chertoff:** You know, largely worrying that we are not going to be consistent about making the long-term investments in the low probability high consequence events because they're not imminent. We're not going to have -- like right after Mumbai if I went out and talked about the small boat strategy everybody's going to say, yeah, yeah that's great. If I talked about it two months ago everybody's like what do you want to do that for.

So the problem is if you look at the WMD area particularly biological and nuclear we haven't seen that yet. We've seen it in the Anthrax attack but I think that is generally viewed as a kind of a singular event.

So how do you motivate people to invest the money and effort to prepare for that if it's never happened? That's what the financial people call the fat tail and I think that -- I worry that the public will not have the consistency to make sure that those investments are accounted for.

**Question:** Where does that stop? Like it seems like the DHS, the preventive side of the action is continuing to try to find new threats to prevent and by doing so removing liberties from us or from the citizens to try to protect us. So --

**Secretary Chertoff:** Well, actually it's funny because in this particular area I don't think that what needs to be done is take certain liberties. I actually don't think in the WMD area, the investment has to be made obviously in terms of the nuclear, we want to keep it out, that's going to mean finishing up what we're doing on general aviation in terms of making sure that people can't fly in on corporate jets without us knowing who they are and having been cleared. It means actually doing a lot more to secure nuclear material overseas. That's not really our domain, but we have an interest in that obviously. It means more detection capability. Again, I don't think that impacts on civil liberties unless you're walking around with uranium in your pocket.

On the biological area, actually what I think we need to do is more empowering of people. I think the steps that need to be taken are the initiative, you know, the next generation sensing equipment and better integration of information about public health is to just take the existing countermeasures and make them more readily available as a precautionary measure to people.

We're talking about now giving postal workers medical kits which have like Cipro and the normal countermeasures against biological agents because they might be used to distribute to other people and they would want to make sure that they are taken care of first.

But I've argued that we ought to take that further. First responders, maybe at some point, we ought to ask whether ordinary citizens should be afforded the right to do this. Now the medical establishment hates this idea because they like the fact -- they believe, I'm not critical, they believe you shouldn't get a prescription medicine without a doctor's examination because of side effects and because if people misuse the drugs you can have

bacterial resistance develop.

But I have to say that to me I think the balance of the possibility of a catastrophic attack like Anthrax or something which it would be almost impossible to distribute Cipro to thousands and thousands of people, trusting and empowering people to control their own destiny by having the ability to get that and hold it and keep it in their medicine cabinet I think is a positive step for security.

I think that actually is pro-liberty not anti-liberty because it empowers people. And they've actually done some field testing that people would be responsible in doing that. So I don't view security as inimical to liberty. I think it's -- I'm the first person to say I think, you know, I don't believe in 100 percent scanning overseas. I don't believe that we ought to strip search everybody who gets on an airplane. I think we've got to be balanced and I think in many ways we've reached the right balance. And there'll always be tinkering back and forth but so that's my philosophy. I think, you know, we'll see what the next secretary thinks.

**Moderator:** We'll count that as a follow-up. We have time for one final question.

**Question:** I want to ask you about cyber and it's not a real clear question even as I'm trying to formulate it, in terms of you've got Greg Garcia. You've brought in Beckstrom. They haven't really been that visible. There's always banter about what level it should, where it falls. So as you're on your way out where do you see cyber playing over the next --

**Secretary Chertoff:** The cyber -- this is really -- the cyber security strategy which the President signed off and launched in January really I think is a huge shift in the way we do this. Up until then we really treated cyber security as separate and distinct from the domain that was being dealt with in the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community which limited what we could bring to the table.

We had US-CERT we could bring, you know, people to share information but we didn't have access to some of the intelligence, some of the tools that might really take it to the next level. I think that when we put together this strategy it opened up a much broader playing field where we can be an interface between some of these very sensitive capabilities and information and not only the civilian domain and the government, but also the private sector in a way that's not mandatory or coercive in the private sector but opens up the possibility of the opportunity.

With that the theory is that the cyber security division will be our operational arm, US-CERT, you know, our capability to do what we have to do as operators in protecting the civilian domain. But the cyber security center will be, I guess, kind of the like the NCTC, a fusion center between our operational activity, DoD's operational activity, the intelligence community's operational activity so we can network. It's kind of again that federated concept, which are networked together and the center would really be the forum or the platform in which that networking occurs.

**Question:** Do you see that rising in prominence or do you think it's where it needs to be?

**Secretary Chertoff:** I think when it gets fully developed the idea is it will be really kind of a shared space of the major agencies that play here. Not a command and control organism, but literally a shared space where we, DoD, the IC and maybe one or two agencies come together and we share information across it so we can do our job and they can do their job. It doesn't control or command, but it facilitates and moves back and forth.

Whereas the cyber security division is the actual operator in much the same way that the NCTC, National Counter Terrorism Center, you have your collectors and your analysts, but they also -- they're basically the fusion and cross fertilization. I think that's roughly the concept.

**Moderator:** Thanks everybody.

**Secretary Chertoff:** Let me just conclude by saying I think in terms of public affairs interaction, as I said, this has been the most pleasant surprise is the blogging I've gotten. You get the deepest questions that are serious questions not loopy out of (inaudible). That, you know, even if you agree or disagree with what we do they're always informed by a good knowledge base and that really is, from my standpoint that's all I want. I may not persuade you or whatever but I feel that we get a full discussion of the issues which is great. So I'm going to recommend that it be continued. Alright, thanks guys.

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