



# Top Ten Challenges Facing The Next Secretary of Homeland Security

Homeland Security Advisory Council

*September 11, 2008*



Homeland  
Security



# Top Ten Challenges Facing the Next Secretary of Homeland Security

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September 11, 2008

Secretary Michael Chertoff  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary,

On this September 11 anniversary, as we reflect on that dark day seven years ago and remember those who were lost, we present to you a report detailing the ten top strategic challenges that will face your successor. It is the hope of the Homeland Security Advisory Council that this report will give the next Secretary insight into the key challenges facing this Department at this time.

During the course of our deliberations, it became evident that this list of challenges should not be presented in any particular priority order. Instead, these key issues are interdependent and equal in importance. Each of these challenges must be addressed and overcome to achieve a more secure, prepared, and resilient America. The challenge for the new leaders will be to make hard political choices between competing and equal priorities. This report provides a template that may help the new leadership successfully navigate some of those hard decisions that lie ahead.

We appreciate the opportunity to advise you on our most important homeland security matters during this crucial time. On behalf of the members of the Homeland Security Advisory Council, it has been an honor to serve you, the members of this Department, and the American people in this advisory role.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Webster".

Judge William H. Webster  
Chair, Homeland Security Advisory Council

# HSAC Tasking

Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528




**Homeland  
Security**

JUN 05 2008

## Memorandum

MEMORANDUM FOR: Judge William Webster  
Chairman  
Homeland Security Advisory Council

FROM: Secretary Michael Chertoff 

SUBJECT: Homeland Security Advisory Council Tasking

The Homeland Security Advisory Council has contributed to the homeland security of the United States and the betterment of the Department of Homeland Security through 22 completed reports with more than 300 recommendations since its inception. In an effort to support the first transition of administration for the Department, I request that the members of the Council provide for me a list of the ten most pressing strategic-level challenges that will confront the next Secretary of Homeland Security.

This list of challenges – whether outstanding priority recommendations that have yet to be implemented, or other issues of vital importance to the Nation's security – should be at a very broad, strategic level, providing insight into the key challenges that remain for the Department, highlight potential courses of action available, and serve as an appropriate initial briefing for the new Secretary as he or she continues our efforts to secure the Homeland.

Please deliver this report to me by September 15, 2008.

## Executive Summary

In an effort to assist with the first Presidential administration transition of the Department of Homeland Security, the Homeland Security Advisory Council has identified ten key challenges that will confront the next Secretary of Homeland Security.

It is important to note that these key challenges are in no particular order of importance. They are interrelated and interdependent, equally necessary to continue to build a strong Department and secure Homeland. With that said, a core test for political leadership will be to make the hard choices on priorities and trade-offs between equally important programs and policies. Successfully taking on these challenges will help the new Secretary gain credibility within the Department as well as among its many homeland security partners throughout the Nation. Ultimately, homeland security is about synchronizing efforts with multiple partners across the landscape of America. The ability to successfully establish and maintain meaningful partnerships at all levels of government and society for the purpose of securing the homeland may be the greatest, ongoing challenge facing the next Secretary, as well as his or her successors.

- » **Key challenge 1:** Homeland security is more than just a single cabinet Department.
  - » **Key challenge 2:** Quickly get an inventory of the Department's commitments and deadlines and work with Congress to achieve a rational system of oversight.
  - » **Key challenge 3:** Continue to improve intelligence and information sharing.
  - » **Key challenge 4:** Build a cadre of homeland security leadership through a unified national system of training and education.
  - » **Key challenge 5:** Build the strong research and development, procurement and acquisition process necessary to support the Department's various missions.
  - » **Key challenge 6:** The work of strengthening our Nation's disaster response capabilities is not complete.
  - » **Key challenge 7:** Lead the building of a resilient America.
  - » **Key challenge 8:** Find the right balance between secure borders and open doors to travelers, students, and commerce.
  - » **Key challenge 9:** Improve risk management and risk communications for homeland security.
  - » **Key challenge 10:** Sustainability of our Nation's homeland security efforts.
-

## Top Ten Challenges

The Department of Homeland Security leads America's efforts in the prevention of, protection from, response to, and recovery from attacks, major disasters or other emergencies within the Homeland. In the past year the Department has assisted state, local, and tribal governments with combating wildfires, recovering from multiple hurricanes and floods, and protecting the homeland from terrorist threats. On a daily basis, the Department's various components and organizations pursue multiple missions working together with the common goal of securing the Homeland.

The Department reached its five-year anniversary this year. It is an important milestone in an unprecedented effort to combine over 30 federal agencies and programs into one organization. During this time, the Department has matured through both failure and success, and the men and women involved in this effort are to be commended for their tremendous dedication and resolve in serving and securing our Nation.

The Homeland Security Advisory Council appreciates the opportunity to take stock of the continuing challenges in homeland security in order to distinguish the ten most pressing issues facing our nation and the Department. The Council offers this document to the next Secretary of Homeland Security with the hope that it provides guidance to ensure a smooth transition to a new Presidential administration by helping to add understanding to this complex and newly emerging profession.

The top ten challenges that will face this leadership fall into four areas: first, the broad homeland security environment; second, the key issues and relationships outside of the Department; third, the key issues and challenges within the Department; and fourth, several broad strategic challenges.

It is important to note that these key challenges are in no particular order of importance. They are interrelated and interdependent, equally necessary to continue to build a strong Department and secure the Homeland. Highlighted here are unranked and concurrent issues that must be viewed as such. With that said, a core test for political leadership will be

to make the hard choices on priorities and trade-offs between equally important programs and policies.

Successfully taking on these challenges will help the new Secretary gain credibility within the Department as well as among its many homeland security partners throughout the Nation. Ultimately, homeland security is about synchronizing efforts with multiple partners across the landscape of America. The ability to successfully establish and maintain meaningful partnerships at all levels of government and society for the purpose of securing the homeland may be the greatest, ongoing challenge facing the next Secretary, as well as his or her successors.

### *I. THE HOMELAND SECURITY ENVIRONMENT*

Homeland security provides some of the most complex policy and operational challenges faced by any executive agency. Our Nation's homeland security efforts go to the core of long-standing, purposely designed tensions within our Constitutional system of governance; security versus liberty, federalism in intergovernmental relations, and numerous other complex issues. The next Secretary will face two key challenges in understanding the homeland security environment: homeland security involves far more than just DHS, and DHS has a pre-existing set of complex issues, deadlines, and decisions that must be addressed.

#### **KEY CHALLENGE 1: HOMELAND SECURITY IS MORE THAN JUST A SINGLE CABINET DEPARTMENT.**

The Department of Homeland Security is unique in government in its complex need for both horizontal and vertical integration with other organizations and groups. Securing the homeland requires sharing responsibility horizontally with other federal departments and agencies. Relationships with the Intelligence Community, the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, and other partners must continue to grow and become institutionalized. DHS must continue to build its ability to serve as a leader in interagency



homeland security processes and programs. Homeland security also requires a robust vertical integration of the federal, state, local, and tribal governments, the private and non-profit sectors, and the American citizen to build a secure, safe, and resilient Nation.

While horizontal integration requires traditional leadership at the federal level, vertical integration requires new and collaborative skills that will challenge DHS leadership. Gaining credibility with partners outside of the Department will be the foundation of success for the next Secretary. Key to gaining this credibility is ensuring that a bottom-up approach is applied to virtually all homeland security endeavors. The wide variety of homeland security partners makes this a tremendous challenge.

Building upon and improving existing systems for engagement with the private sector is especially essential. While 85 percent of our nation's critical infrastructure is in the hands of the private sector, and the Department has specifically developed Sector Coordinating Councils to improve private sector coordination in this area, the next leadership team must recognize that private sector infrastructure providers comprise only a small percentage of the entire private sector. The next Secretary must continue to engage the broader private sector to strengthen the working relationships on proposed homeland security strategies, policies, and procedures during their formulation and prior to publication or implementation. This collaboration is particularly important with respect to the private sector's role in our Nation's response and resiliency endeavors, and most importantly with respect to the Department's regulatory rule-making authorities.

The Homeland cannot be secure until every hometown is secure. That means listening to local leaders and including their thoughts in the homeland security plans, programs, and processes. The incoming leadership of DHS will be challenged continually to ensure that homeland security partners are provided collaborative mechanisms to provide essential "outside-the-beltway" perspectives that work towards securing the Homeland.

## **KEY CHALLENGE 2: QUICKLY GET AN INVENTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT'S COMMITMENTS AND DEADLINES AND WORK WITH CONGRESS TO ACHIEVE A RATIONAL SYSTEM OF OVERSIGHT.**

DHS is involved in many controversial but important efforts, many with congressionally-mandated deadlines. The ability to competently manage these deadlines will test the credibility of the new Secretary and the new leadership team. Additionally, 86 Congressional committees are keeping a keen eye on the Department's progress in meeting these numerous efforts and deadlines. For example, the 9/11 Act requires that DHS scan 100 percent of U.S.-bound maritime containers by 2012 and screen 100 percent of air cargo by 2010. Both requirements also lay out key milestones that must be met (e.g., the requirement that 50 percent of air cargo be screened by February 2009). The new administration will need to ensure consistency in the Department's approach to meeting both the 100 percent maritime scanning and 100 percent air cargo screening requirements within the 9/11 Act.

The next administration will also need to fulfill requirements for the National Preparedness System. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 and the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) which call for a comprehensive system to assess, on an on-going basis, the Nation's capabilities and overall preparedness, including operational readiness.

Some additional commitments and deadlines facing the next Secretary and requiring continued action include Real ID, Secure Border Initiative Network (SBINet), US-VISIT, Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), E-Verify, Transportation Worker Identification Credential Program (TWIC), the Target Capabilities List (HSPD-8), and the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). This is just a small sample of the numerous programs and activities that the new leadership team will need to tackle quickly.

The new Secretary must also aggressively work with Congressional leadership and The White House to develop a rational system of oversight that provides

proper balance between the Executive and Legislative roles in governance and does not choke the ability of the new leadership team to manage the Department. Reporting to 86 different Congressional committees directly and negatively affects the Department's ability to manage and address its many homeland security missions. The next Secretary should continue to pursue the recommendation of the 9/11 Commission for Congress to reduce its homeland security oversight processes. The Congressional system of oversight is a dangerous obstacle to the Department's efforts to achieve its mission.

## II. LOOKING OUTSIDE DHS

Building and strengthening partnerships with organizations outside the Department is one of the most fundamental challenges for the new Secretary. Closely linked to this is the need to expand and improve information sharing processes that tie all the players together, and provide a common picture of the challenges and threats to America. Building out a robust system for sharing information and intelligence is a key challenge and underlying network that will tie DHS to all its partners.

### KEY CHALLENGE 3: CONTINUE TO IMPROVE INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION SHARING.

The Department and its partners have spent the past five years building the basic systems and mechanisms to share and exchange information and intelligence. The next Secretary of Homeland Security must continue to expand this system.

Several opportunities exist to accomplish this goal, including implementing objectively measurable processes for intelligence and information sharing with the private sector, as well as state, local, and tribal governments. The incoming DHS leadership must institute standards to continuously improve the quality, timeliness, and operational utility of intelligence and information-sharing systems with all Homeland Security partners. Several initiatives should be considered and

supported as next-steps in building this information and intelligence-sharing network, including:

- » **Requirements-based intelligence** – Consistent with the intelligence cycle, DHS should implement a requirements-based intelligence and information sharing process with its state, local, tribal and private sector partners that will allow for each partner to define, identify, and voice its intelligence and information sharing needs.
- » **Expand and sustain fusion centers** – Intelligence fusion centers at the state level are becoming an essential place for information sharing. Expand and sustain existing fusion centers by completing the assignment of DHS intelligence officers in every fusion center, continue to build common standards and common platforms for information-sharing in the fusion centers, and seek mechanisms to provide sustained funding to fusion center efforts, especially those efforts that include technology and people.
- » **Involve the private sector in fusion centers, emergency operations centers, and joint field offices** – These centers offer the best opportunity for the private sector to integrate with government activities by sharing information on a day-to-day basis and integrating response efforts during times of national security emergencies.
- » **Fix the security clearance and classification process** – The federal security clearance process and classification system is broken and is a barrier (and often an excuse) for not sharing pertinent information with homeland security partners. The next Secretary should direct a concerted effort to resolve these clearance and classification issues.

## III. LOOKING INSIDE DHS

As the new Secretary begins to understand the challenging operating environment of DHS, it is also necessary to look inside the Department and take the next steps to lead DHS towards its 10th anniversary, and beyond. Key challenges inside the Department include building

an effective leadership cadre for the future, improving the Department's technology acquisition processes and procurement procedures to prepare for the future threats to the Homeland, and continuing to improve upon the Department's leadership role in preparing and responding to unfolding catastrophic events.

While it is inevitable that some continued reorganization of the homeland security enterprise will take place as the new leadership looks inside the Department, the next Secretary should take caution in quickly reorganizing the pieces before gaining a grounded understanding of how the entire organization functions. While some movement will be inevitable, it should be measured against costs and effort that will result.

It is common for new leadership teams to focus on the organizational structures and boxes as the source of their energies. But in reality it is the people making up the organizational charts that make mission successes possible. The next Secretary should focus on the needs of the employees within DHS and the supporting management systems and infrastructures that enable them to accomplish their work. By placing the people inside the organization first and understanding their jobs and roles, any necessary reorganizing of those people into a structure for accomplishing their missions will become self-evident.

#### **KEY CHALLENGE 4: BUILD A CADRE OF HOMELAND SECURITY LEADERSHIP THROUGH A UNIFIED NATIONAL SYSTEM OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION.**

Homeland security remains in its early stages as both a concept and as a profession. It is a mosaic of disciplines, from law to law enforcement, public policy, administration, military and national security affairs, emergency response, emergency management, risk management, intelligence, science and technology, and communications. Professionals from each of these fields populate the federal, state, local, tribal, private, and non-profit leadership throughout our national homeland security system. It is imperative that the next Secretary work to secure the grounding of this profession by

aligning the training and education systems on a national level. This must start inside the Department with its own leadership, and expand outside the Department to include the wide variety of homeland security partners.

- » **Leadership training environment** - One initiative the Department should continue to support and expand is the Homeland Security Academy program with the Homeland Security University System to develop its own leadership school where senior and future leaders in the Department can share experiences, standardize their professional development, and work to further integrate the Department's culture, knowledge, and operations. Developing a place where students who are key leaders from multiple DHS organizations can interact, develop relationships, discuss key leadership and cultural issues, and work together on projects that are beneficial to the Department is the key to this effort. Currently, DHS is using the Naval Postgraduate School to support this program. There are many examples in private industry that can be modeled to create a leadership training environment to develop future leaders.
- » **Professional development** - DHS must lead an effort to increase the visibility of professional development opportunities both within DHS and with homeland security partners. This will involve expanding the opportunities for training, education, and development assignments beyond traditional horizontal opportunities (to work in different DHS components or other Cabinet departments, for example) to include opportunities to work vertically, with state, local, and tribal governments, or with the private or non-profit sectors. Understanding both the horizontal and vertical relationships -- and how these interlocking pieces fit into our Constitutional system of government -- is the key to unlocking the potential of DHS by developing strong future leadership who will lead a truly national homeland security effort.
- » **Education** - Over 200 colleges and universities are now providing degrees in homeland security and related fields. For a homeland security degree to mean something, however, people must know what a homeland security degree means. DHS must lead an effort to align curricula, develop education standards, define the loose boundaries of the

profession, and support the academic foundation of a homeland security education system. The concept of the Homeland Security University System must be expanded to include a systematic, national approach to homeland security education.

» **National Security vs. Homeland Security education -**

It is important that the next Secretary understand and emphasize that “homeland security” is aligned with, overlaps, but is not the same as “national security.” Commendable efforts are underway to rebuild the system of National Security Professional Development at the federal level as dictated by the President’s May 2007 Executive Order 13434. DHS must ensure that a similar effort, taking into account the unique nature of homeland security, provides the Nation with leaders for the future with the professional understanding of how homeland security fits into the national security jig-saw puzzle.

» **Training** - DHS has supported many training programs, often through grants, to build levels of operational competency. DHS should ensure that these training programs are reviewed for relevance and align with the rest of the homeland security training and education system.

» **Enhance Red Team Thinking** - DHS should also look for mechanisms to enhance “red team” thinking and capabilities among its leadership by incorporating programs that provide alternate world-views and build the capacity of leaders to think in a more flexible and adaptive manner. Leaders should learn to think like our adversaries, or to simply look at problems through different lenses and test institutional assumptions.

**KEY CHALLENGE 5:  
BUILD THE STRONG RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, PROCUREMENT AND ACQUISITION PROCESS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THE DEPARTMENT’S VARIOUS MISSIONS.**

DHS must continue to build a credible and reliable system for identifying, developing, and acquiring technologies

and services that meet the evolving requirements of the Department and the changing threats to the Homeland. The next Secretary must continue the effort to implement the recommendations from the Homeland Security Advisory Council’s *Essential Technology Task Force Report* (2008), including:

- » Build a high performance acquisition function implemented by capable staff.
- » Adopt a rigorous Department-wide requirements management process.
- » Develop a Department-wide acquisition strategy with a clear implementation plan.
- » Improve engagement with the private sector in the acquisitions process.
- » Manage innovation through a variety of approaches.
- » Use the regulatory and standards-setting role of DHS to generate economies of scale across markets.

**KEY CHALLENGE 6:  
THE WORK OF STRENGTHENING OUR NATION’S DISASTER RESPONSE CAPABILITIES IS NOT COMPLETE.**

The new Secretary will need to understand the evolving roles, responsibilities, and authorities that go along with his or her position as the Nation’s leader for domestic incident management. Understanding the relationships between the Secretary of Homeland Security and the roles of the Attorney General, the Secretary of Defense, the Administrator of FEMA, and state and local leaders will test the leadership of the next Secretary. The issue of when and through what authorities the President and the Nation’s Governors must share or cede authority during a large catastrophe is still an unsettled Constitutional issue.

Despite good efforts to improve our national response capabilities, including the new National Response Framework, the next Secretary must be aware of many response issues that require additional attention.

- » **The gap in medical and EMS surge capacity** – Gaps remain in the Nation’s disaster preparedness and response capabilities, most notably in medical surge

capacity and emergency medical readiness for mass casualties and specialty life support, trauma, and burn care. This will require close coordination with the next Secretary of Health and Human Services.

- » **National Planning System and Target Capabilities** – As national planning efforts are established, the new Secretary will be challenged to ensure involvement of homeland security partners in building a bottom-up approach of organization and response. This planning is essential but must involve homeland security partners to make those plans realistic. Eisenhower’s dictum that planning is important, not the plan itself, applies here.
- » **Testing of response capacity** – The new Secretary will be involved in many national exercises, an important tool used for determining preparedness and capabilities. However, the exercise system currently in use has many weaknesses, often either throwing predictable scenarios at participants in order to involve everyone or failing to test for system failure to identify areas and issues where the system can be strengthened. DHS should also enhance the use of Red Teams in exercises, not just to probe for weaknesses and overlooked vulnerabilities, but also to test for weaknesses that could threaten response efforts. Additionally, key lessons are more often revisited than learned and the process for sharing lessons from exercises and tying them into program changes is ineffective and slow.
- » **Implement the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Framework (NRF) across the federal agencies** – Training partners in the federal government in the use of the NRF and the NIMS system and implementing its widespread use must become a government-wide priority.
- » **Monitor the real-time resource status of national response assets** – DHS has improved its ability to maintain situational awareness during catastrophic events but should work to improve its ability to ensure DHS has real-time visibility on national resources that are available for incident response.
- » **Maintain the all-hazards approach** – The all-hazards philosophy should remain an underlying focus of all

response and recovery efforts and should also guide the Department’s prevention and protection doctrine.

- » **Disaster communications** – Communications in the midst of a disaster is a perpetual problem, and DHS must continue to lead initiatives that work to ensure resilient communications systems and interoperability during disasters, as well as establish response plans and mechanisms that can be executed in the midst of, or in spite of, communications failures.
- » **Think about recovery before the catastrophe** – DHS should develop a framework for catastrophic disaster recovery in anticipation of future events to take place alongside preparedness, mitigation, and planning as a key inter-governmental function.

#### IV. STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

In addition to the previous objectives, there are a number of strategic national challenges that the next Secretary will need to address. These include shifting our preparedness and protection efforts towards a concept of national resiliency, finding the right balance between security and openness at our borders, and building the framework that will support a risk management approach to the homeland.

##### KEY CHALLENGE 7: LEAD THE BUILDING OF A RESILIENT AMERICA.

Critical infrastructure is the enabler of our national economic and social activity and therefore, a central focus of our homeland security efforts. While the Department’s role in promoting infrastructure protection is important, recent infrastructure failures and their cascading consequences have demonstrated that a focus based solely on protection is not enough. As a nation, we cannot protect everything, against all things, at all times, and at all costs. Fortress America thinking is an unattainable goal and the wrong national strategy. A far-superior objective for our Nation and our critical infrastructures is the concept of resilience. It is a concept that is more aligned with our traditional American

values as an independent, rugged, and strong society. The ability to absorb the blows and quickly snap back from the consequences of any event, natural or manmade, will be the measure of long-term security success. The Nation-wide application of a “resilience metric” (i.e., time to reconstitution of every day services and routines of life) builds on traditional, sector-focused protection efforts and provides the means to objectively assess, triage, and significantly mitigate and effectively manage the initial and cascading consequences of infrastructure service disruption, regardless of cause. An all-hazards approach to building resiliency should become an overarching theme throughout our homeland security enterprises.

- » **Public-private partnerships** – Resilience is a unifying goal that must be addressed by the entire Federal Government and Nation. Thus, the new Secretary must ensure that DHS policies and programs empower, enable and leverage the experience, vision and innovation that reside in private sector, community, state and regional-based resilience efforts. Ensure continuous improvement in national resilience by actively engaging and acting upon private-sector and academic-sector thought leaders (e.g., Business Executives for National Security, Center for Strategic and International Studies, The Council on Competitiveness, Council on Foreign Relations, The Heritage Foundation, The Infrastructure Security Partnership, and The Reform Institute). As an extension of the above, the government must also support the development of a nationwide system of community-based, cross-sector, resilience-focused partnerships to empower communities to collaborate in their collective best interests.

### KEY CHALLENGE 8: FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN SECURE BORDERS AND OPEN DOORS TO TRAVELERS, STUDENTS, AND COMMERCE.

This issue involves more than just DHS, including such partners as the Department of State, The White House, and the private sector. The challenge of finding the proper balance between secure borders and open doors for travelers, foreign students, foreign workers,

and commerce remains a priority. This issue must be a focus of the highest levels of our government.

- » **Need for Cabinet-level leadership** – We acknowledge that there is an inherent and unavoidable tension between security and openness, requiring policy analysis and review by the President and the Cabinet. It is unreasonable to expect mission-oriented agencies within the Department, e.g. Customs and Border Protection or the Transportation Security Administration, charged with a specific security mission, to adjudicate the trade-off between security and openness. But we cannot win the long struggle against extremist ideology by closing our doors to the people of the world that want to visit, learn, and work here.
- » **Expand what works** - The Department has made great accomplishments in improving security by identifying those who would do us harm. Expanding programs such as Model Ports is important, and these programs are to be commended. But additional work is needed, especially with inter-agency partners such as the Department of State, to improve the processing of visitor, student, and worker visas. In addition, DHS must continue to work with industry partners to ensure that the flow of commerce and the life of our economy is not choked off in an effort to build walls against both real and perceived threats.
- » **Improve metrics** - Key to understanding this problem is the need to further develop and refine better metrics that measure the performance of our security systems around the processing of people and goods. An effort to integrate the metrics used at the Department of State and in private industry with those used at DHS would help build a common picture of the movement of people and goods, and help measure our effectiveness in achieving the right balance.

### KEY CHALLENGE 9: IMPROVE RISK MANAGEMENT AND RISK COMMUNICATIONS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY.

Dealing with risk involves two key concepts: risk management and risk communications. The new

Secretary must support and expand efforts to improve the risk-based approach to homeland security, which is in its early stages. The evolution and decisions about risk, as applied to the Homeland, are paramount to building a risk-based foundation for security that lasts into the next decade. Ultimately, a good risk framework is only useful if political leaders (at all levels) are willing to make tough choices on security trade-offs.

In addition, the new Secretary has the challenge of communicating to the American people and homeland security partners in an effort to prepare them for potential threats, as well as during unfolding crises.

» **Risk management** – Assessing the changing risks to America is always a priority. DHS is uniquely positioned to lead a national effort at developing a risk management approach to securing the Homeland. Determining the risks to the Homeland and using a risk management approach to allocate resources, make decisions, and communicate threats, readiness, and protective actions has not been perfected. This will require establishing and improving performance metrics for measuring risk and building a framework for risk-informed decision-making. An effective risk-based approach will help the new Secretary share the responsibility for managing those risks with other partners in homeland security, allocate resources more efficiently and effectively, and counter the politicization of homeland security programs (such as grant distribution).

It is also important that the Department make an effort to consolidate the different, existing risk management programs across its many components and agencies, to ensure that the DHS risk methodology is consistent within the Department, and consistent when presented to the Department's many partners.

» **Risk communications** – Improving the approach to risk in the Department also requires improving risk communications systems. Risk communications starts with the fundamental need to explain the threats that America faces and involves creating a culture of preparedness through long-term education. An effective risk communications system can mitigate the long-term psychological effects of an incident on

the American citizen, which will help safeguard our Democracy against overreaction to possible future attacks. It also involves improving crisis communications systems such as the color-coded homeland security advisory system (which should be revisited and revised to have meaning for the average American), as well as completing the improvements to the old emergency alert and warning systems that DHS controls. New crisis communications networks must engage homeland security partners during the initial phases of an event, provide adequate and immediate warning with clear instructions to those in harm's way, and continually update partners and the public with pertinent information as the situation changes.

#### KEY CHALLENGE 10: SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR NATION'S HOMELAND SECURITY EFFORTS.

Two underlying issues challenge the long-term sustainability of our homeland security efforts: finances and focus.

- » **Financial sustainability** – In this period of economic struggle, it will be easy for the federal government, state, local, and tribal governments, and partners in the private sector to shirk responsibility for financing long-term homeland security efforts. Selling the need for continued and long-term investments to finance our homeland security enterprise for those over-the-horizon threats will challenge the next Secretary.
- » **Focus** – One of the toughest challenges for the next Secretary will be to keep the American public engaged and focused on efforts to prepare for any potential domestic or international threats. Maintaining the political will and public support to move forward with necessary, long-term efforts to protect the Homeland is a challenge for all Americans. The new leaders of DHS must continue to work to inspire a sense of urgency in the public and among policy-makers that our efforts are necessary and valuable to the protection of our Nation.

## Acknowledgements

The members of the Homeland Security Advisory Council would like to express our appreciation to the three leaders we have had the privilege of advising: President George W. Bush, Secretary Tom Ridge, and Secretary Michael Chertoff. We believe that their leadership in facing the fundamental challenge of our generation in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001 will be seen through the eyes of history as laying the strong foundation for the future security of America.

We have found this Council to provide a unique avenue for exchanging important ideas and initiatives among all the partners who share the burden of securing America. We offer this report to the next Secretary with the hope that he or she will have a successful tenure in leading this young organization. This Council stands ready to assist the new Secretary in our continued desire to be of service to the Department and the American people.

The Council would also like to express appreciation to the staff of the Homeland Security Advisory Council whom have worked diligently to facilitate the delivery of our advice and recommendations.



## Process

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff tasked the Homeland Security Advisory Council with compiling a list of top challenges facing the Department at the Advisory Council's meeting in Washington, D.C in June 2008. During that meeting, members heard views on current challenges expressed by members of the Department and its senior leadership, homeland security partners, and homeland security thought leaders.

A working group of Homeland Security Advisory Council members and its five subcommittees held eight separate teleconferences in July, August, and September 2008 to discuss and develop this report. The members also reviewed past Advisory Council materials and position papers from leaders in academia, think tanks, the media, Congress, the GAO, and the Department's numerous homeland security partners in government.

# Appendix A: Homeland Security Advisory Council

## *HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS*

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**William H. Webster (Chair)**

Partner, Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy, LLP

**James R. Schlesinger (Vice Chair)**

Chairman, Board of Trustees, The MITRE Corporation

**Richard Andrews, Ph.D.**

Senior Director, Homeland Security Projects,  
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## Appendix B: Homeland Security Advisory Council Reports

### 2008

- » Report of the Essential Technology Task Force
- » Report of the Administration Transition Task Force
- » Report of the Secure Borders Open Doors Advisory Committee

### 2007

- » Future of Terrorism Task Force Report
- » Homeland Security Culture Task Force Report

### 2006

- » DHS/DOJ Fusion Center Guidelines
- » Critical Infrastructure Task Force Report
- » Weapons of Mass Effect Task Force on Preventing the Entry of Weapons of Mass Effect Into the United States

### 2005

- » Homeland Security Requirements Process
- » Homeland Security Information Sharing between Government and the Private Sector Report
- » Homeland Security Intelligence and Information Fusion Report
- » Maritime Strategy Report
- » Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 Recommendations

### 2004

- » Intelligence and Information Sharing Initiative Report and Recommendations
- » Task Force on State and Local Homeland Security Funding Report
- » Homeland Security Lexicon Recommendations
- » Homeland Security Award Recommendations
- » Statewide Template Initiative



# Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

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