

Addressing America's Domestic Security Holes: A Blueprint For The New Homeland Security Department

The following report grades the federal government's efforts to protect the nation's key infrastructure areas. It examines efforts to protect America's airports, rail system, sea ports, water supply and public health system and evaluates our nation's ability to forestall and respond to attacks using nuclear, bio-chemical and more traditional destructive materials. Most importantly, it lays out an agenda for what the new Department of Homeland Security needs to do over the next six months to improve and enhance emergency preparedness

- **Providing New Money for First Responders and NOT Taking From Other Law Enforcement Activities** Over the last year and a half, the Administration has stonewalled and shortchanged first responders – freezing funds Congress appropriated for emergency response teams, then refusing to release appropriations and jerry-rigging the system by providing funds for emergency response preparedness by cutting \$82 million from the Justice Department's COPS program and \$118 million from Emergency Management Grants – exacerbating the financial straits being felt by local police and fire departments. The White House now admits that the FY03 Omnibus contains only \$1.3 billion in new funds for local counter-terrorism efforts, a more optimistic outlook than the one given by the Senate Democratic Policy Committee which says there is only \$994 million in new funding. The DHS should require all money for anti-terrorism first responder increases to be new money - not funds taken from other law enforcement programs. In addition, the DHS needs to expedite the release of those funds before police and fire departments face foreclosure.

Grade: F

- **Helping Localities Bear The Costs of First Responders in the Military Reserves and National Guard** A disproportionate number of those called up for active duty service are police officers, firefighters or paramedics. These first responder organizations suffer financially from call-ups because many continue to pay benefits and portions of salaries. The DHS should reimburse state and local first responder units to help cover the expense of Reserve and National Guard call-ups. Emergency services across the country need this funding to maintain staffing levels required for homeland security. With the possibility that military action abroad is likely to provoke retaliatory action against the American homeland, and any diminished capacity to prevent and respond to such an attack could be disastrous.

Grade: F

- **Combating Bioterrorism** The bulk of the federal funds to combat bioterrorism so far have focused on the development of State and community bioterrorism preparedness plans. Little funding has gone to local hospitals and public health entities to implement the plans, leaving them wholly unprepared in the event of an attack. Public hospitals need an immediate infusion of at least \$10 billion to enhance bioterrorism preparedness and ensure that they are ready in the event of an attack, according to health experts.

Grade: C+

- **Cyber-Security** Cyber attacks on critical infrastructure could result in a range of disasters including disruption of the stock market, rolling blackouts, dead phone lines, as well as sudden subway, train and air traffic control shutdowns. In 2002, the number of reported computer security incidents was 82,094, an increase of almost 30,000 from the prior year. The Administration's newly-released Cyberspace plan fails

to include requirements for Internet service providers to include firewall software and does not require government agencies to use their vast purchasing power of computer programs to encourage software makers to improve the security of their products. The plan also lacks a comprehensive time line for enacting its proposals as well as an assessment of the costs.

Grade: D

- **Chemical Plant Security** According to the Environmental Protection Agency, there are 110 hazardous material facilities where a release of chemicals could threaten more than one million people. There are an additional 750 other facilities where a chemical release would threaten more than 100,000 people. Despite these risks, security at these plants remains lax and no federal security standards govern these facilities. The DHS needs to establish federal security standards for chemical plants, conduct vulnerability assessments at chemical facilities across the country, and report to Congress within one year on the cost of implementing the needed security improvements.

Grade: F

- **Water Supply Security** The President has reported that diagrams of public water systems were discovered in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, and officials seized water supply diagrams from suspected Al-Qaeda members in Denver. Despite these risks, the EPA has provided only \$111 million of the \$500 million needed to help municipal water systems develop security plans. Even worse, the Administration has capped the maximum individual grant capped at \$115,000 – less than a fifth of what it would cost a city with over one million people to conduct a study. The DHS needs to increase funding for these needs and earmark funds specifically for security.

Grade: D

- **Northern Border Security** The Administration has failed to implement measures to beef up security along the porous, 4,000-mile Northern Border, supporting only enough money to hire two of every three border personnel authorized by Congress. The Administration must comply with the PATRIOT Act's Northern Border staffing authorizations and create a Northern Border Coordinator within the DHS responsible for monitoring border security, improving coordination among federal agencies, and acting as a liaison with state and local governments, as well as with the Canadian government.

Grade: C

- **Great Lakes Security** Although boaters crossing the Great Lakes into the US are technically required to report to Customs upon their arrival, few actually comply – only 10 percent of Lake Ontario boat traffic reports to Customs, leaving an estimated 16,000 boats unaccounted for each year. The DHS should create a database to monitor boat traffic crossing the Great Lakes and create regional task forces through which federal and local representatives will work together to meet the unique security needs of each Great Lake.

Grade: D

- **Protecting Commercial Airlines While In Flight** The hand-fired missile attack on an Israeli airliner in November underscored the need to equip commercial airlines with technology capable of defending against surface-to-air missiles. Shoulder-launched missiles have a range of over 3 miles, well within the flight paths of planes flying in and out of urban areas and are known to be in the possession of

some of the world's most dangerous terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and Hezbollah. The DHS needs to equip planes with anti-missile technology, increasing research to develop ground-based missile jamming systems and improving anti-smuggling measures to ensure that the missiles do not reach the US.

Grade: F

- **Port Security** Just 2% of the 5.7 million cargo containers that come through American ports are screened for contraband materials. Poor radiation detection technology leaves ports and border crossings vulnerable to terrorist groups trying to smuggle dirty bombs into the country. The DHS should provide funds for research and development into port security technologies, deploy radiation detectors at ports nationwide, and should expedite the deployment of the Container Security Initiative.

Grade: C-

- **Charter Aircraft Security** Currently non-commercial aircraft, including all charter and general aviation flights, are not bound by the same security requirements on commercial aircraft. As a result, passengers and baggage are not screened on the vast majority of non-commercial flights. The DHS should mandate that all aircraft with 15 seats or more be required to meet commercial screening standards, which includes screening all passengers and baggage. In addition, the DHS should evaluate and develop a plan to improve security on smaller charter aircraft.

Grade: C

- **Rail Security** Although security experts agree that the nation's rail system is vulnerable to attack in the wake of 9/11, next to nothing has been done to improve rail security. Significant sections of Amtrak's infrastructure remain completely unprotected and Amtrak's continuing financial difficulties have made it near impossible for the railroad to make needed security upgrades without Federal assistance. In addition, the nation's freight railroads are vulnerable, and the FRA has done little to work with railroads to improve freight rail security. The DHS must assume responsibility for rail security planning and develop a schedule for integrating the nation's freight railroad police departments into a nationwide railroad safety system coordinated from one central location.

Grade: D-

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