

Secretary Napolitano Announces 60-Day Review of Homeland Security Advisory System



Release Date: July 14, 2009

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
Contact: 202-282-8010

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano today announced the formation of a task force to conduct a 60-day review of the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS). The mission of the task force is to assess the effectiveness of the system in informing the public about terrorist threats and communicating protective measures within government and throughout the private sector.

Secretary Napolitano appointed Fran Townsend, former Assistant to President George W. Bush for Homeland Security, and Judge William Webster, former director of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), to co-chair the task force and lead the review.

“I have assembled a task force, made up of Democrats and Republicans, elected officials at the state and local level, security experts, law enforcement officials and other professionals to assess our current threat level system and provide options for any improvements that are needed,” said Secretary Napolitano, “My goal is simple: to have the most effective system in place to inform the American people about threats to our country.”

The review will include broad consideration of HSAS and the system’s impact on state, local, tribal, territorial and international law enforcement partners, the private sector and the American people. The task force will consult with the Department of Justice—under which HSAS was originally created—and provide opportunities for public input. In addition, DHS will take public comment directly via email at hsasreview@dhs.gov.

Following the 60-day review period, the task force will present its findings to Secretary Napolitano, who will, in turn, discuss the findings with other Cabinet officials before making a recommendation about the future of the system to the White House.

This review is one of a number of steps Secretary Napolitano has taken to bolster the Department’s counterterrorism efforts. She recently completed a weeklong trip to Europe and the Middle East where she signed agreements with Spain and Portugal to allow for the exchange of biometric and biographic data to bolster counterterrorism and law enforcement efforts while emphasizing privacy protections. She also visited Ireland, England, Kuwait and Pakistan, where she met with top security officials to increase coordination against transnational terrorism.

Over the past five months, Secretary Napolitano has embarked on new security agreements with international partners, bolstered intelligence information sharing with domestic law enforcement partners, announced \$1.7 billion in Homeland Security grants to strengthen risk-based preparedness activities across the nation for all disasters and implemented programs and directed funding for infrastructure protection, transportation and air travel security and cybersecurity efforts, among other efforts to protect the nation from threats of terrorism.

Task Force

Co-chair Fran Townsend – Former Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism

Co-chair William Webster – Chair of Homeland Security Advisory Council and former Director of CIA and FBI

Randy Beardsworth – Former Assistant Secretary for Strategic Plans at DHS and principal with Catalyst Partners

Richard Ben-Veniste – Partner at Mayer Brown, LLP, and 9/11 Commission member

Matt Bettenhausen – California Homeland Security Advisor

David Bradley – Owner of the Atlantic Media Group

James Carafano – Senior Member at the Heritage Foundation

Mannv Diaz – Mavor of Miami

Clark Ervin – Director of the Aspen Institute’s Homeland Security Program and former Inspector General for DHS

Mary Fetchet – Founding Director of VOICES of September 11th

Shirley Franklin – Mayor of Atlanta

Rick Fuentes – Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police and State Director of Emergency Management

George Gascon – San Francisco Chief of Police

Christine Gregoire – Governor of Washington

Michael Rounds – Governor of South Dakota

Joe Shirley – President of Navajo Nation

Ed Skyler – Deputy Mayor of New York City

History of Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS)

- The Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) was introduced on March 12, 2002.
- After its introduction in 2002, the national threat level has been modified sixteen times.
- It has consistently remained at Yellow (Elevated) or Orange (High) and was elevated to Red (Severe) once on Aug. 10, 2006.
- HSAS has never been lowered to Green (Low) or Blue (Guarded).
- In August 2004, DHS began identifying specific sectors to possible terrorist threats—including aviation, financial services and mass transit.

2002

March 12, 2002 – Introduction of Homeland Security Advisory System at Yellow

As part of a series of initiatives to improve coordination and communication among all levels of government and the American public, President George W. Bush signed Homeland Security Presidential Directive 3, creating the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS).

Sept. 10, 2002 – Raised from Yellow to Orange

The U.S. intelligence community received information, based on debriefings of a senior al Qaeda operative, of possible terrorists attacks timed to coincide with the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. Information indicated that al-Qaeda cells were established in several South Asian countries in order to conduct car-bomb and other attacks on U.S. facilities. These cells had been accumulating explosives since approximately January 2002 in preparation for attacks.

Sept. 24, 2002 – Lowered from Orange to Yellow

Based on a review of intelligence and an assessment of threats by the intelligence community, as well as the passing of the anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks and the disruption of potential terrorist operations in the United States and abroad, the Attorney General in consultation with the Homeland Security Council returned the threat level to an elevated risk of terrorist attack, or yellow.

2003

Feb. 7, 2003 – Raised from Yellow to Orange

Intelligence reports suggested that Al Qaida leaders emphasized planning for attacks on apartment buildings, hotels, and other soft or lightly secured targets in the United States.

Feb. 27, 2003 – Lowered from Orange to Yellow

Threat level lowered based on a careful review of how specific intelligence evolved, as well as counter-terrorism actions taken to address specific aspects of the threat situation.

March 17, 2003 – Raised from Yellow to Orange

The intelligence community believed that terrorists would attempt multiple attacks against U.S. and Coalition targets worldwide in the event of a U.S led military campaign against Saddam Hussein.

April 16, 2003 – Lowered from Orange to Yellow

Following a review of intelligence and an assessment of threats by the intelligence community, DHS, in consultation with the Homeland Security Council lowered the threat advisory level to an elevated risk of terrorist attack..

May 20, 2003 – Raised from Yellow to Orange

In the wake of terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia and Morocco, intelligence reports indicated that terrorists might attempt attacks against targets in the United States.

May 30, 2003 – Lowered from Orange to Yellow

Following a review of intelligence and an assessment of threats by the intelligence community, DHS, in consultation with the Homeland Security Council lowered the threat advisory level to an elevated risk of terrorist attack.

Dec. 21, 2003 – Raised from Yellow to Orange

The U.S. intelligence community received a substantial increase in the volume of threat-related intelligence reports.

2004**Jan. 9, 2004 – Lowered from Orange to Yellow**

Following a review of intelligence and an assessment of threats by the intelligence community, DHS, in consultation with the Homeland Security Council lowered the threat advisory level to an elevated risk of terrorist attack..

Aug. 1, 2004 – Raised from Yellow to Orange, specifically for the financial services sectors in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Washington, D.C.

Raised the threat level for the financial services sector in New York City, Northern New Jersey and Washington, D.C. as a result of new and unusually specific information about where al-Qaeda would like to attack.

Nov. 10, 2004 – Lowered from Orange to Yellow, for the financial services sectors in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Washington, D.C.

State and local leaders as well as the private sector strengthened security in and around specific buildings and locations as well as throughout the financial services sector after the threat level was raised on Aug. 1, 2004. Permanent protective measures were put in place that did not exist before this date.

2005**July 7, 2005 – Raised from Yellow to Orange for mass transit**

In light of the attacks in London, the United States government raised the threat level in the mass transit portion of the transportation sector, including regional and inner city passenger rail, subways, and metropolitan bus systems.

Aug. 12, 2005 – Lowered from Orange to Yellow for mass transit

Since raising the threat level for mass transit systems on July 7, DHS worked with federal, state and local partners to develop and implement sustainable mass transit security measures tailored to the unique design of each region's transit system. In light of these increased long-term measures, the Department lowered the national threat level for the mass transit portion of the transportation sector.

2006**Aug. 10, 2006 – Raised from Yellow to Red for flights originating in the United Kingdom bound for the United States; raised to Orange for all commercial aviation operating in or destined for the United States.**

The U.S. government raised the nation's threat level to the highest level for commercial flights originating in the United Kingdom and bound for the United States and raised the threat level for general aviation to High to include all in-bound international flights, other than flights from Great Britain, and all flights within the United States.

Aug. 13, 2006 – Lowered from Red to Orange for flights originating in the United Kingdom bound for the United States; remains at Orange for all domestic and international flights.

DHS lowered the aviation threat level from red to orange for flights from the United Kingdom to the United States. The U.S. threat level remains at orange for all domestic and international flights. The ban on liquids and gels in carry on baggage remains in full effect.

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This page was last reviewed/modified on July 14, 2009.