

Remarks by Secretary Napolitano at "Pen & Pad" Session With DHS Beat Reporters



Release Date: June 25, 2009

For Immediate Release
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Secretary Napolitano: Good afternoon everybody. I thought I'd start with a few points.

A few weeks ago I began speaking about the five major missions of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS): counterterrorism, securing the borders, enforcing smart and effective immigration policies, preparing for, responding to, recovering from disasters; and then building one Department of Homeland Security out of the 22 agencies that were originally put into DHS.

The next four or five weeks are going to be a—keep focus on the counter-terrorism aspect of this Department. Why, because it is the reason this Department was started and there's a lot of work to be done in that area. One of the first things I will be doing is leaving on a week-long trip Saturday to Europe and to Kuwait where I'll be working on Homeland Security issues in a variety of ways.

In Ireland we will be evaluating aviation preclearance operations. In other words, there are going to be certain places around the world where we will actually—in a way—push the border out for purposes of loading on cargo for purposes of aviation. We will begin phasing that in on July the 29th. In the U.K., I will meet with the new home secretary Allen Johnson and the new transportation secretary Lord Andrew Adonis on a number of issues, including cyber security, violent extremism and civil aviation security.

In Portugal we are going to be discussing a number of ways in which we can share information involving threats to both countries and also discuss immigration challenges that confront both countries and how we can learn from each other. In Spain I will sign an agreement enhancing the security of air travel, and also discuss implementation of two other agreements we are working on with Spain involving criminal information sharing and science and technology cooperation.

In addition, Spain, as you know, will be the incoming head of the EU and we'll be discussing the possibility of some agreements that will be EUY with respect to data sharing. Spain, of course, is among Mexico's most important bilateral partners. We obviously have some important common issues there. For example, how what we are doing vis-à-vis the land with Mexico is affecting the transportation of narcotics by sea and into Europe via Spain.

In Kuwait I will be evaluating our Coast Guard operations in the Gulf—what is happening now—what we think will be happening in the weeks and months to come. In each country—in addition to the bilateral issues, we will discuss matters of common interest to the United States and the European Union including the protection of privacy of information—while at the same time improving law enforcement and security cooperation. We will also be looking at the security enhancements under the 2007 implementing recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act.

Now, when I get back, I will turn my attention immediately to a bill that was proposed in the Senate this past week known as PASS ID. PASS ID is a national security measure. It fulfills one of the key recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, which was that the Federal Government set a national standard for identification.

While the Federal Government sets the standard, it is up to the states to implement that standard and PASS ID is the bill that provides that implementation mechanism. It's a common sense bill that's been worked on with the nation's governors in a bipartisan fashion. It already has bipartisan support. The National Sheriff's Association endorsed it a couple of days ago. The Federal Law Enforcement Association just endorsed it as well, so we'll have law enforcement support coming on board.

But that is a bill that in my view will help us on—really—our never-ending quest to not only fill the mandates of the 9/11 Commission but even improve upon them. So that's a little bit about the up and coming eight or nine days, but obviously, there's much else going on as well. And I'd be happy to answer questions about what I've just talked about or anything else that's on your minds.

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This page was last reviewed/modified on June 25, 2009.