

PRESS STATEMENT

Senator Joe Lieberman

**The Best Defense:
Leveraging the Strength of Our Military to Protect the Homeland**

Remarks to the Progressive Policy Institute Forum on
“Making America Safer: Next Steps for Homeland Security”

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(*AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY*)

Introduction

For years, you at the DLC and PPI have been producing strong, innovative defense strategies for the post-Cold War era. I’m proud to see you now challenging the country to develop smarter, more effective homeland security solutions.

Before September 11th, we knew about the dangers of terrorism. In fact, we had already been attacked, not just around the world but at home—at the World Trade Center in 1993, and in Oklahoma City in 1995. Nevertheless, our nation was still dulled by the illusion that the oceans to our East and West, and friendly neighbors to our North and South, would protect us against the worst dangers of the world.

Never again. Our challenge and our responsibility after September 11th is to meet the deadly fervor of our terrorist enemies by adapting, responding, and reforming to protect our people from future attacks.

For the U.S. Congress today, that means taking the disconnected pieces of a disorganized federal bureaucracy and reordering them into

a unified, focused domestic defense department. In the Senate, through the Governmental Affairs Committee I chair, we are committed to doing that as swiftly and as surely as possible.

But that's only one of the two homeland security tasks we in government face today. While we create the new department, we must also develop a coherent and comprehensive homeland security strategy that can will safeguard the American people—and that the new department can implement as soon as it is up and running.

Today I want to talk to you about what should be one of the core components of such a larger strategy: maximizing the use of our military resources here at home. Our Department of Defense has more tools, training, technology, and talent to help combat the terrorist threat at home than any other federal agency. Our military has proven capable of brilliance beyond our borders. Now, we must tap its expertise and its resources within our country—by better integrating the Defense Department into our homeland security plans. That is particularly true of the National Guard.

Recalling the Past and Looking to the Future

Let me start with some history.

When our republic was born, the American military, made up largely of citizen soldiers—the militia—played the key role in domestic defense. Those militias developed into the military forces that fought the Civil War. Later, much of the country was explored and mapped by our military. In the 19th century, the military helped create our modern infrastructure, including our great network of railroads.

Over the past century, with good reason, the active homeland role of our military has diminished. Our armed forces, including the National Guard—which is today's regulated citizen militia—has become increasingly expeditionary, applying its might abroad to deter outside threats to our interests, principles, and security.

As we go forward, we must keep that overseas force strong and

modern. But at the same time, we must recognize that defending America itself is now a central part of the military's mission.

We don't need to invent a metaphor to describe this changed landscape of danger we face. Sadly, on September 11th, the Pentagon—the headquarters and symbol of our military here in America—was attacked by enemies of America. Nearly 200 men and women serving our nation were killed not in a foreign land, but in Virginia, the cradle of our democracy.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld understands how the world has changed. In the DoD's *Quadrennial Defense Review*, the four-year statement of its strategy, completed last summer and released in September, the Secretary said that defending America would henceforth be the Department's primary mission, and that U.S. defense policy would have to evolve accordingly.

It is evolving. A new Northern Command headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado, whose mission will be protecting North America from enemy attack, will open its doors this October and be fully operational next year. But thus far, the Northern Command is taking small steps when we need bold moves forward.

The new Command seems designed to support civil authorities here at home using military capabilities we already have, which were developed for use in foreign wars—not to meet the new domestic threats to our security. The Northern Command is being engineered to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats from afar: missile attacks, submarines off our shores—not planes flown into tall buildings, bombs exploded in transportation centers, or smallpox in shopping malls. Its assets haven't yet been adequately shaped and directed to protect against terrorism.

That's why I have included a provision in this year's Defense Authorization Bill requiring the Pentagon to fully assess and report to the Congress on its homeland security capabilities—how it should plan and prepare to engage in all aspects of domestic defense: detection, prevention, protection, and response.

And I will work hard to ensure that in the legislation creating the new Department of Homeland Security we establish a strong, official link between the new department and the Department of Defense. We need to guarantee the highest level of ongoing cooperation between the agencies. At the same time, I will work through the Senate Armed Services Committee to make sure that the Defense Department more proactively works to assist the new department in fulfilling its mission.

Bolstering Our Defenses and Raising Our Guard

The Defense Department has enormous assets to bring to this fight. Taxpayers will invest almost \$393 billion next year, money well spent, in their Department of Defense. The new homeland defense department will probably have a budget, and total resources, about one tenth that. We've got about 1.3 million people on active military duty, most of them in the United States, and about 900,000 members of our Reserves and Guard. That's 2.2 million Defense personnel. By comparison, the Department of Homeland Security will employ about 170,000 people. And the Department of Defense has trained, disciplined, cohesive units with more experience in responding to crisis, more technology, and more expertise in dealing with chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological weapons, than anybody else in government. We don't need to reinvent these wheels—just to redirect and reengineer them.

No part of our military is better suited to aid in providing for the common defense of our homeland than the National Guard. As the national militia, under the direct command of each of the 50 state governors, its core mission naturally extends to homeland defense.

The resources of the Guard are formidable. Together, the Army and Air Guard receive about \$17 billion of the Department of Defense's budget. There are half a million Guard men and women—talented soldiers, mechanical and electrical engineers, computer specialists, doctors, and other trained experts. The Army Guard maintains over 3,000 armories all over the country; the Air Guard has 140 units throughout the country and its territories.

But organizationally, most of today's Guard remains structured, trained, and equipped to augment and reinforce active duty troops that serve outside our country. That remains an important role we need to respect and protect—because we may well need them for that purpose. In the Gulf War, for example, more than 63,000 members of the Guard served ably and nobly. Thousands have served in Bosnia. Thousands have augmented the active force serving in Afghanistan.

But in the age of terrorism, we also need more talented hands on deck right here, right now. For homeland security to be all it can be, the National Guard needs to be all it can be. That's why I recommend that the President and Secretary of Defense redirect the Guard to focus more mind and muscle on domestic defense.

We've already gotten a glimpse of what they're capable of. In the wake of September 11th, 428 National Guard units from 48 states and territories—practically 20,000 Guard men and women—were mobilized for a whole range of operations. We saw the most prominent examples of their work in the protection of our airports, and in their reassuring presence on the streets of New York. And while those Guard men and women have served their country well, we must acknowledge that their service was a temporary solution. The Guard has been deployed to close gaps quickly, not by strategic design. Training has been improvised, using units conditioned for classic combat and equipment designed for different purposes.

In the aftermath of September 11th, we need to build new and different National Guard units, equip them with new and different equipment, and instill in those servicemen and women new and different ways of thinking about their mission. There is, in fact, no mission of more critical importance to America's security. Let me now describe two areas in which our National Guard should become more engaged in the domestic fight against terrorism.

First, the Guard can take a lead role in prevention and protection. They're playing an important part now, but we can use their skills more wisely and more widely.



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