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For Immediate Release  
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## President Convenes Homeland Security Advisory Council

Remarks by the President at Meeting of Homeland Security Advisory Council  
The Indian Treaty Room

10:44 A.M. EDT



**VIDEO** Multimedia

President's Remarks

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**THE PRESIDENT:** Well, thank you all very much for taking on this assignment. Joe, thank you for your being chairman. And, Bill Webster, we've got a lot of talented folks around this table. And I want to thank you for agreeing to help our nation.

We're under attack; just the way it is. The more we love freedom, the more we espouse values that are decent and honorable, the more we welcome religion in our society, open political discourse, the more this enemy is going to try to hit us. And we've got two course of action. One is to run them down, wherever they try to hide, and bring them to justice. That's precisely what we're going to do.

These people are the kind of people that -- they try to find a soft spot around the world and burrow in and plot and plan. And we're just going to have to enforce the doctrine, either you're with us or against us. You join the coalition of freedom, or you're on the other side of the fence.

And we're making good progress, we really are. The other night when I announced this Department of Homeland Security, I made mention of the fact that our coalition has hauled in about 2,400 of these terrorists, these killers. The problem is there's still quite a number of them still out there.

We're using our military -- we've got a great military, by the way. I'm really proud of the men and women who wear our uniform, and our nation stands squarely with our military.

We're using diplomatic pressure. That's an important tool. We're cutting off their money. That's -- we've been fairly effective at cutting off their money. We can all do a little better job of denying them the funds they need. They don't need a lot of money, but they do need money to conduct their attacks.

We're sharing intelligence. I know many members of this committee have been very much involved in the intelligence gathering capacity of America, and we're doing a better job of finding our weaknesses here at home, and working on the weaknesses. The CIA and the FBI now are doing a much better job today than they had been prior to September the 11th of sharing information across these -- what were once formidable jurisdictional boundaries.

The culture of our agencies have changed since the war. The FBI has got a -- has got a new job, which is to prevent attack, and that's now their primary focus. And Bob Mueller is doing a good job of recognizing the cultural shift that needs to take place, of taking input, listening to people, and responding.

So we're making progress, we really are. But until we rout out every terrorist cell and every terrorist, until attitudes change about freedom in America, we've got to protect our homeland in a new way. And I want to thank you all for agreeing to help us. You're breaking new ground, and you're going to help us leave a legacy, so that future Presidents, future administrations and future Congress can deal more effectively with how to do the most important job any elected official has, which is to protect innocent life.

As you know, I called for the Department of Homeland Security. Obviously I wouldn't have done so if I didn't think it was the absolute right thing to do. I think it's important to focus the mission, through reorganization. I know it's

going to make -- help us be more effective here at home.

I also recognize how tough the chore is going to be. I mean, after all, we are asking people in Congress to give up turf, as they say, give up a little power. And I'm under no illusions that asking folks to give up power can be a difficult assignment. So one of the things I'll do is remind the members of Congress that this is not a political issue, that protecting America is an American issue. It's a duty we all have and that I vow not to play politics with doing what's right.

I'll also remind the Congress that I am going to speak to the American people about this issue. Once I propose it, I'm going to take my case beyond Washington to the true influence -- the real influence peddlers of America; that's the American people, the people who work every day and who've got the capacity to inform their members of Congress or the Senate their opinion. And that's what I'm going to continue to do.

I'm going to continue to speak as plainly as I can about the need for this department, assuring the American people that we're not interested in increasing the size and scope of the federal government, we're interested in efficiency. We want an organization that can work closely with local leaders such as my Mayor, Mayor Williams. We want to be able to respond better if something were to occur. We want to know how better to enforce our borders. We want to know when they're coming in the country and if they're overstaying their visas. We need to know that in America, under this new -- the new threats under which we live.

We've got to -- I signed a bioterrorism bill today. I want to thank you all for coming for the signing ceremony. I saw Jim Schlesinger there, and I'm sure you're glad I cut my remarks in half, because the temperature seemed to be -- (laughter) -- seemed to be a little warm out there. But the idea is to better coordinate our capacity to detect weapons of mass destruction and respond to them if they occur.

And, finally, we need an analytical capacity within a department that can take all the intelligence that's gathered, not only by the FBI or the CIA, but all throughout our government, and analyze it so we have a better feel for what the terrorists might be thinking, and then how to respond.

And you all can play a very useful role in this -- in this process. You bring a lot of heft and a lot of experience and a lot of know-how. You can definitely help us understand how best to coordinate government activities with the private sector, and that's essential, that we team up to do everything we need to do to protect America.

So I want to thank you for your service. I want you to know this administration is totally committed to protecting the people. Many of you are aware of the President's briefing he gets, sees or knows what the President reads and they're still out there. These people -- you know, these killers, they're still lurking around. But they picked on a -- they picked on a group of people who are plenty determined, and that's the American people.

We've got a fabulous nation. And we're tough and we're determined and we're united and we're strong. And at the same time, we're showing the world that we're a compassionate nation, as well. We won the first battle, or we're winning the first battle in the war of the 21st century, which was in Afghanistan. And we went into that country not as conquerors, but as liberators. And I'm proud of our nation, and I'm proud of your service to our nation. And I want to thank you all for giving us your time.

God bless you all. Thank you. (Applause.)

END 10:52 A.M. EDT

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