

President Announces Substantial Increases in Homeland Security Budget

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Remarks by the President to U.S. Mayors and County Officials
The East Room

- [Fact Sheet: Strengthening Homeland Security](#)

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THE PRESIDENT: Welcome to the White House. It's a privilege for me and for Tom to be with the country's most accountable elected officials. (Laughter and applause.) The mayors -- los alcaldes.

We always used to say, you know, the government that's closest to the people is that which governs best. You know firsthand. You know what it's like to get the call to make sure the streets are paved, or the garbage is picked up. You're what I call practical. (Laughter.) The farther you get away from the local governments, we get a little theoretical. But there's nothing like being a mayor to be a problem-solver.

And as you know, we've got a new problem to solve here. And that's the security of our homeland. And I'm so pleased that you all are here to give me a chance to discuss how we're going to work together to solve this common national problem, which is the security of our people.

It's your police forces, your emergency medical teams, your fire fighters who are responsible for the first response on any terrorist attack, and are responsible for saving lives.

I say terrorist attack because we're still under attack. They still want to come after us. These are evil people that are relentless in their desire to hurt those who love freedom. And since we're the bastion of freedom, the beacon of freedom, we're their target. And we're going to respond, and we're going to deal with it by working together.

I want to thank -- when you go back to your communities, you make sure that you thank your police chiefs and your fire chiefs and your emergency medical teams, not only on behalf of the President, but the entire country. These good folks put their lives at risk, they work incredibly hard and long hours, and they deserve the praise and love of our nation. (Applause.)

There obviously is a role for the federal government, and I'll discuss parts of our homeland security strategy in a little bit. But in order to make sure that our homeland is secure for a long time, we as a nation must be patient enough and resolved enough to hunt down the killers and the terrorists wherever they try to hide and bring them to justice. And that's exactly what this country is going to do. (Applause.)

I say "patient enough," because sometimes there is a certain sense of anxiety that creeps into the national dialogue. Some folks are trying to rush the score card, I guess is a way to put it. We've made huge progress in four and a half months. I mean, we've done a lot, thanks to a great military, by the way. And there's a lot of moms and dads and wives and husbands and children who also need to be thanked, for their sacrifice. (Applause.)

But in the first theater to rout out terror, we have done a lot. We've totally destroyed the government, and routed out the government that thought they could hide the terrorists. You see, there used to be, I guess, a school of thought around the world that it's okay to hide a terrorist, you weren't considered a terrorist. We changed that. We said, if you hide a terrorist, or you feed a terrorist, or you coddle a terrorist, you're just as

guilty as the terrorists, and we will hold you accountable, as the Taliban has found out.

We have liberated people. I'm so proud of our military, and this great nation, and our coalition -- we've got a strong coalition -- of going into Afghanistan and freeing women and children. It was a fantastic moment in United States history, to be able to liberate people that were so oppressed that they probably thought they had no future. And yet we came. We came to achieve an objective. The objective was to hold a government accountable enforcement for harboring a terrorist and, in so doing, became liberators. It's a proud moment for the country.

And now we're chasing down people in the first theater who, on the one hand, are willing to commit others to suicide and they, themselves, hide in caves. And they think they can hide, and they may be able to hide today, but we'll get 'em. We're going to get them running and, when they run, we'll bring them to justice.

I'm plenty patient. I have no preconceived notion about how long this should take. And neither do the American people. What the American people expect was a determined, relentless effort. And that's exactly what we're going to -- that's exactly how we're going to behave. (Applause.)

And so while we're after them overseas, there's a lot to do at home. That's what I want to discuss today, that this is a two-front war. Overseas, we're fighting and at home we're fighting. We're fighting to share information, or we're working to share information to make sure that all law enforcement agencies are knitted up, that we do a better job of alerting people, giving people a heads-up that something might be going on in the neighborhood and please help.

Our people are alert. The shoe man, the shoe bomber, Reid, he found out how alert Americans can be, when he showed up on the airplane, and all of a sudden people noticed something was odd, and they turned him in. And now he's in prison. That's what we're doing. But there's more to do, and I want to discuss that with you today.

We're counting on you, and I'm about to tell you that we're going to make resources available so that we can work together. (Applause.) I want to thank Tom for taking on a tough assignment. I appreciate you bringing one Mayor who thought you did a good job as Governor. (Laughter.)

I'm really proud of Tom's efforts. He understands local government, he understands state government. He believes in cooperative efforts, he's an open-minded fellow. I hope you've found that he's willing to listen, willing to listen to good ideas. He's not an, "it's got to be invented here" guy. He believes that if there's a good idea, it doesn't matter who brought it up, Republican or Democrat. We'll put in place. So I'm real proud of your efforts, Tom, and thanks for your hard work. (Applause.)

Mel Martinez is here. He will have spent a lot of quality time with you all on housing issues. I appreciate your service, Mel. I appreciate your service. (Applause.) A man who worked with me a lot in Texas, who now runs FEMA, who is a -- who has made sure the agency is responsive to emergencies, who will eventually soon play a big effort in making sure this national strategy for homeland defense is affected in a way that helps you do your job, and that's Joe Allbaugh. Thank you for coming. (Applause.)

I appreciate all the county officials, all the city officials, all who helped make sure that we work together in good fashion. I particularly want to thank the head of the Mayors. I am a little disappointed in Mayor Morial. I went down to Antoine's the other day in New Orleans to eat a meal -- I was hoping I could invite him and he would pay. (Laughter.) But the intelligence-gathering system in New Orleans works well, so he went to Mexico. (Laughter.)

But nevertheless, Mr. Mayor, I appreciate your service. I love your town and thanks for being here today, sir. (Applause.)

I'm going to the Congress next Tuesday night to deliver a State of the Union address. And I will lay out the priorities of our government. You heard one of our first priorities. That's to fight and win this war.

The second priority of our government, a priority which will be reflected in my budget, is making sure we protect the people at home, homeland defense. And, therefore, I'll be calling on Congress to pass a funding increase for homeland defense of 38 -- an additional \$38 billion. (Applause.)

This is double the pre-September 11th numbers. Thirty-eight billion dollars is the total request. Double over 2002. It's the beginning of a homeland defense initiative which is going to last throughout my administration.

It's the beginning of a cooperative effort.

It shows and recognizes that, in the first minutes or hours after an attack, are the most hopeful minutes for saving lives -- the first minutes, immediately. And, therefore, we've got to understand and remember the important role of first-responders. It became vivid, obviously, on September 11th.

One of the most poignant stories I remember is when some going into the danger wrote their Social Security numbers on their arms. It reminds all of us about how dangerous the job is, and about how some are willing to sacrifice for others. We saw that firsthand throughout the September the 11th time frame.

We saw people drive an airplane into the ground to save others. I think America is now coming to appreciate the definition of sacrifice, sacrifice for freedom, sacrifice for human life. That's something our first-responders have known for a long time. And it's important for America to recognize that contribution they make.

And so, what we must do in the country is remember that the attacks on September 11th were not just attacks on New York or the Pentagon, were attacks on all of America, and treat those attacks such. It is a national threat and, therefore, obviously, it's a federal responsibility.

And so the 2003 budget proposes \$3.5 billion in federal aid to state and local first-responders. (Applause.) That is a thousand percent increase over what our government has spent. (Applause.) It's necessary money. It's part of the \$38 billion budget I'm going to be asking for for homeland security. It's absolutely necessary that we spend the money, and that we spend it correctly.

And, therefore, in order to make sure that there is a strategy, one that you understand, one that the governors understand, one that the folks in Washington understand, I'm going to ask the Federal Emergency Management Agency to be the lead agency on coordinating efforts with the local governments.

It is the right agency to choose. They understand local disaster and the local emergency. They understand and have responded in the past, not only in this administration, but in other administrations, the need to work closely with mayors to make sure that we affect good policy. Plus, I trust Allbaugh. I've seen him work before. He's a good man. It doesn't matter whether Daley calls him, or whether a Texan calls him. He's going to answer the phone. (Laughter.) He's not one of these political, partisan guys. He's here to serve the country for the right reason. And so this is the right way to go. And if you have any problem with him, call me. (Laughter.)

Part of our task is to recognize there's 36,000 local jurisdictions all around the country. And how do we make sure there are some standards, how do we make sure, you know, that the fire hydrant hookup works in one city and can go across the region and fit another city? How do we make sure information flows properly? How do we make sure there's mutual aid agreements in the neighborhoods? How do we make sure that the communications equipment and the rescue equipment is compatible not only within a state but nationwide?

Those are the tasks ahead, and that's part of the challenge we face. But I'm confident that if we work with you, we can meet the challenge. There's no question in my mind that, given the right impetus and the right focus, the right communications and the right money, we can make it work. We have no choice. We're all charged.

We find ourselves in a moment of history where we, as leaders, must respond, and we will, and we will respond. It is -- sometimes you get to pick your moments and sometimes you don't. (Laughter.) And we're here now in the middle of a war and I want to thank you all for understanding the call. And we're not going to blink as a nation, and I know you won't blink as mayors. You accept your responsibility and I accept mine.

And, as a result of working together, the nation will be better off. We've got a lot of work to do. But that's how I got elected. And it starts with cooperation. And I can assure you, this government is willing to cooperate. (Applause.)

I also understand a good homeland defense means our cities are vibrant and strong. I want to work with you on brownfields legislation -- on implementing brownfields. (Applause.) I signed legislation, now it's time to get after it, and it's going to help the cities around America, that we clean up the brownfields. I want to thank the Republicans and Democrats up here who worked on this initiative. We finally got something passed that will enable cities to revitalize tracts of land that have been abandoned, that now can be productive parts of your property tax base.

I want to work with you to support home ownership for low income Americans. I love the idea. (Applause.) I

love the idea of somebody owning something, somebody owning their own home. I can't think of anything more powerful to help revitalize neighborhoods, than to encourage home ownership. And we'll work with you on that.

I want to work with you to strengthen the community-based drug prevention, and effective drug treatment programs. I believe that the best -- (applause) -- I know we've got to do a better job of suppressing demand for drugs. But I also understand that the most effective programs are community based programs. You've seen them. You've helped make them vital in your communities. And we want to work with you to do just that.

I have not given up on my faith-based initiative. Many of you understand the power of faith-based programs in your communities, church programs, programs out of synagogues and mosques. I believe so strongly in the power of faith, I believe strongly that we must unleash the armies of compassion in every city in America to provide hope for people where hope doesn't exist. And I want to work with you to do just that. I think we can get a bill out of Congress. (Applause.)

I bring up matters of the spirit because the enemy doesn't understand who they hit. They first thought they were hitting somebody, a nation which was soft, a nation which wouldn't -- oh, we might respond but we wouldn't mean it. You know, it would be kind of a slap-on-the-wrist response. They didn't understand that when you attack America and you murder innocent people, we're coming after you with full force and fury of a great nation and our allies. (Applause.)

They didn't understand our fiber, our character, our values. And that's one of the interesting developments in our country, is that people, as you know better than me, have said, we better assess our values as a result of what went on, and people all across the country are doing just that. It's a moment that we must seize. Those of us in leadership position must understand that there are a lot of Americans who are asking what they can do to help. I like to put it in as plain terms as I can -- if you want to fight evil, do some good.

If you want to show the world that we're not going to stand evil, let's make sure we love somebody, mentor a child. Let's get involved in the school systems in our local communities. Let's rally around those who want to help a neighbor in need. Let's seize the moment, seize the initiative, seize the chance to rally the armies of compassion, so that people feel love and decency in their lives, so that shut-ins know somebody cares, so lonely children who may have a parent in prison know somebody loves them.

This is the opportunity. I look forward to working with you, to rally the country, to not only not let -- to not only fight evil, but to stamp in place a compassion, a decency and a goodness that will stand the test of time. It's a challenge we face, and I know it's a challenge we can meet.

Thank you all for coming. (Applause.)

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