



 [CLICK HERE TO PRINT](#)

For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
June 10, 2002

## **Remarks by Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge to the National Association of Broadcasters Education Foundation 2002 Service to America Summit**

Ronald Reagan Building  
Washington, D.C.

GOVERNOR RIDGE: Thank you, Eddie. And good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank you for this invitation to spend some time with you this morning. I must applaud Eddie and the foundation for extending the invitation several weeks ago. Your timing was impeccable. (Laughter.) So I might consider to borrow your crystal ball in the future.

But it is good to have the opportunity within a few short days after the President announced his vision and his plan to create a Cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security to spend some time with this organization. So I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to your group at such an important time for our country.

The nine months since the terrorist attacks have been a great time to be an American, in spite of the horror and the tragedy associated with the attacks. We have learned so much about what this country and its people are all about. And most of what we have learned, we have learned through you.

Through your unblinking eyes and ears, the entire human drama was brought into our living rooms -- the heartbreaking losses, the heroic responses, the heartfelt prayers and words of comfort from a concerned nation. Many of your stations offered 24-hour coverage in the days following the attacks. And in doing so, you accepted the reality of lost ad revenues at a time when advertising was already scarce. No matter the cost, you continued to get the news out.

At the same time, through your efforts, broadcasters helped this country raise in excess of \$1 billion for the victims of 9/11 and related causes -- an extraordinary contribution in and of itself. And you still found time to record and air PSAs answering the questions all Americans had: How can we help?

You've even won over some old critics. Apparently, an FCC chairman about four decades ago in a speech to your group -- a fellow by the name of Newton Minow -- was very, very critical of the media. But recently he was reported to have said, and I quote, "Television deserves a round of gratitude from the American people for the way they have handled this crisis. They deserve the highest praise."

But most importantly, as Americans understand it, you did your job, keeping all of us informed and aware.

Now I think broadcasters have a new challenge, reporting on homeland security. In many ways -- many, many ways -- this is a much more difficult story to report. It doesn't have very good sound or visuals. It's complicated. There are a lot of gray areas. There aren't too many photo opportunities. It can be under-reported, breeding false confidence, or over-reported, stoking unnecessary fears.

But it is one of the most important, if not the most important, story of our lifetimes. It's the story of how we protect American lives and the American way of life, the most important job of government.

Last week, President Bush announced a major change in how we will do that job. The President has proposed a new Department of Homeland Security. The new department will be commissioned and tasked to protect our borders and airports and seaports and to monitor visitors to this country; to oversee preparedness and to help train and equip first-responders; address the threat from weapons of mass destruction, and turn policies into action through regional drills; to map our nation's critical infrastructure so we can learn where the great vulnerabilities lie and take action to reduce them; to synthesize and analyze homeland security intelligence from multiple sources, so we can separate fact from fiction and identify trends that help us deter and catch terrorists; and finally, to communicate threats and actions to those who need to know -- governors, mayors, law enforcement officials, business owners and the public.

Today, no single agency calls homeland security its sole or even its primary mission. Instead, responsibility is scattered among more than 100 separate government organizations. Currently -- excuse me. Consequently, despite the best efforts of the best public servants, our response is often ad hoc. We don't always have the kind of alignment of authority

and responsibility with accountability that gets things done. This creates situations that would be comical if the threat were not so serious.

Are you the captain of a foreign flag ship that entered U.S. waters? You could meet agents from Customs, INS, Coast Guard, or the Agricultural Department, each of whom might have jurisdiction over some portion of your ship. And even though the Coast Guard has the authority to act as an agent for the other three, they often defer to their federal colleagues.

The same thing happens if you're taking a car or truck across a border -- you can see the INS or Customs, or perhaps the Border Patrol or Agriculture or somebody else there. One opens the hood, one looks for people, one checks the baggage, one opens the trunk. Again, we need to do a better job of targeting those resources, perhaps in cross-training, to deploy these men and women and the technology that they have at their disposal in a more effective, much more effective way.

Let me give you another example. Say you live near a nuclear power facility, and you want to obtain potassium iodine in an emergency -- and some states are actually in the process of distributing some. If you live within a ten-mile radius of the plant, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission regulates the distribution of this very important drug. If you live outside the circle, the Federal Emergency Management Agency regulates the distribution. But of course, if you live within ten miles of a nuclear weapons facility, it's the Department of Energy that distributes the drug. And oh, by the way, to add one more layer, if there isn't enough potassium iodine to go around, then the Department of Health and Human Services is in charge of the national pharmaceutical stockpile.

These men and women go to work every day. They're patriots all, and they work very hard to comply with the law and do what they're told to do, according to the law and the regulations and the direction of their agency. But clearly a situation like that shouldn't be so cumbersome, shouldn't be so complex. It is confusing, to say the least. We need to eliminate as much of the confusion as possible.

The Department of Homeland Security will have a single mission. As the President reminds all of us, it is his most important job, and the most important job of the federal government: protect the American people and our way of life from terrorism. And it will have a single, clear line of authority to get the job done. It will bring together everyone under the same roof, working toward the same goal and pushing in the same direction.

Let me give you another example. Right now, many, many governmental organizations collect intelligence for a variety of purposes. The most prominent are the CIA and the FBI, but obviously you have several in the Department of Defense, the NSA. You've got the Drug Enforcement Agency. INS collects intelligence, Customs collects intelligence, Coast Guard collects intelligence. You have multiple agencies out there that gather information and intelligence. No single agency conducts a comprehensive analysis of that entire universe of data. No single agency is charged with that task.

That would change. Not only will the Department have access to the data, but that department will be able to fuse it, analyze it for threats, and then map those threats against vulnerabilities, which the Department will also be responsible to assess. We can then put out the threat advisories or call for increased security measures to meet the threat. Basically, the Department will be able to put together all of the pieces of the puzzle and, depending on what the picture shows, take the requisite action.

Since day one, the primary mission of the Office of Homeland Security has been to develop a comprehensive national strategy to secure the United States from terrorist attacks and threats. This proposal is the centerpiece of that national strategy. It gives us the structure that we need in order to implement the national strategy.

Now, I know conflict usually makes for far better news than consensus. And any reform this far-reaching will certainly have its share of both conflict and criticism. The conflicts are particularly sensitive in a town as turf-conscious as Washington, D.C. But as I said on day one, the only turf we should be worried about protecting is the turf we stand on. And by and large, the people who serve this President have taken that message to heart.

And I'm confident, by the way, based on conversations, numerous conversations I've had with Republicans and Democrats on the Hill, that they share this President's commitment to getting this done sooner rather than later. We were very encouraged by a conversation we had with many of the members who have been out talking about some form of reorganization for quite some time last Friday morning, when the topic of the conversation, during the course of the President's discussion, was how they can work together to accelerate the consideration, the legislative consideration of this proposal on the Hill. And the President was very gratified by that, very gratified by Congressman Gephardt's remarks the following day, suggesting that maybe we could get it done by September 11th.

Now, having been on -- having served as a member of Congress for 12 years, the notion we could get something this dramatic, historic, done between now and September 11th would be a grand and historic gesture in and of itself. But -- and we're going to do everything we can to work with Congressman Gephardt and everybody else. But if we can work together, presidential leadership with legislative leadership, and get it done by the end of the year, as the President has suggested and hoped, I think it would be an extraordinary accomplishment.

[FEMA Director] Joe Allbaugh said at a Cabinet meeting where the President announced his plans the following: "Mr. President, you came to Washington as a change agent and we're change agents, too -- otherwise, why are we here?" It's a huge change, a sea change, nothing like it since Harry Truman. And I believe the executive and legislative branch together will get it done.

Now, we all know that change can be fairly uncomfortable. It's been said that it is always easier to create new government than it is to reorganize old government. The President's reform touches nearly every Cabinet department, and will affect nearly 170,000 federal employees. But we need to seek a better fit between the job at hand and the agencies with the matching core competencies in the field. And I want to assure them that they will have the satisfaction of going to work every day knowing they're protecting the American people and our way of life.

I also want to reassure taxpayers that we are not creating a new federal bureaucracy. We're not creating a new government agency in the sense that there are 170,000 new employees that will be going to work for the federal government. The President said, we need to make the existing government work better and to focus on efficiency and effectiveness if we're to consolidate and streamline our homeland security responsibilities.

So I would ask my former colleagues in Congress who have been -- many of them have been fully engaged in this debate not only during the past several months, but for several years even before the tragic occurrences of 9/11, who have called for similar reforms -- to approve the President's proposal before they adjourn this year. We're very encouraged. I believe they will.

The current structure may be favored by some. There are some people that just like the status quo, think things are just fine -- just give us more money, more people, more this, more that, but let's just keep things as they are. And I understand there may be some people on the Hill who have worked very hard to oversee, as legislators, different components of the new proposed Department of Homeland Security. But I am hopeful that in the long run they would be willing to understand that a streamlined, consolidated, reorganized effort is precisely the way this country needs to go.

The President and I believe the American people need a single department that can partner with states and localities. It was very interesting -- in the President's directive creating the position of Advisor to the President for Homeland Security, one of the tasks given to our office was to design and implement a national strategy -- not just a federal strategy. A national strategy, by implication, means we have to work and do a better job not just within our federal agencies, but we have to tie ourselves together with state and local government and the private sector as well.

We need to make this department a clearinghouse for many of the best practices that we believe can be deployed to prevent terrorism. And certainly we need to do a better job of preparing our country, building up capacity to respond to one, an attack, if it occurs.

We can never eliminate the threat completely. We can never eliminate the notion of surprise, of terrorist attack, particularly in a society that's as open and as free and as diverse and as large as we are in the United States of America. And I believe we can significantly, significantly reduce the vulnerability to terrorism and terrorist attack over time. We can give Americans greater peace of mind, convenience, and commerce. Done wrong -- it's just business as usual, things done the old way -- I believe we leave our nation more vulnerable to attack, and the possibility of slowing our economy down as well.

Homeland security is not an inside-the-beltway story. It encompasses the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, the energy we use, critical infrastructure everywhere. It affects us every time we board a plane or visit the office or log onto our computers. It touches everyone's lives. And broadcasters have an important role to play in informing and educating the American people.

After 9/11, you just didn't report the news. You helped calm fears. You answered questions. And I hope and believe you'll give the same attention to homeland security. As my colleague, Mike Byrne, who's worked so hard on first-responder initiatives within our homeland security office -- he's a 20-year veteran of the New York Fire Department who lost his next-door neighbor, as well as many other friends with whom he had served in New York City -- he reminds all of us on a very, very frequent basis: always remember, he says, this is about saving lives. And there's no more important story than that.

You know, for those of us at a certain age, there were a few constants in life. One of those was radio and TV. The other was the Cold War. Half a century ago, President Truman saw a need to reorganize the military, in spite of the victory in World War II, to meet the new threat, the Soviet threat. Back then, the Army and Navy and other military organizations had separate, independent commands. Truman looked at the lessons learned from Pearl Harbor and from our prosecution of the war, and he said, and I quote: "In the theaters of operation, we went further in the direction of unity by establishing unified commands. But we never had comparable unified direction or command in Washington." Sounds familiar.

He added: "It is now time to discard obsolete organizational forms, and to provide for the future the soundest, the most effective, and the most economical kind of structure for our armed forces." Truman pushed for the creation of a unified Department of Defense -- he got it -- a Central Intelligence Agency to learn about the threat, and a National Security Council to analyze the threat. He got all three.

When told it couldn't be done, he said simply, in typical Truman, straightforward, plain language, "It has to be done." His efforts turned the U.S. military into the most powerful force for freedom the world has ever seen. And though he didn't live to see it, his vision and his reorganization helped bring down the Berlin Wall and end the Cold War, a goal many, many people in the '50s and the '60s thought impossible.

It's time for us to take the lessons learned from 9/11 and from our war on terrorism and apply them to homeland security. We may not see victories in our lifetimes either, but if we build the foundation now, I'm confident America can do the impossible and make history once again.

Thank you very, very much. (Applause.)

END

---

**Return to this article at:**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020610-7.html>

 [CLICK HERE TO PRINT](#)