

## **Homeland Security Director Speaks at the National Governor's Associations Winter Meeting in Washington**

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*Remarks by Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge at the National Governors' Association Committee on Human Resources*

Washington, D.C.

GOVERNOR RIDGE: John, thank you, and Frank. It is a homecoming; I'm delighted to be here. Throughout the past several months, people have asked about how they should address me as an individual. Should it be "Director" or "Governor" or "Tom"? And I'd say, if truth be known, if you keep calling me Governor, I'd like that quite a bit. So it's once a governor, always a governor, I guess. I'm delighted to be back with my friends.

I also thank you for the opportunity to continue the discussion that we've had since October 8th, when I formally took over the Office of Homeland Security. And I do have a couple of thoughts I'd like to share with you, and I know Dr. Henderson does, as well. And then I think it would probably be even -- most beneficial if we just did a little Q&A today.

First of all, I want to commend the governors from the states and the territories, because everyone has basically identified someone within their administration to serve in a similar capacity as a point of contact for our office. And that has proven to be exceptionally helpful. As we have gone about responding to both individual requests that some of the states have had, the collective concerns that you've had and shared with our office; the fact that you've identified some extraordinarily competent individuals to serve as your homeland security directors has clearly been an enormous asset to our office -- and frankly, to the state -- and the citizens of the country ought to know about it.

The governors have been working every bit as hard since September 11th to secure their respective states. And I might add, I have a feeling that if we make every hometown secure, the homeland will be secure. And I know the governors have been working with their mayors and their county executives rigorously and persistently. And one of the thoughts I want to leave with you today before I get into some of the specifics of our conversation is that the approach that we need to take in developing a national capacity to deal with the potential or the possibility of other terrorist incidents has to be a national approach.

In the President's executive order, he specifically directed this office to design and implement a national strategy, not a federal one. And by implication, that means that the federal government, working with the state government, working with local governments. We need to find a way to be as seamless as we possibly can.

And having served for almost seven years -- and I'm delighted to see my governor here, Governor Mark Schweicker, who succeeded me in Pennsylvania, and who actually was responsible for overseeing the development of a very robust statewide emergency plan, a robust plan connected down to the county level, a plan that was connected with our major metropolitan areas.

That is a model that many of you have adopted, but we have to, frankly, I think, be mindful that the collaboration between you as leaders of your states and the relationship you have with your governors, with your -- excuse me, with your mayors -- is going to be critical to this effort.

Now, we have about 30,000 municipalities and political subdivisions in this country. And understandably, when I meet with the mayors, men and women whom you know and you respect, they would like to see a direct relationship with the federal government. And we have told them very respectfully that we need to work their issues through state plans, and then back to the federal government.

So the only thing I could ask you to do is work as closely as you possibly can with your local political leaders. We want county plans to be merged into state plans, to fit an overall 50-state-and-territory strategy. We're going to try to avoid in future years, as we deal with public health issues, first-responder issues, and some of the other issues -- I think it's critically important that the dollars from the federal government go through the state government; that the state government, and under your leadership, you have responsibility, and hopefully you will see to it and work very, very closely with the mayors in your respective communities, so we can avoid a disparate, almost an anecdotal or ad hoc approach toward developing a permanent infrastructure to deal with the possibility and the potential of terrorism.

So I'm going to encourage you to work and integrate your plans, and make sure that your county leaders, and your major metropolitan leaders, and your rural leaders are really engaged in developing the county plans and integrate it into your state plans. Because we do want to use the states as the conduit for the dollars that are going into your respective communities.

And make no mistake about it, most of those dollars must go down to the local level. In both of our plans, particularly with the first-responder plan as we sent it to the Hill, there will be dollars set aside for the states, for the governors, specifically, to oversee what you need to do in terms of planning, the technology that you need to have a statewide operation, communications operation, however you connect yourselves to the counties and the metropolitan areas. But it's critical that we work very hard with our mayors and our parish and county leaders to make sure we have an integrated plan.

Now, during the past couple of months, we've been working on a -- there's developing a national strategy. And you see some of the most significant steps in this strategy that are embodied in some of the initiatives in the President's 2003 budget. Let me just briefly go over them with you. You're probably very familiar with them, but to identify the four.

The first-responder money -- there is an initiative here that practically raises the level of federal support by nearly 1,000 percent to first-responders. I mean, this is really a break with historical precedent. Rarely has the federal government been engaged -- certainly at this level; never at this level -- the dealing with the emergency medical personnel, with police, and with fire. But under the circumstances of September 11th and recognizing a national need for equipment and training and planning and exercises, the President includes \$3.5 billion in this budget.

And what we're going to do in this budget, again, it's a little bit different. We've identified the one agency that we think ought to be a permanent part of the infrastructure, dealing with the first-responder community for all times in the future, and that is going to be FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Many of you, because of natural disasters and difficulties on a fairly regular basis, have a pretty good working relationship with FEMA. And in that relationship, you deal with the police, you deal with the fire departments, you deal with the emergency medical personnel. So it seems to us that there's a core competency, and a very important relationship that already exists between the states, local government, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. So these dollars are to be directed through FEMA.

As I said before, you will be the conduit. As we sent it to the Hill, 25 percent of the money's going to remain with you, and you'll have some discretion on how to use some of it. And the rest of the money's going to go down to the local government. We are hopeful that -- again, as a condition of getting those dollars at the local level, we've talked to the mayors, we've talked to the National Association of Counties, we've talked to the League of Cities. They know that working with you as governors, they've got to come up with a plan, a county, regional, and then a state plan. So they're very much engaged in this process. So that's the first initiative.

We're going to encourage mutual aid pacts -- cities helping cities, counties helping counties. Once you have your own house in order, to take a look at your neighboring states and have mutual aid pacts between the respective states, among the respective states. So that's the first initiative that you'll see, the first-responder initiative in this budget. It's about \$3.5 billion. Again, encouraging you -- I can't say it often enough -- to be mindful that to have an effective terrorism response plan, we have to integrate our local leaders and our local communities.

Secondly, for those of you who are on the borders, we certainly understand there's been a tremendous pressure that as we rush to secure the borders, we obviously made it very difficult for the day-to-day commercial activity that prior to September 11th had flowed rather easily across the borders. Obviously that has been slowed down, and we've tried to accelerate it. But the President has said, take a look at the borders with our friends in the north in Canada, and in the south in Mexico, and come up with some smart border agreements -- not dealing just with security, but dealing with the enhancement of commerce, dealing with drug interdiction, dealing with immigration.

So we're working very, very hard with your friends, our friends in the north and the south, to come up with a smart border accord, so we can deal with not only the security issue -- we won't compromise security. But there are ways we believe we can make the borders more secure and still get back to the commercial interaction that's so critical to the states and the communities and the people who live on both sides of the borders.

You'll see some experimental technology applications at these borders. You'll see quite a few new approaches to a 21st century border. And in light of that, the President recognized that we need to build up INS capacity, Customs capacity, Coast Guard capacity. And so in this budget you'll see, again, as a significant step in the emerging national strategy, we beef up all three of those agencies with an eye toward our smart border accords with our friends in Mexico and Canada.

Thirdly, as an information sharing initiative, in terms of dollar amount the first year it's not as significant as the statement made by including in the budget this year an entrance and exit monitoring system for our borders. We need to do a better job of identifying those who visit us as guests, and making sure that once their visas have expired, that -- unless they've reapplied or there are other reasons for them to remain in the United States -- that their exit is assured.

So the President has made a significant down payment, several hundred million dollars, on an entry/exit system, a database and a monitoring base, for us as a country -- again, an open, welcoming, trusting country, a nation of immigrants. We want to keep our borders open, but we do have to do a better job of policing our borders.

And I understand there will be some exceptions, particularly in regard with our friends in Canada and Mexico. But by and large, we need to establish a database, we need to put more technology on the borders so we can develop a more rigorous system of accountability, of monitoring the activity of those who visit our country as guests.

And then finally -- I'll spend a little bit more time on this, and Dr. Henderson's going to spend most of his time on it, as well -- is the bioterrorism component. The President has said, and has given the Office of Homeland Security the opportunity to take a look at this country through the lens of security. But the President has said that when there are opportunities to make strategic investments that make us not only more secure as a country, but make us better as a country, we need to do that, as well.

And we learned a lot of lessons with regard to our public health system as states and communities tried to deal with anthrax. Some of them were painful. We recognized some strengths in that system, but we saw some gaps and weaknesses.

And as you take a look back at the past 10 years, we noted that the commitment that we've made to our public

health system over the past 10 years, I guess to put it mildly, has languished. It hasn't been the kind of priority that perhaps in retrospect we wish it would have been.

But having said that, we now know that we need to beef up our capacity within the public health system. And to that end, the President has approved in his budget nearly \$6 billion to begin the process of building up this public health system. Because whether it's the microbes of a terrorist or infectious disease brought to us by Mother Nature, we need to build up that system so that we can not only be more secure, but so that we can be a healthier and better country. And to that end, the President included nearly \$6 billion in the budget.

Now, you're going to find that we're going to be building up the national pharmaceutical stockpiles. We need to encourage and train and get more epidemiologists out there. We need to enhance our laboratory capacity to deal with infectious disease. We need to significantly upgrade and support a far more aggressive research and development capability, and you're going to see, I think, well over \$1 billion, nearly \$1.5 billion going to the NIH so they can begin developing partnerships with academic medicine with the pharmaceutical industry and the like.

Because as we go about trying to identify therapeutics and vaccines and diagnostics in anticipation of a terrorist attack, clearly -- clearly -- our ability to apply the same kind of lessons, scientific lessons learned to other infectious diseases will be dramatically enhanced. So it's a good investment for America to make. We'll be more secure against a bioterrorism attack, but we'll be a lot healthier and a lot better country, because we'll be upgrading our public health system.

So to that end, those are the four initiatives that begin to show you the first significant steps as we emerge, as a national strategy emerges.

Finally, I would say to my colleagues and my friends, friends all, I understand that we've got to do a better job with information sharing. I might as well bring this up before you do. And we'll continue to have these discussions over the next several months.

Dirk Kempthorne has said it a couple times: Tom, when I was in the Senate, I was cleared to get some information, but now I'm a governor, and I can't get some of this information. And I happen to share that point of view. I just wanted to let you know that in this budget, as well, we are working toward both an intelligence-sharing system and a protocol so we can keep our governors better informed.

We need to do a much better job at the national level processing all the information we get from a multitude of sources available to the federal government. Governor Keating knows whereof I speak; you've worked in the system, you know how many people grab information out there, international and domestic. We're going to do a better job of processing that information in the years ahead.

And that's that horizontal fusion. We've got to do equally a better job getting some of that information sent down to you on a timely and appropriate basis. And these are the kinds of things that we're going to have to work out together over the next couple months.

I should tell you that we're a couple weeks away from a national alert system that we have been working on. As a matter of fact, I think -- Governor O'Bannon, you had a system, and Governor Pataki, and Governor Davis out in California. Matter of fact, Governor, I recall you visiting the office, and I said could you hold up just a little bit as we try to take your plan, and Governor O'Bannon's, and Governor Pataki's, and the International Chiefs of Police. We're real close to this plan, and we hope to have it out and unveil it in the next couple of weeks.

So I know we've got additional work to do on that issue. I know how important it is to you. And I just pledge that I'll do everything I can to work with you so we can have a rational, responsible, reasonable system that we're all comfortable with. And I'm grateful to have the opportunity to spend a little time with you this

afternoon, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you. (Applause.)

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Q First a comment, and then a question. And the comment to Tom Ridge -- think -- I know I speak on behalf of all my colleagues when -- your former colleagues -- when I say, thank you, thank you for taking on the toughest job in America, and we're just glad that there's a governor there who truly can appreciate and understand the complications of coordinating the agencies that you have working with you, and also working with local government.

I saw that firsthand, and I think all of us have seen the work behind the scenes. Perhaps the American public hasn't seen it, but I know the governors know that you're on the conference calls almost every day of the week, working with our homeland security people, working with our National Guard, coordinating resources and, in our cases, alerts and all kinds of other information that has been exchanged.

I also saw it personally when, unfortunately, we had an anthrax death in Connecticut. And within hours, with your coordination and your personal involvement, I saw 30 or 40 members of the Centers for Disease Control showing up in my state, members of FBI investigative teams and an extraordinary effort that were made. I was intrigued at just how involved you were personally, almost calling on a daily basis to make sure everything were going well.

So, thank you. You don't see enough of that. I always wonder, and I know my colleagues and I have talked about it, having a job that each and every day that something doesn't happen is a good day. And that's one hell of a challenge.

Now the question. The President has proposed \$38 billion in homeland security funding, which is extraordinary, \$3.5 billion to go back to the states, in terms of first response. I guess the question I have is, with four alerts, and with the sense of urgency that we all have, the American people know that this is the number one issue, the clear and present danger that we are facing. Where is the sense of urgency within the Congress?

And I say this with all respect. You're sitting next to a former congressman. All three of us all served together. My fear is that in these days and times -- and we just watched campaign finance reform debate over the last several weeks, not the prettiest site I've ever seen -- I'm worried about the urgency of the Congress to take action, because once that legislation passes, and there's \$3.5 billion coming back to the states, then we go to work -- whether it's 25 percent to us and 75 percent to the cities and towns -- we've got to assess the dollars that we'll be getting, and how we're going to coordinate and spend those dollars with our fire, police, technology -- communications is a huge issue that we've all talked about.

Do you think there's a sense of urgency? Should it be happening tomorrow morning? Are there other concerns that perhaps we should be engaged on over the next 48 hours during our meetings here? We're talking about Medicaid and a lot of other issues, but I think that this is the most important to the people of this country, and to us as governors. And I would suggest to you that we're ready to help light the Congress on fire, if you think the timing is right.

GOVERNOR RIDGE: Well, first of all, John, I think that you should know that the Office and the initiatives that have been put forward have enjoyed tremendous bipartisan support on the Hill, both House and the Senate, both Republican and Democrats, and a few independents.

I think you -- credit is justifiable, it goes to the Hill. They not only have additional dollars in the 2002 budget, but there's a substantial supplemental that's out there, and there are several billion dollars that, even in the

area of bioterrorism, as Dr. Henderson pointed out, the CDC got nearly an additional billion in the supplemental, Secretary Thompson got nearly an additional billion. It's in the process of being distributed.

So right now I don't think there's -- anyone should be concerned nationally that the Congress of the United States is not fully engaged and very, very supportive of these initiatives. It's just there might be other areas where they may have legitimate philosophical differences, and this -- we play some pretty robust, pretty tough politics in this town, and it's going to surface during this year, but not around homeland security. I mean, I may have the only job in town where everybody on both sides of the aisle in both chambers wants me to succeed, and I'm gratified by that. So you don't have to worry about Congress, I don't think.

One of the challenges I think we're going to have with regard to Congress -- and I say this with great respect, having been on the Hill -- is that we are going to start making some recommendations this year, and in outgoing years, about reconfiguring some of the agencies, and some of the departments. I mean, we are going to make FEMA a much more robust agency so it can have the permanent responsibility to deal with training and equipping and overseeing exercises.

Well, for that purpose, we're going to take a little money from -- now there's \$3.5 billion, there's a couple hundred million dollars that's going to come out of the Department of Justice. Most of that is new money, but there are a couple hundred dollars going out of the Department of Justice over to FEMA. There may be some other transitional moves. I think there is a small fire grant program that will be merged into that \$3.5 billion.

Again, most of it's new money but, again, instead of having separate, distinctive programs in multiple agencies, our recommendation, as embodied in the budget as part of a strategy is, we're serious about homeland security, we're serious about coordinating efforts with the state and local governments. Let's put it in the agency that has the core competency.

So I don't think you're ever going to have a challenge with the Congress of the United States with regard to financial support. It is the agency that's controlling it. And, again, I'm mindful of the great -- of the League of Cities and the mayors that I've talked to. They, understandably, would like to see dollars going directly to them.

I just don't think, as you develop a national strategy, that is the most effective use of public dollars. That's why I encourage my friends, as governors -- you've worked with them, I worked with them, and these great public servants, all -- both sides of the aisle -- they are engaged as we are at the national level, as you are at the state level. Let's just make sure that we include our mayors and our county officials as we develop those plans, because in the first-responder dollars, most of the money is going to get down to them anyhow, once a plan is established.

Q Who will look at the plans, Tom, starting from the cities and the counties, maybe the health departments and others, and they put together a plan, send them to the state. Do we then judge them and say how they should act, and then we pass it on to you at the federal level, and you review the plan to see if all the components are there to really meet the threats that you're talking about?

GOVERNOR RIDGE: Governor, you've fairly well identified the protocol. And, obviously, we trust the governors to engage everybody that needs to be engaged to develop a holistic plan around the state. I mean, your homeland security advisor, if you've got somebody separately doing your emergency preparedness, your commissioners of public health, both at the state and the local level. We, again, believe that under the leadership of governors, you're going to come up with comprehensive statewide plans. You're going to engage everybody at the local level.

With regard to FEMA overseeing the first-responder money, they've basically taken snapshots of the 50 states and the territories as to what your basic needs are. And hopefully we'll be engaged with you during this process. When we say put together your local and state plans, we hope that part of that integration, part of that discussion involves federal officials, as you develop into a state and local plan. So it's almost a fait

accompli by the time you get into Washington.

I mean, there are some broad parameters, but we're trying to basically build up a similar capacity in every state. And there will be some guidelines and a fairly large menu of the things to choose from. But if you engage the federal government and local officials and your county officials, your states officials all at -- simultaneously, I think it will be pretty much a done deal by the time you get it here.

Q Governor, I, too, want to add my congratulations to you for the job you've done. We've been on the phone many times, we've met in the White House, and I think you've done an extraordinary job, and I'm sure every governor has had an individual conversation or two which would allow them to come to the same conclusion.

We did work together --

(End side A of tape.)

Q -- our ideas for a California based alert system. I have a two-part question. I wonder if you could share, in a general way, what you hope the national alert system would do. Obviously, we think sometimes attaching a numeral to communicate specifically the seriousness that you attach to a given threat.

And, secondly, particularly -- on a different subject -- particularly in light of FEMA being the lead agency in the allocation of some of these funds, do you look to reimburse the state for some of the costs we've already incurred?

As you know, a lot of us are using overtime, buying new surveillance equipment and spending monies that would otherwise use for other purposes. FEMA on a natural disaster has programs to help individuals who are hurt in a flood or earthquake or hurricane, and also if public infrastructure is damaged, roads or bridges, there are programs to compensate the local and the state public authorities.

So I guess the second part of the question is, are there any funds to reimburse the state for some of the expenses we've already incurred trying to do our part to protect our citizens?

GOVERNOR RIDGE: Let me answer the second question first, Governor. There will be some flexibility in both the dollars going to the states and the local governments to use at your discretion, and to use perhaps to defray some of the overtime cost -- literally at your discretion, however you chose to employ them. I cannot -- mean, you won't have the dollars even in that \$3.5 billion to compensate you for all of the cost, but we thought it was appropriate both at the state and the local level to give some flexibility for you to make that decision as to where you deploy it.

Q So that's within the 25 percent? The reimbursement is basically included within the 25 percent?

GOVERNOR RIDGE: Correct. Within that 25 percent, there will be a certain portion of that, you'll just have the discretion to use as you see fit -- reimbursing you for some overtime costs, reimbursing you for equipment acquisition, whatever it is. And, again, that could be subject to change when it gets to the Hill, it may be a larger amount, it may be a smaller amount. But we did recognize the fact that the states and the local communities have accepted a part of their responsibility and absorbed a lot of the cost, just as the federal government has done. And we wanted to recognize that, and we've done it with a formula.

With regard to the national alert system, the challenge of processing and analyzing the bits and pieces of information that get before the intelligence community and the FBI is one that is more complex than I think these professionals are given credit for. I mean, they have to deal with literally -- probably one of the most difficult tasks in this town is taking these bits and pieces of information, connecting them and trying to draw conclusions from them.

Having said that, they are doing a far better job today than they were on September 11th, sharing information not only among the principals, but I think institutionally, as well. However, I think both culturally and technologically, they're not set up to maximize all the information that they receive. I mean, just culturally, it hasn't been done, technologically, they don't have, I think, the kind of architecture that we're going to have to build, so they can -- certain agencies can have access to all of this information.

So that's part of a longer-term goal that we're engaged in right now. Again, in the Congress of the United States, gave the FBI -- appropriated several hundred million dollars, so they can begin developing a much, much better architecture.

Having said that, there's a lot of information that comes before the President every single day -- I see it, and others see it -- that in the scheme of things may be from a source that is unknown, or that hasn't been corroborated, or that doesn't really identify a specific threat. But it's out there, it's part of the noise that you're trying to make some sense of.

That kind of information we may want to share from time to time, just on a need-to-know basis with governors, not that you would necessarily act on it, just to let you know that it's out there. It's not specific, it may not have been corroborated. It's a close hold, to let you know that the intelligence community is trying to drill down and find out more information about the source, whether or not there's any corroboration.

There can conceivably be other information where the credibility of the source has been confirmed, where it may have been corroborated, where there may be more specific information with regard to the means -- you know, the what, when, where and how. But we need to make some kind of calculation, as you did in California, we need to make an assessment on that threat, how credible is it. And then we need to say, if we think it's that credible, then we expect this certain level of preparedness. You need to respond to it in such and such a way.

The system that we are developing is an effort, and I must say it's -- it won't be perfect. It will be an imperfect system that we give to you, and we're going to have to work on. I'm never sure it's going to be perfect. It's going to be more -- as much art as it is science, because there is still a lot of subjective analysis that has to go into this. We could alert you either with a -- as a governor with a specific piece of information, a region, or from time to time perhaps a country. But doing something more than just going out and announcing that we have a threat that the country should know about.

It was probably the Attorney General Ashcroft's least favorite moments as Attorney General when he had to go out and make those announcements. I will assure you that the occasion that I went and made that announcement, and everybody in the press corps and everybody around the country said, well, all right Governor, you told us to be on alert, what do you think we've been on since September 11th?

So I understand the concern that people have. And for that reason, we've decided -- and it's turned out to be a far more complicated process

than we thought -- to come up with an assessment of the quality of the information, the kind of alert that we ought to be on, and an accompanying level of preparedness that you ought to get to.

I think we're pretty close to resolving it. What will happen is that we have to get this consented to by the governors and the territories. We can't mandate this as a system. We can mandate it with regard to federal agencies, the federal government and the like. And so the plan will be to put it out in the public, give you some time to comment on it. We'll review your comments, and then come up with a final system. And we're probably -- I'd like to think we're no more than a couple weeks away from doing it publicly. But we'll obviously let you know before we go public, what it's about.

But you take a look at it, compare it with the systems that you have, make some recommendations back to us.

Because, ultimately, we would like a national system. But that national system will have to be based on consent. We can't tell you how to -- we can't tell you how to operate your states, and we don't want to. But if we can reach an agreement on this, it would be very helpful to the country.

Q Governor, just a short question about food supply. As you look at the issues of threats to food supplies, is that a FEMA issue, is that a public health issue, is that a national issue, is it state, local? And what do you -- maybe you can just comment briefly on that.

GOVERNOR RIDGE: Well, the Secretary of Agriculture and HHS have really sharpened their focus. I mean, I certainly look at it as a high priority within our office, the whole food supply from raw material, through the processing, into the home. And we're working with -- Secretary Thompson has made this a very high priority, and perhaps Dr. Henderson can talk to you about that, as well as our Secretary of Agriculture. And it's one of those issues that as we develop our national strategy, we'll be looking forward to talking to you about.

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Q Tom, thank you very much, and Doctor, your willingness to use the states as the portals. When Governor Bush and I and Governor Barnes testified in New York about what was the number one thing that we needed, it was the inter-operability of radio -- of communications equipment in middle size states, small states, large states. And obviously if you shower everything into a state, people are going to purchase things, like in the old LEAA days, that simply are not necessarily inter-operable with other people. And that simply is not wise.

Let me very briefly switch to another subject, and that's the subject of airport security. I am former state counsel to the NAACP in Oklahoma. We passed a bill in our state on racial profiling saying that race cannot be the sole factor in identifying an individual for further review. There is no security in the Mineta system. In my judgment, the random check provides a feeling of security to some. It provides, really, no security.

It may be nice and humbling to have John Dingle be embarrassed because he has a metal piece in his hip, and they strip-search him. But it's a waste of time. To have six year-olds spread-eagle, to have a state trooper -- I know in my own knowledge base -- who had all of his paperwork approved to take a firearm on the airplane, and then they said, oh, you bought your ticket within 24 hours, we have to go through all of your equipment and all of your material -- I suppose to see if he had a gun -- which he had had approved just seconds before.

This is silly, and I would hope that you would aggressively pursue Mr. Mineta, aggressively pursue the need to assure that we have real-time security in airports. Two-thirds of this economy is consumer confidence. And every life is precious. If there is another incident involving an airplane, and business people don't travel, they don't want to travel -- people now as a result of being shut down -- this latest directive that you can't really be pre-cleared, pre-screened, is hostile to getting out of the basement economically, and I think a threat to what should be a sensible law enforcement system in airports.

And I hope -- we wish, Tom, that you all would take a very fresh and aggressive view about what is -- has been created as a system that does not provide any security.

GOVERNOR RIDGE: Frank, just briefly, the next couple weeks -- first of all, this week I'll be meeting with John Magaw to discuss the issue of how we can -- there are many issues that he and I are going to be discussing. But the point you raised, I think, is something that he understands, and Secretary Mineta understands. As we move forward, what do we at our airports to make sure that we focus our human assets and our technology assets on the unknown?

I mean, there are no-risk travelers and low-risk travelers. I'm still somewhat amazed that flight crews, men and women who have been working for the airlines for 15, 20, 25 years are still going through the security checks. I know that John has said, no more special treatment for frequent fliers. But I do think that this might be a great opportunity for us to do some work with biometrics, and get a trusted flier program. So by a series

of decisions, we reduce the line. But we get the crews out of the way, you get the trusted fliers over here, so suddenly those folks at the airports are the ones you don't know. And then even the ones you don't know -- I had a 67 year old grandmother stand up at a meeting one time, and said, what about me makes me a profile for a search? I couldn't identify anything at the moment, so I said, nothing. To your point.

So if we get the -- we need to reduce the lines of users to focus on those we don't know or who just don't meet any kind of profile that's consistent with anything we know in the intelligence world about our enemy. So we're working on it, John's working on it, Norm's working on it. And it's a high priority for us. We want to get people back into these airlines, because it has not only affected the airline industry, but there are so many other components of our economy dependent upon a very, very rigorous aviation system. And we're not where we need to be yet.

Q We in the U.S. Virgin Islands have sea borders with other Caribbean islands. Are we going to be treated the same as the border with Mexico and Canada?

GOVERNOR RIDGE: We are going to treat the states and territories as equals. If there are unique problems associated or unique challenges associated with travel to and from the Virgin Islands, both individuals and commerce, we'll be working with you on that, as well. The executive order -- I just want to assure you -- that the President signed talks about states and territories.

Q Thank you very much, Tom, for the great communication we had when we had a problem, and a lot of national attention was focused on the state of Washington and Seattle just a few weeks ago. And I really appreciate your intervention to get straight information to all the different parties.

One question that I have, though, is that the administration had decided to federalize the National Guard for deployment along the northern borders with Canada. But it's taking a long, long time to get that in place. So I just urge you to try and move on that, or have the other members of the administration move on that. Because the current time table is that they won't be available for the Canadian border for several months. And that's simply untenable.

GOVERNOR RIDGE: Governor, you're absolutely right. INS and Customs made requests back in October, November. It has been slow in deploying more Guardsmen. We have well over 7,000 deployed at airports and other places. But hopefully we can -- in discussions I've had with the Pentagon, the arrangements they had with Treasury and with Justice, everybody has signed off and it's now a matter of calling up the Reservists in your state and other border states and getting them out. And hopefully it could be done not in the next couple of months, but in the next two or three weeks. And I will follow up on that myself and then get back to you.

Once a final decision is made with regard to a unified northern command, as you know, that the Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs and Secretary Rumsfeld recommended to the President -- and they're going through the process now of a specific entity within their chain of command structure dealing with Homeland Security, a Northern American command -- I think we'll be able to move these things along a lot quicker.

We have various military assets deployed all over this country -- aviation, naval, National Guard. And the decisions on these have been made on an ad hoc basis. And once we get a unified command with a direct relationship with the Office of Homeland Security, it is my belief and my hope that we can facilitate the decision making process a lot quicker.

END

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