



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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Fact Sheet: President Highlights a More Secure America on First Anniversary of Department of Homeland Security

Today's Presidential Action

In remarks celebrating the Department of Homeland Security's first anniversary, President Bush highlighted the accomplishments of DHS and the significant progress being made at the Federal, state, and local level in making America more secure.

On March 1, 2003, approximately 180,000 personnel from 22 different organizations around the government became part of the Department of Homeland Security -- completing the largest government reorganization since the beginning of the Cold War. As a result, our efforts to defend the homeland are more effective, efficient, and organized.

Background: Securing the Homeland

The Department of Homeland Security was created with one single overriding responsibility: to make America more secure. Along with the sweeping transformation within the FBI, the establishment of the Department of Defense's U.S. Northern Command, and the creation of the multi-agency Terrorist Threat Integration Center and Terrorist Screening Center, America is better prepared to prevent, disrupt, and respond to terrorist attacks than ever before.

Border and Transportation Security: DHS has unified the agencies responsible for securing our borders -- many now wearing the same uniform -- to keep out terrorists, criminals, and dangerous material. To do so, DHS is implementing a layered security strategy -- including an increased DHS presence at key foreign ports, improved visa and inspection processes, strengthened seaport security, and improved security technology at airports and border crossings. DHS is implementing background checks on 100% of applications for U.S. citizenship and has registered over 1.5 million travelers into the U.S. VISIT program. The Coast Guard also has seized over 136,000 pounds of cocaine and arrested more than 280 drug smugglers in 2003 with this layered approach.

Critical Infrastructure: DHS has worked to better protect our communications systems, power grids, and transportation networks. During the holiday terror alert, DHS coordinated with private and civic partners to upgrade security at key facilities around the country. DHS also established a National Cyber Security Division to examine cyber-security incidents, track attacks, and coordinate response.

Chemical and Biological Threats: DHS has established the BioWatch program, which protects many large U.S. cities by monitoring the air for biological agents that could be released by terrorists. Additionally, with the funding of the President's Project BioShield, America is able to develop and acquire more advanced vaccines and treatments for biological agents.

Helping our First Responders: The Federal Government has provided more than \$13 billion to equip and train local officials such as firefighters, police officers, and EMS workers to respond to terrorism and other emergencies and created a National Incident Management system. Over 500,000 responders have been trained in weapons of mass destruction awareness and response since September 11, 2001.

The USA PATRIOT Act: The PATRIOT Act has played a vital role in protecting the homeland, enabling the Federal government to better track terrorists, disrupt their cells, and seize their assets. By breaking down unnecessary barriers between intelligence and law enforcement officers, the PATRIOT Act is helping to ensure that the best available information about terrorist threats is provided to the people who need it most.

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