



For Immediate Release
March 17, 2003

Fact Sheet: Operation Liberty Shield

[en Español](#)

Operation LIBERTY SHIELD is a comprehensive national plan designed to increase protections for America's citizens and infrastructure while maintaining the free flow of goods and people across our border with minimal disruption to our economy and way of life. Operation LIBERTY SHIELD is a multi-department, multi-agency, national team effort. It includes:

- Increased security at borders
- Stronger transportation protections
- Ongoing measures to disrupt threats against our nation
- Greater protections for critical infrastructure and key assets
- Increased public health preparedness
- Federal response resources positioned and ready

INCREASED SECURITY AT BORDERS

Maritime

More Patrols - Security has been increased at major U.S. ports and waterways with more Coast Guard patrols by aircraft, ships and boats.

More Escorts of Passenger Ships - The Coast Guard has increased its escorts of ferries and cruise ships.

More Sea Marshals - Every high interest vessel arriving or departing from American ports will have armed Coast Guard Sea Marshals onboard, closely watching the ship's crew and ensuring that it makes its port call safely. These merchant ships have cargoes, crewmember(s), or other characteristics that warrant closer examination.

Selective Maritime Restrictions - The Coast Guard will enforce security zones in and around critical infrastructure sites in key ports. This information will be published and announced for those using U.S. waterways.

Land Borders

Increasing Border Surveillance – Surveillance and monitoring of the borders will be increased with more agents and patrol assets. These forces will cover areas between major ports of entry.

Increased Border Screening – Customs and Border Protection officers will increase screenings of vehicles and cargo crossing our land borders. Officers will conduct more interviews and detailed screenings as people transit in and out of the U.S. The actions at land borders are not expected to significantly impact the movement of people and cargo across the border.

Asylum Modifications

Asylum Detainees – Asylum applicants from nations where al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda sympathizers, and other terrorist groups are known to have operated will be detained for the duration of their processing period. This reasonable and prudent temporary action allows authorities to maintain contact with asylum seekers while we determine the validity of their claim. DHS and the Department of State will coordinate exceptions to this policy.

STRONGER TRANSPORTATION PROTECTIONS

Airports

Increasing Airport Security – The Transportation Security Agency will implement airport security measures that are proactive, sustainable, and focused, based on intelligence information. One of the most visible changes will be increasing the presence of law enforcement officers on patrol and in airport facilities.

Checking Airport IDs– TSA has advised air carriers to review and ensure the validity of all personnel ID's for those who have access to the secure areas. In addition, TSA screeners will continue to remain at a heightened state of alert.

Airspace Control

Controlling Vital Airspace – New temporary flight restrictions have been put into place over certain U. S. cities, including Washington D. C. and New York City. The FAA will continue to closely monitor air traffic in these and other key areas.

Enhancing Rail Security

Improving RailBridgeSecurity – State governors have been asked to provide additional police or National Guard forces at selected bridges.

Increased Railroad Infrastructure Security - Railroad companies will be asked to increase security at major facilities and key rail hubs.

AMTRAK Security Measures - AMTRAK will implement security measures consistent with private rail companies.

Increasing Railroad Hazardous Material (HAZMAT) Safety – At the request of the Department of Transportation private railroad companies will monitor shipments of hazardous material and increase surveillance of trains carrying this material.

Enhancing Road Security

Government and Industry Teamwork - The Department of Transportation will work closely with hazardous material shippers and carriers and encourage

them to follow transportation security checklists and recommendations. Suggested measures include employee identification checks, communications plans, and emphasis on operator awareness. U. S. and Canadian authorities will also coordinate cross-border hazardous material shipments.

ONGOING MEASURES TO DISRUPT THREATS AGAINST OUR NATION

Monitoring Terrorist Suspects

Tracking Suspects - The FBI will continue to closely monitor individuals suspected of links to terrorism.

Identifying Terrorist Supporters - The FBI is working closely with the Departments of Justice and DHS to identify those that would facilitate terrorist activity through fundraising, logistical support and recruitment.

Foreign National Information. - In order to advise members of the Iraqi community of the FBI's responsibilities in protecting them from hate crimes, and to elicit information that may be useful to the U.S. Government in the event of hostilities in Iraq, the FBI, working with the Department of State and immigration officials, has identified a number of Iraqi-born individuals in the U.S. that may be invited to participate in voluntary interviews.

GREATER PROTECTIONS FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND KEY ASSETS

Protecting Key Economic Centers and Ports

Vital Petro-chemical Facilities - The Coast Guard will provide maritime protection for petroleum centers located in close proximity to major coastal population centers.

Strengthening Nuclear Regulatory Safeguards

Facility Security - The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is requiring all licensed users of radioactive material to take additional security measures.

Protecting Key Infrastructure - The Federal government, state and local organizations and the private sector are increasing the security presence at chemical facilities, nuclear power sites, key electrical grids, bridges, subway systems, and other sites.

Cyber-Security

Monitoring and Vigilance – The Department of Homeland Security, together with other government agencies, continues to monitor the Internet for signs of a potential terrorist attack, cyber-terrorism, hacking, and state-sponsored information warfare. Industry and public Internet users are reminded of the importance of employing sound security practices and reporting unusual activity or intrusion attempts to DHS or local law enforcement.

INCREASED PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS

Increasing Disease Surveillance and Food Security

Alerting and Informing the Food Industry - The Department of Agriculture is alerting producer organizations of the increased threat status and urging them to implement additional security measures such as inspecting all vehicles and escorting all visitors to their facilities.

Department of Health and Human Services Outreach - HHS is alerting state and local health departments, hospitals, and medical care providers to report any unusual diseases or disease patterns. HHS has put the U. S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corp Readiness Force of doctors, nurses, and other health care staff on alert status and alerted emergency support and management teams to possible deployment.

Imported Food Monitoring. HHS has taken aggressive steps to enhance the inspection of imported food and is coordinating federal, state, and local communications on imported food issues and potential food pathogens.

USDA Monitoring of Food Chain - The Department of Agriculture is taking steps to assure that employees and representatives throughout the food and agriculture community are alerted and aware of the need for extra precautions during this time. USDA is encouraging state and private authorities to monitor feedlots, stockyards, import and storage areas.

FEDERAL RESPONSE RESOURCES POSITIONED AND READY

National Emergency Response Teams - DHS has pre-positioned National Emergency Response Teams (ERT-N) with one team designated for the National Capital Region. These teams are able to provide onsite management of federal response efforts.

Incident Teams - USDA Incident Management Teams (IRTs) from the U. S. Forest Service are ready to deploy to an emergency site to manage an incident with other DHS, federal, state, and local authorities.

DECON Teams Ready - EPA decontamination teams are on alert and ready to deploy.

In addition to the measures being taken in Operation LIBERTY SHIELD, members of the public are encouraged to become more informed about the emergency preparedness measures they can take to protect themselves and family members.

School Preparedness – On March 6, the Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, and Secretary Ridge announced a new web site that provides educators and school administrators with key emergency information to include in their own preparedness plans. The website includes information covering a variety of emergencies, including natural disasters, violent incidents, and terrorist acts. The website is: www.ed.gov/emergencyplan.

[READY.GOV](http://www.ready.gov) – The READY.GOV website and 1-800-Be-Ready line provide citizens with informative preparedness suggestions and advice for families.

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