

# THE BUSH RECORD ON HOMELAND SECURITY

## ***RHETORIC VS. REALITY***

*“Time and distance from the events of September the 11<sup>th</sup> will not make us safer unless we act on its lessons. America is no longer protected by vast oceans. We are protected from attack only by vigorous action abroad, and increased vigilance at home.”*

President George W. Bush  
State of the Union  
1/29/02

The President has said that terrorist likely will attempt a major attack on the United States this year – yet almost 3 years after September 11, 2001, and more than one year after the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the Bush Administration’s record on homeland security is one of too much talk, too little action, and too little funding to protect Americans from another terrorist attack on our shores.

**RHETORIC****REALITY****Intelligence**

“And this new department [of Homeland Security] will review intelligence and law enforcement information from all agencies of government, and produce a single daily picture of threats against our homeland.” - Bush 6/6/02

“Right now, there are several major watchlists and related systems. But with each separate watchlist comes the potential for another seam. The Terrorist Screening Center will provide “one-stop shopping” so that every federal anti-terrorist screener is working off the same page.” - Ashcroft 9/16/03

The integration of intelligence information and the consolidation of terrorist watch lists is arguably the most important homeland security challenge the Administration faced after 9/11.

First, this activity was assigned to the new Department of Homeland Security, then switched to the Terrorist Threat Integration Center, now the consolidation of watch lists – a key component – has been moved to the Terrorist Screening Center.

The DHS Inspector General recently concluded that “... delayed connectivity with other agency databases and communications system have further hampered ... DHS’ effectiveness with regard to intelligence related matters.”

GAO found that local officials do not consider the current process of sharing intelligence information to protect the homeland to be effective for the purposes of protecting the homeland.

Today, there is no fully consolidated terrorist watch list and 12 watch lists need to be checked.

**RHETORIC****REALITY****Air Marshals**

“..we are going to dramatically increase the number of federal air marshals on our airplanes.” - Bush 9/27/01

The Bush budget for the coming year includes a 20% reduction in the number of air marshals (which is classified), compared to the number Bush wanted immediately after 9/11.

“Americans should know that every available air marshal is being deployed and additional resources are being directed to this critical program.” – Ridge 7/30/03

Last May, the Administration proposed reducing funding for air marshals and using it to fund wasteful spending at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). In one case, the DHS Inspector General revealed that TSA wasted \$7 million on duplicate screener background checks.

To deal with the air marshal shortfall, almost a year ago Secretary Ridge proposed to train and use 2,500 Immigration Enforcement agents as air marshals.

To date, fewer than 200 such agents have been trained.

**Creation of DHS**

“The reason to create this department is ...to increase its (the government’s) focus and effectiveness. ... By ending duplication and overlap, we will spend less on overhead, and more on protecting America.” – Bush 6/06/02

DHS overhead continues to rise. The Administration wants to increase funding for departmental operations by 92% in the coming year. The bulk of this increase is for manager training and the implementation of the Department’s proposed new personnel system. Funding requested for the new human resource system totals \$133.5 million.

“There’s too many bureaucratic rules. ... I need the flexibility to run this department.” – Bush 8/15/02

Bush has failed to use the unprecedented flexibility Congress provided to hire needed Homeland Security staff. One year after formation of the Department, almost 30 percent of the key DHS positions in human resources, budget, and legal offices remain unfilled. Political appointees now make up ¼ of all Departmental management staff.

**RHETORIC****REALITY****Use of New Aviation Security Technology**

“We will invest in new technology for aircraft security, with grants to develop transponders that cannot be switched off from the cockpit; video monitors in the cockpit to alert pilots to trouble in the cabin ... including technology to enable controller to take over distressed aircraft and land it by remote control.” – Bush 9/27/01

To date, less than \$2 million has been invested in this technology. Neither the FAA nor TSA have invested in transponders that cannot be switched off from the cockpit or technology that would enable a controller to take over a distressed aircraft.

“With new equipment, we’re now screening every bag that goes to every airplane.” - Bush 9/10/03

The mandate to screen all checked baggage with explosive detection machines has not been met. GAO recently found that, “Of the airports reporting that they were not screening 100 percent of checked baggage using ETD and EDS [new explosive detection machines], the number of consecutive days that they were not conducting this screening ranged from 1 to 371 days.” Even today, some luggage is only checked by matching a bag to a passenger.

“We’re not waiting for ships and planes to arrive; we’ve got what we call a Proliferation Security Initiative – fancy words which means America is working with other governments to track and stop the shipments of dangerous weapons and dangerous cargo.” - Bush 2/5/04

The Bush Administration continues to drag its heels on screening of passenger aircraft cargo. Up until a few months ago, DHS didn’t even know who all the “known shippers” are. These “known shippers” are allowed to put cargo on passenger aircraft and most of it is not screened for explosives.

**Immigration Reforms**

“The INS estimates that 40 percent of the people who are here illegally have overstayed their visa ... And one of the things we want to make sure of is we find the 40 percent ...” - Bush 1/25/02

The backlog of those on the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) “deportation” list continues to grow. In June 2003, there was a 396,000 person backlog and is estimated to grow by 40,000 a year.

**RHETORIC****REALITY****Checking Hazardous Materials Drivers**

“Almost two years ago, I signed the USA Patriot Act. That essential law...tore down the walls that blocked America’s intelligence and law enforcement officials from sharing intelligence.” - Bush 9/10/03

“Today I can report to you that our investigation has uncovered several individuals, including individuals who may have links to the hijackers, who fraudulently have obtained, or attempted to obtain, hazardous material transportation licenses.”  
– Ashcroft 9/25/01

The Administration has not implemented the requirement to screen, through fingerprint checks, applicants for hazardous material transportation licenses, as required by the Patriot Act. It does not plan to do so until January 2005 – more than 3 years after the law was passed.

This is despite Attorney General Ashcroft using the need for hazmat license screenings as a reason Congress needed to pass the Patriot Act.

In fact, under the Bush 2004 and 2005 budget proposals, the government would check every airline passenger more thoroughly than it checks those who drive trucks filled with material that could potentially kill tens of thousands of people.

**Critical Infrastructure**

“In the past year, DHS has visited several hundred chemical facilities in high-threat urban areas and has identified measures to improve their security.” - White House release 1/22/04

DHS has given chemical plants and other private facilities no specific time frame to implement identified security measures.

In February, DHS published procedures for voluntary submission of vulnerability information from the private sector, including chemical facilities. It took DHS one year to implement these voluntary procedures mandated by law. DHS has received only two submissions from the private sector.

The GAO in a March 2003 report concluded, “The federal government has not comprehensively assessed the chemical industry’s vulnerabilities to terrorist attacks. ... Consequently, federal, state and local entities lack comprehensive information on the vulnerabilities facing the industry.”

**RHETORIC****REALITY****Port Security**

“We will work to make sure that not only is the port strong for economic reasons...we will make sure ... that this port is safe and secure. .... we have a solemn duty to protect our homeland, including the seaports of America.” – Bush 2/5/04

The coming year’s budget is the first time Bush has ever specifically asked for port security grant funding and Bush proposes to cut this funding by over 60% below the \$124 million Congress provided last year, over the President’s objections.

The Coast Guard estimated in 2002 that at least \$7 billion would be needed to make port security improvements. Congress – in the absence of presidential leadership – has provided \$587 million to improve port security since 2001. Yet this is less than 10% of the total investment needed.

**Container Security**

“Information regarding nearly 100% of all containerized cargo is carefully screened by DHS before it arrives in the United States. Higher risk shipments are physically inspected for terrorist weapons and contraband prior to being released from the port of entry.” - White House Press release 1/22/04

“We’re doing things more wise in order to protect our country. We’re not waiting for ships and planes to arrive; we’ve got what we call a Proliferation Security Initiative – fancy words which means America is working with other governments to track and stop the shipments of dangerous weapons and dangerous cargo.” - Bush 2/5/04

Bush requested no money for the Container Security Initiative (CSI) in 2002 or 2003. This Initiative shifts inspection of suspicious containers to overseas ports so that the most suspicious containers are cleared before they enter the United States.

Bush’s own Customs Commissioner said that he needed \$57 million to fully fund the initial phase of the program. When Congress provided \$39 million for it, Bush vetoed it. Despite no request from Bush, the Congress provided this \$57 million the following year.

It took until last year for the Bush Administration to belatedly requested the \$62 million for the CSI program, which Congress provided.

GAO recently found that the targeting system used to identify containers needs to be redone and that no national system for reporting and analyzing inspection statistics exists. GAO-04-325T

**RHETORIC****REALITY****Local Police, Fire and Emergency Responder Preparedness**

“We’ll increase funding to help states and communities train and equip our heroic police and firefighters.” – Bush 1/29/02

“The first responders of America, all across America, must have the resources necessary to respond to emergencies and save lives.” – Bush 3/23/03

“Past experience has shown that preparedness efforts are key to providing an effective response to major terrorist incidents and natural disasters.” - Bush Administration’s National Strategy on Homeland Security

A 2003 Council of Foreign Relations report found that responders were “Drastically Underfunded, Dangerously Unprepared,” and that “America will fall approximately \$98 billion short of meeting critical emergency responder needs over the next five years if current funding levels are maintained.”

Both this year and last, Bush proposed to reduce funding levels, by \$2.3 billion last year and \$1.2 billion this year, primarily for law enforcement and firefighters.

Last year, Congress was able to make up most, but not all, of the Bush cuts to these preparedness programs. This year, given the tight funding constraints, making up Bush’s cuts will be difficult.

A 2003 Rand survey identified needs in six areas: personal protective equipment, communications, training, chemical protective equipment, communicable disease protection, and best practice benchmarking. A recent survey of fire departments found that only 13% of fire departments are prepared to respond to a hazmat incident. In addition, an estimated 57,000 firefighters lack personal protective clothing needed in a chem-bio attack, 1/3 of firefighters per shift are not equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus and nearly half of the available units are 10 years old. Only half of all emergency responders on shift have portable radios.

**RHETORIC****REALITY****Northern Border**

“Tom Ridge went up to Canada – he went up with Canada and were taking about a new border initiative with our friends. We’re analyzing every aspect of the border and making sure that the effort is seamless, the communication is real, that the enforcement is strong.” – Bush 1/25/02

Since 9/11, Congress provided an additional \$308 million to beef up security on our northern border, and to add border patrol agents, inspectors and equipment. Only one-third of this funding was requested by Bush.

The Patriot Act, passed in 2001, called for a tripling of inspectors and agents on our Northern Border, due to the vulnerabilities that exist there. Bush has never proposed a budget that would meet this goal. Today, only one in 10 border patrol agents is assigned to guard the northern border which is almost three times as long as the southern border. Today, there are almost 2,000 fewer inspectors than called for three years ago and the White House still has no plan identifying how many more agents and inspectors and how much new technology are needed to adequately guard our northern border.

**Overall Homeland Security Funding**

“I’ve asked for doubling of homeland security funds, to \$38 billion a year. This is double the pre-September 11<sup>th</sup> numbers.” - Bush 1/25/02

Before 9/11, many of today’s programs were virtually non-existent, making a comparison to pre-9/11 funding levels meaningless. One example is the Transportation Security Administration, which didn’t exist before 9/11, and for which Congress has provided over \$15 billion since 2002. Another example is biodefense, for which Congress provided \$10 billion, for activities not conducted prior to 9/11.

There is no agreed upon definition of what comprises “homeland security funding” and the Administration redefines it every year. For example, last year Congress provided \$746 million for firefighter grants and Bush classified it as non-homeland security funding. This year, the President requested \$500 million for firefighter grants, but now classifies it as homeland security funding. By re-labeling the request the president creates the appearance of an increase in homeland security funding when he is in fact cutting it, in this case by 35%.