

## Managing Homeland Security

### Develop a Threat-Based Strategy

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#### Summary

After 9/11 the United States acted swiftly to defend itself from terrorist attacks. The government implemented numerous far-reaching security measures, undertook a vast reorganization for the purpose of defending against terrorism, and more than tripled Federal homeland security spending. Although substantial gaps remain, coordination of anti-terrorist efforts has been significantly improved internationally and within the federal government.

There have been no terrorist attacks in the United States since 9/11, but it is far from clear whether the government's efforts have made the difference. Policy discussions of homeland security issues are driven not by rigorous analysis but by fear, perceptions of past mistakes, pork-barrel politics, and insistence on an invulnerability that cannot possibly be achieved. It's time for a new, more analytic, *threat-based* approach, grounded in concepts of sufficiency, prioritization, and measured effectiveness.

The new President should put forward a threat-based homeland security strategy that would acknowledge that major terrorist attacks are unlikely in the United States and would reallocate resources accordingly. The strategy would focus specifically on enhancing four major efforts: coordination with foreign partners to degrade Al Qa'eda further; continued "over-protection" of civil aviation, including air cargo inspection and defense against surface-to-air missiles; public education to create more resilience in the event of an attack; and outreach to Muslim communities in the United States,



whose unfriendliness to terrorist groups so far has made the United States less vulnerable than other countries to incidents of terror.

## Context

“Homeland security”—both the term and the policy—were effectively born amid the crisis of September 11, 2001. The policy started with a simple purpose: to prevent further terrorist attacks on American soil. On these terms, the policy seems enormously successful: the country has seen no further Islamist terror attacks, despite numerous predictions to the contrary. Of course, neither were there any terrorist attacks in the United States in the five years before 2001, so whether our post-9/11 success is attributable to recent homeland security policies, offensive anti-terrorism operations abroad, or just dumb luck is debatable.

Homeland security is such a new topic that explanations for success are difficult to assess. It also has become a politically charged question in a country traumatized by 9/11 and increasingly polarized along partisan lines. Perceived deficiencies in homeland security have become political cudgels for beating incumbents and establishing a politician’s *bona fides* on national security issues. Neither these discussions nor homeland security policies themselves are squarely rooted in anything except the politics of fear and perceptions of pre-9/11 deficiencies.

In the early days after 9/11, it made sense to take measures that responded to the circumstances of that attack and reassured a nervous public. But, five years into the apparently endless war on terrorism, homeland security should evolve from a set of emergency policies into a permanent field of important government policy that, like any other, must justify its allocation of taxpayer funds through solid analysis.

Certainly, an extraordinary amount has been achieved in homeland security (see Table). A multitude of specific initiatives to protect everything from ports to power plants has advanced from mere ideas to operational programs with, by governmental standards, lightning speed. Giant bureaucracies, including the Department of

Homeland Security (DHS), the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), have emerged from nothing into large functioning organizations. Governments are rarely capable of reacting so rapidly and radically to new challenges.

And yet, as critics frequently point out, many gaps remain in homeland security. State and local governments, although critical to both preventing attacks and managing their consequences, have not been well-integrated into federal efforts. Similarly, the private sector has just begun to contribute to homeland security. As a result, targets that can be protected only at the local level—skyscrapers, subway systems, and chemical plants, for example—have inconsistent protection or none. Limited information-sharing with other countries means that suspected terrorists continue to slip across borders. Within the federal government, DHS lacks the authority and intelligence assets to fully coordinate homeland security, while the Department's dreadful response to Hurricane Katrina has raised questions about its competence. This list could go on and on.

But the difficulty in evaluation comes less from these well-known deficiencies than from the absence of any reasonable standard of judgment. That the U.S. homeland can never be made 100-percent secure has become a cliché. The country contains a half-million bridges, 500 skyscrapers, 200,000 miles of natural gas pipelines, and 2,800 power plants; the list of critical infrastructure alone is far too long for all its components to be protected, and then there are subways, restaurants, movie theaters, schools, and shopping malls.

Yet, in the political arena, invulnerability *is* the standard by which homeland security policies are judged. Washington think tanks, federal agencies, and government commissions have produced a steady stream of reports since 9/11 detailing the myriad vulnerabilities of the homeland and the insufficiency of the government response before and after 9/11.<sup>1</sup> The attack scenarios they present demonstrate a degree of imaginative thinking that even the innovative strategists of Al Qa'eda could never match. Moreover, the scenarios are often connected only to vulnerabilities, not to threats. Each type of attack is said to be plausible, regardless of whether any

particular actor in the world has both the desire and the capacity to carry it out. A vaguely defined enemy, usually labeled “Al Qa’eda,” is assumed to be willing and capable of doing essentially anything.

In fact, in many cases, there simply is no such enemy. For example, no one has presented evidence of any group in the world currently willing and capable of carrying out a terrorist attack in the United States using nuclear weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction (WMD), reasonably defined. The federal government nevertheless spends \$9 billion a year to research, develop, and deploy technologies to defend against “catastrophic threats.” Similarly, no evidence of a realistic plot against a U.S. port has surfaced; nor is one included among the ten terrorist plots that President Bush says the U.S. has disrupted since 9/11. But, the government’s 2007 homeland security funding request provides \$2 billion more than the previous year for port security, because a terrorist attack against a U.S. port could be “economically devastating”—regardless of how likely it is.<sup>ii</sup>

Vulnerability analyses do little to promote wise policy, but they are very meaningful politically. They usually make the case that an investment of just a few billion dollars would fix the problem. If another terrorist attack occurs—and one certainly could—a report will doubtless already exist that demonstrates that the attack could have been prevented for a few billion dollars, and yet the government did nothing. Having watched the “blame game” surrounding the 9/11 commission hearings, any U.S. official may assume this situation represents a serious *political* vulnerability.

Partly for this reason, the last five years have witnessed a massive increase in homeland security expenditure. For fiscal year 2007, the President requested \$58 billion for homeland security—a sum greater than the British or French defense budgets and about three times the estimated level of pre-9/11 homeland security spending.<sup>iii</sup> This spending generally lacks any firm connection to a specific terrorist threat; at worst, it serves as a source of government pork, promoting the growth of a nascent “homeland-security-industrial complex.” Nevertheless, the only real criticism to date, from both sides of the aisle, has been that America remains vulnerable in key

areas. This type of criticism arises not because anyone believes or asserts invulnerability is possible, but because no other standard is used to evaluate homeland security policies.

There is, as yet, no measure of sufficiency in U.S. public debate on homeland security: How much are we willing to spend to be how safe? What civil liberties are we willing to give up, and what inconveniences should we tolerate? Which vulnerabilities should we address, and which should we live with? These questions remain unanswered—actually they have barely even been posed in U.S. politics.

*After five years of willy-nilly and often wasteful expansion, we now should have both the breathing room and the wisdom to find a better approach.* The key challenge is not to persist in the quixotic effort to eliminate vulnerabilities through new bureaucracies or greater expenditures. Rather, it is to establish some concept of *sufficiency*, to create *priorities* within the expanding array of homeland security initiatives, and to determine *measures of effectiveness* to assess policies already implemented.

Planning for homeland security appears to be based on the notion, expressed on page one of the U.S. government's National Strategy for Homeland Security that "[t]oday's terrorists can strike at any place, at any time, and with virtually any weapon." In fact, the primary lesson of the past few years is that they cannot. The enemy is neither omniscient nor omnipotent—and, at this point in the war on terrorism, we know an extraordinary amount about Al Qa'eda and about Islamist terrorists in general. We know about terrorist groups' goals and motivations, their multiple strengths, and their even more myriad weaknesses. We can discern very consistent operational styles and patterns.

Certainly, these groups include many intelligent, adaptive enemies that constantly innovate, and we need to be able to meet new challenges. But, any terrorist group's operational flexibility is limited by the nature of its political goals, its organizational responses to counterterrorism, and the constituencies it seeks to please. An

understanding of those limits will yield a much smaller field of possible terrorist targets and methods that deserve our greatest attention. In general, we can use our knowledge of the enemy to inform our homeland security policy, to efficiently and effectively allocate resources, and to resist the pressure to pursue an invulnerability that we know we can never achieve.

## **Where We Are Today**

After 9/11, the United States undertook by far the broadest government reorganization response to terrorism in modern history. The sheer size and symbolic power of an attack on what had previously been considered an inviolable continental sanctuary forced an entire rethinking of U.S. national security policy. Indeed, the perceived causes, both proximate and long-term, of the 9/11 attack have been used to justify all subsequent major changes in U.S. homeland security policies.

The government put the population on alert, providing a first, crucial line of defense. Air travel was quickly made much safer. The federal government created an entirely new agency, the TSA, which nationalized airport security, adding at one stroke tens of thousands of employees to the federal workforce—a stark contrast to the general trend of privatizing U.S. government functions. The TSA quickly improved passenger screening procedures, began inspection of all luggage, installed hardened cockpit doors on large commercial aircraft, employed thousands of air marshals, and armed some pilots. The years since 9/11 have been among the safest in aviation history. There have been no further successful terrorist attacks and indeed only one crash of a large U.S. passenger jet for any reason.

Intelligence-sharing, particularly about individuals with terrorist ties, was another early focus, reflecting a widely held belief that information sufficient to prevent the 9/11 attacks had existed within disparate parts of the government and private data sources in the United States. Rather than an overall lack of information, the problem was thought to be that no single agency or decision-maker had enough aggregate information and power to recognize the full pattern and to act on what it knew.

To solve this “connect-the-dots” problem, Congress speedily passed the USA PATRIOT Act, giving the government broad new powers and breaking down long-held distinctions in American law and practice between domestic and foreign intelligence and between intelligence and law enforcement. The Terrorist Threat Integration Center (now the National Counterterrorism Center) was created to integrate and analyze all terrorist-related intelligence and information. The government also embarked on an immense effort, still very controversial and far from complete, to link various federal, state, local, and private-sector databases to enhance “information awareness.” These initial efforts were reinforced in 2004 by creation of the office of Director of National Intelligence to oversee and coordinate all 16 agencies of the U.S. intelligence community.

## Major post-9/11 U.S. Homeland Security Legislation

<i>Legislation</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
<b>Authorization to Use Military Force</b>	September 2001	Authorized the President to use force against those who committed or aided the 9/11 attacks
<b>USA PATRIOT Act</b>	October 2001	Expanded the authority of U.S. law enforcement by breaking down barriers between law enforcement and intelligence and between domestic and foreign activities
<b>Aviation and Transportation Security Act</b>	November 2001	Established the Transportation Security Administration to improve security in all modes of transportation
<b>Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act</b>	May 2002	Increased resources for border security and for information sharing among intelligence, law enforcement, and border security agencies
<b>Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act</b>	June 2002	Implemented measures to improve the ability to prevent and respond to bioterrorism and other public health emergencies
<b>Homeland Security Act</b>	November 2002	Established the Department of Homeland Security, whose primary mission is to help prevent, protect against, and respond to acts of terrorism
<b>Terrorism Risk Insurance Act</b>	November 2002	Created a financial backstop, enabling commercial insurers to provide affordable terrorism insurance
<b>Maritime Transportation Security Act</b>	November 2002	Implemented measures to protect the nation's ports and waterways from terrorist attack
<b>National Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act</b>	December 2004	Created office of Director of National Intelligence and National Center for Counterterrorism to coordinate intelligence-gathering and analysis



It made sense to move quickly after 9/11 to reassure a nervous public. But, from a longer-term perspective, the success of the 9/11 plot did not mean that the American government was wholly unprepared for terrorism or even that U.S. intelligence was strategically surprised by these attacks. The government had done an enormous amount of work before then on homeland security. It was spending by some measures \$16 billion a year to prevent attacks, protect critical targets, and prepare to deal with the consequences of WMD attacks.<sup>iv</sup> The intelligence community had even specifically focused on Al Qa'eda as the principal terrorist threat. Of course, more could have been done. But the real change after 9/11 was in the prioritization of the fight against terrorism and in the wider public's perception of its importance, not in the awareness of the threat within the state security apparatus. For a nation at peace, the United States was enormously aware of terrorist and Al Qa'eda threats.

Still, after 9/11, many in the U.S. government saw a huge and probably fleeting opportunity to reorganize the government in a manner they had understood to be necessary but politically impossible. They believed that the government security apparatus, a legacy of World War II and the Cold War, made little sense for dealing with new problems, including transnational terrorism. For example, border security was divided among numerous agencies in six departments (State, Treasury, Justice, Transportation, Agriculture, and Defense).

The most drastic change was the creation of DHS in 2003, in the biggest reorganization of the federal government since 1947. DHS brought together 22 previously separate agencies, with more than 200,000 employees and a fiscal year 2006 budget of \$40 billion. It now includes the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service, the Secret Service, and the new TSA. The White House also created a Homeland Security Council, analogous to the National Security Council, to coordinate homeland security policy across the federal government. The existence of this council acknowledges that DHS, despite its size and scope, still does not contain all of the governmental assets necessary for homeland security, not least the FBI, which remains in the Justice Department.

Similarly, a National Joint Terrorism Task Force now coordinates efforts between the federal government and state and local officials.

Complementing these reorganizations is an enormous increase in resources. Beyond the tripling of overall homeland security expenditures, the share of FBI resources devoted to counterterrorism has doubled, and the combined total of CIA and FBI personnel working on terrorist financing alone increased from under a dozen to more than 300 in the two years following 9/11.<sup>v</sup> International cooperation in sharing information on suspected terrorists has improved, extending beyond countries that have been helpful over many years, such as France and Britain, to include many other states, particularly Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, who now take the threat more seriously.

Suspicious ships entering U.S. waters are now more likely to be screened. The country's exposure to biological attack has been lessened by stockpiling tens of millions of doses of antibiotics and enough smallpox vaccine for every U.S. resident.<sup>vi</sup> Oversight has been tightened on labs working with biological materials. Terrorism insurance is now backstopped by a new federal program. Certain types of major infrastructure, such as well-known bridges and tunnels, are protected by police and National Guard forces during terrorism alerts. Nuclear reactors have better protection. Federal agencies are required to have security programs for their information technology networks, and many private firms have backed up their headquarters and their databanks so that operations could continue after the catastrophic loss of a main site.<sup>vii</sup>

## **The Wages of Homeland Security**

Many of these measures were eminently sensible and, along with operations abroad, have helped prevent another major terrorist attack: in essence, we are safer. But, they have not been cost-free.

*First*, there are direct costs, not only \$58 billion in fiscal year 2007 federal dollars, but also some unknown multiple of that figure in non-federal spending. Los Angeles

International Airport, for example, has to spend \$100,000 per day for additional security when the alert goes from yellow to orange. Multiply that sum for alerts at other major airports and for more orange days, and the numbers rise quite quickly.<sup>viii</sup> This level of spending also means that other priorities go unfunded. For example, the FBI investigated only about half as many criminal cases in 2004 as in 2000 and conducted 70 percent fewer drug-related investigations.<sup>ix</sup>

Because much of this spending is not driven by any threat analysis, nearly any expenditure can be justified, and one has little basis for saying whether these trade-offs are worthwhile or whether the money was wasted. The allocation of homeland security funds to rural areas far from the terrorist radar screen and for the protection of miniature golf courses are ample indications that much of the spending is simply pork.<sup>x</sup> Terrorism is used to justify increases in expenditure on everything from anti-poverty programs to gun control to HIV/AIDS. One enterprising senator applied it to prescription drug benefits, citing the “terror” caused by lack of access to medications.<sup>xi</sup>

*Second*, the shift of so many organizations to DHS, whose overriding goal and ethos is counterterrorism and homeland security, has slighted other missions. So, for example, transferring the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to DHS meant that FEMA paid less attention to natural disasters, with the result that an organization that in the 1990s excelled at hurricane response was unready for Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

*Third*, homeland security measures impose less tangible costs. Stepped-up security imposes great inconvenience on the public and increases the general level of anxiety. Increased surveillance necessarily compromises civil liberties and privacy. Controversies over, for example, warrantless wiretapping stir up divisive political debates and divert attention from other important issues. Insidiously, these measures often fall hardest on specific ethnic minorities and foreign nationals, especially those from Islamic countries, whose goodwill is most necessary for any long-term victory in the war on terror.<sup>xii</sup> The increased difficulties that foreign students, workers, and tourists have in entering and living in the United States may have helped protect the

homeland, but they also have reduced our competitiveness, restricted our access to foreign talent, and hurt our standing abroad. We have no way of assessing whether this trade-off was worthwhile.

## The Enemy Without

The key to understanding how to make such trade-offs lies in understanding the nature of the terrorist threat. There can be little doubt that Al Qa'eda and like-minded terrorist groups retain the desire to carry out attacks within the United States. According to an October 2005 speech by President Bush, the United States has disrupted three attempted Al Qa'eda strikes inside the United States and intercepted at least five more terrorist efforts to case targets or infiltrate the country. Terrorism continues to flourish abroad, with attacks in Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the United Kingdom. And of course, the war in Iraq seems to be incubating an entire new generation of *ihadis*.

Intent, though, is not capability. Given the loose international environment and well-documented holes in U.S. homeland security, the failure of *ihadis* to carry out even one small-scale attack in the United States in more than five years implies that they have some serious weaknesses, weaknesses that can inform an analytical approach to homeland security.

Terrorism analysts typically divide the *ihadist* threat into three categories.<sup>xiii</sup> First is the Al Qa'eda core, an organization based in the border region of Pakistan and Afghanistan with tentacles in many other countries. This is the organization that carried out the 9/11 attacks. The second category contains local, organized groups, such as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in Algeria and Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia. Sharing the general ideological disposition of the Al Qa'eda core and maintaining some links with it, these groups have carried out recent attacks in numerous countries—and they plague Iraq. Finally, there are specific lone individuals or isolated cells, inspired by Al Qa'eda or Islamist ideology, such as the perpetrators of the London attacks in 2005.

## The Al Qa'eda Core

Since 9/11, the U.S. counterterrorism campaign has greatly weakened the Al Qa'eda core. Its sanctuary and training camps in Afghanistan have been eliminated, large numbers of its leaders have been killed, captured, or at least identified, and the remaining leaders spend much of their time and effort avoiding capture. Stepped-up cooperation between U.S. and allied intelligence services and increased monitoring of communications have made it far more difficult to carry out, undetected, a global conspiracy of the size and complexity favored by the core. Improved border security and greater identification of Al Qa'eda members have forced them to rely on local groups, of which there are none in the United States, and have disrupted key members' communications and travel, particularly to this country.

The core has proved very innovative in its techniques, but it has demonstrated a penchant for spectacular attacks against certain types of targets, especially symbolic targets of American power, military targets, and civil aviation. This pattern is not merely a result of habit; it reflects the core's strategy of demonstrating that it is engaged in a legitimate and effective war against the United States, while not alienating its recruiting base of ordinary Muslims through wanton, indiscriminate violence. As Bruce Hoffman has observed, "Radical in politics, terrorists are frequently just as conservative in their operations, adhering to an established *modus operandi*."<sup>xiv</sup>

The rather grandiose summer 2006 plot against airliners leaving the United Kingdom—apparently the first serious plot by the Al Qa'eda core in years—demonstrated both that it remains wedded to large, complex schemes against civil aviation and how hard it has become to carry such schemes to fruition. The plot was apparently discovered through intelligence several months before it was to have been carried out, and it was not even attempted in the United States. None of this means that the Al Qa'eda core is vanquished. Indeed, there is evidence of a revival in the tribal regions of Pakistan. But, its ability to conduct complex, spectacular attacks, particularly in the United States, has been dramatically diminished.

## Domestic Organized Groups

Terrorists' most serious weakness in attacking the U.S. homeland is that organized groups that share Islamist ideology and resort to terrorism do not exist in the U.S. homeland. Such local groups would apparently garner no real support in the American Arab or Muslim community, a precondition for their emergence. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, American officials estimated that Al Qa'eda might have up to 5,000 affiliates in the United States. But, after extensive searching, an FBI report in 2005 concluded that there apparently were no Al Qa'eda cells or affiliated organizations in the United States.<sup>xv</sup> The 9/11 plot originated abroad and apparently did not receive any help from co-conspirators resident in the United States. The absence of such indigenous groups is what most sets the United States apart from countries, including many in Europe, that have experienced Islamist terror attacks since 9/11.

## Isolated Terrorists

Perhaps the most worrisome category from the perspective of U.S. homeland security consists of lone individuals or isolated cells that are inspired by Islamist ideology but operate mostly on their own, with few links to the international *jihād*. As was demonstrated in London and Oklahoma City (by domestic terrorists), these disgruntled elements could construct homemade bombs and conceivably kill dozens or even hundreds of people. There have been many examples of people contemplating various types of small-scale attacks within the United States since 9/11.

Fortunately, terrorists in this category are the least skilled. The attacks they have considered have generally been very small-scale, and indeed most have failed or been foiled long before coming even close to fruition. Many did not progress beyond the discussion stage, and a few aspiring terrorists had to be instructed in terrorism targets and techniques by FBI informants. Others involved plots that were hopelessly absurd, including a scheme to attack the Brooklyn Bridge with a blowtorch. It would certainly be rash to dismiss the possibility that an attack from this quarter might occur at any time and that it might kill many people. But it would certainly be much smaller than

the 9/11 attack and essentially without consequence for the functioning of American society. Because of the isolated nature of these groups, it would not be a harbinger of a sustained terrorist campaign within the United States.

## **Creating a Threat-Based Homeland Security Strategy**

This analysis of the terrorist threat implies several priorities for U.S. homeland security—and, conversely, several areas that do *not* need greater attention or spending. *Catastrophic WMD scenarios dominate U.S. homeland security planning, but the weakness of the Al Qa'eda core and its inability to operate in the United States, the lack of organized indigenous groups, and the low skills of the isolated cells make such an attack unlikely.* The main priority should be to keep Al Qa'eda on its back heels through cooperation and intelligence-sharing with foreign partners, to track members of the Al Qa'eda core and to inhibit their ability to rest, plan, communicate, or travel. This implies that alienating foreign partners for the purposes of fighting terrorism abroad may be counterproductive for homeland security

Even assuming a revival of the Al Qa'eda core, previous patterns suggest that it will continue to attempt to strike at already well-guarded targets, particularly civil aviation, military targets, and symbols of American power. It also has indicated an interest in attacking nuclear plants but has not attempted such an attack so far. Efforts to protect nuclear power plants and continued “overprotection” of civil aviation are reasonable investments. In particular, we should prioritize efforts to better inspect air cargo and checked luggage and to protect civil airliners against surface-to-air missiles.

At the same time, some potential targets merit *less* attention. Enormous expenditures on protecting less glamorous economic targets—so-called “critical infrastructures,” such as ports, food distribution systems, and information systems—is largely misplaced. These systems are certainly vulnerable and important to the American economy, but concern for them reflects a certain mirror-imaging: we reason that if we wanted to cripple the U.S. economy, we would attack these targets. But, the Al Qa'eda core has been wholly uninterested in these targets for reasons of both ideology

and audience. According to terrorism analyst Dan Byman, “When selecting their targets, [Islamist terrorists] prefer to impress Islamists, and particularly *jihadists*, over Americans. An attack that devastates a dam along a river in the Midwest may be costly for Americans, but it has far less appeal than an attack on a national icon.”<sup>xvi</sup>

By contrast, protecting the broad array of targets that might be attacked by isolated cells or individuals is both impossible and inordinately expensive, given the limited damage they could conceivably inflict. Some argue that these attacks must be stopped at all costs, not because of the damage they inflict, but rather because of the damage that would be caused by the public reaction. Thus, just as 9/11 is said to have crippled the aviation industry because people were afraid to fly, an attack on a subway or bus in the United States would suppress economic activity across the country. To the extent that this is the case, it makes more sense to confront this reaction directly rather than to attempt to avoid every attack. Priority should be given to building a degree of *resilience* into U.S. society. Rather than asserting that such attacks represent a concerted effort to, in the words of former DHS Inspector General Clark Kent Ervin, “terrorize the entire nation,” the government should help educate the public that such attackers have limited capabilities and that extraordinary protective measures are unnecessary.<sup>xvii</sup>

Finally, and most important, we need to recognize that the relative safety of the U.S. homeland compared to that of other countries comes less from our broad oceans or our anti-terrorist measures than from the absence of any indigenous terrorist groups. A top priority for homeland security should be to *avoid creating grievances within the American Arab and Muslim communities*. The outlook for this is fairly good at the moment—there is little indication that American Muslims are leaning toward such action in any sort of numbers.<sup>xviii</sup> Nonetheless, the federal government, in coordination with local governments, needs a sustained effort to reach out to these communities, to consult them on counterterrorism measures, and to create a process that will ensure that their concerns are taken into account in formulating policy. Homeland security actions that, in the name of closing vulnerabilities, alienate this community are probably counterproductive in the long run and should at the very least be



complemented by positive efforts to engage the community. For example, most of the Islamic charities in the United States have been shut down since 9/11 on suspicion that they fund terrorism. But Islamic charities are an important outlet for American Muslim communities, and the federal government has essentially ignored their requests for assistance in forming charities that can pass governmental scrutiny.

Implementing a threat-based homeland security strategy will be politically difficult. Although U.S. policymakers often say that homeland invulnerability is impossible, they are rarely able to accept the political consequences of that fact. Vulnerability means accepting that we cannot always be protected and that terrorist attacks can occur. It means that we have to make hard choices about how much to spend and what to leave vulnerable. It means that we may need to accept greater risk in order to preserve the friends we need and to avoid alienating those who might do even greater harm in the future. None of these are messages that the public may want to hear, but they are the realities of the age in which we live. The President should make it clear that the alternatives are wasteful spending, costly diversion from other essential tasks, wholesale suppression of civil liberties, and, ironically, heightened danger of terrorist attacks.

## **About the Author and the Project**

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Opportunity 08 aims to help 2008 presidential candidates and the public focus on critical issues facing the nation, presenting policy ideas on a wide array of domestic and foreign policy questions. The project is committed to providing both independent policy solutions and background material on issues of concern to voters.

## Additional Resources

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<sup>i</sup> For some government planning scenarios along these lines, including such novel plots as terrorist cyber attack and attack on the U.S. food supply, see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/ops/ter-scen.htm>.

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Office Management and Budget, *Analytical Perspectives*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007, Table 3-7.

<sup>iii</sup> De Rugy, Veronique. "Facts And Figures About Homeland Security Spending." American Enterprise Institute, December 14, 2006.

<sup>iv</sup> One estimate of pre-9/11 homeland security spending appears in Carafano, James Jay, and Kosiak, Steven M. "Homeland Security: Administration's Plan appears to project little growth in funding." Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, March 12, 2003. Before 9/11 there was no "homeland security" spending category, so pre-9/11 homeland security spending can only be estimated.

<sup>v</sup> Speech of George W. Bush at the FBI Academy Quantico, Virginia, September 10, 2003.

<sup>vi</sup> Ridge, Tom, "Since that Day," *Washington Post*, September 11, 2003.

<sup>vii</sup> On labs, see Enserink, Martin. "'Facing a Security Deadline, Labs Get a 'Provisional' Pass.'" *Science*, November 7, 2003, p. 962; On nuclear reactors, see Wells, Jim. Government Accountability Office. *Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Preliminary Observations on Efforts to Improve Security at Nuclear Power Plants*. GAO-04-1064T, September 14, 2004; On information technology, see Moteff, John. "Computer Security: A Summary of Selected Federal Laws, Executive

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Orders, and Presidential Directives." Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, RL32357, April 16, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>viii</sup> Mueller, John, *Overblown*, Free Press, 2006, p. 161.

<sup>ix</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, "Top Management and Performance Challenges in the Department of Justice – 2006," at <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/challenges/2006.htm>.

<sup>x</sup> Fallows, James. "Success without Victory." *Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2005.

<sup>xi</sup> Mueller, John, *Overblown*, Free Press, 2006, p. 43.

<sup>xii</sup> On the treatment of foreign nationals, see Cole, David. *Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism*. New York: The New Press, 2003.

<sup>xiii</sup> This division of the threat follows Dan Byman and others. See, for example, Byman, Dan. *The Five Front War*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, forthcoming 2007. Appendix I of this book includes a list of people charged with contemplating terrorist attacks in the United States since 9/11.

<sup>xiv</sup> Hoffman, Bruce. "The Modern Terrorist Mindset: Tactics, Targets, and Technologies." Columbia International Affairs Online Working Paper, October 1997, p. 10.

<sup>xv</sup> On the 5,000 figure, see Mueller, John. *Overblown*, p. 38; On the FBI Report, see Lichtblau, Eric. "Security Report On U.S. Aviation Warns Of Holes." *New York Times*, March 14, 2005, p. A6.

<sup>xvi</sup> Byman, Daniel, *The Five Front War*, Wiley, forthcoming 2007, chapter 5.

<sup>xvii</sup> Ervin, Clark Kent, *Open Target: Where America is Vulnerable to Attack*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 34.

<sup>xviii</sup> For an examination of how homeland security measures are affecting the American Muslim population, see Barrett, Paul. *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.