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## CONCLUSION

Protecting our country's critical infrastructures and key assets is a core homeland security mission. This *Strategy* reaffirms our commitment as a Nation to protect our critical infrastructures and key assets against further terrorist attacks.

As we begin to address the myriad of physical protection challenges, we must keep in mind the complex nature of the infrastructures and assets we aim to protect. As a potential target set, our country's critical infrastructures and key assets are a highly diverse, interdependent mix of facilities, systems, and functions. Government owns and operates some of them. Most, however, are controlled by the private sector. All are vulnerable in some way to the terrorist threat.

They also represent a true "system of systems." Failure in one asset or infrastructure can cascade to disruption or failure in others, and the combined effect could prompt far-reaching consequences affecting government, the economy, public health and safety, national

security, and public confidence. As a whole, our protection mindset must include a thorough appreciation of these complexities as we carry out this national strategy for action.

In this document we have highlighted the diverse physical protection challenges that we face as a Nation. We have laid out a comprehensive agenda that will allow us to address the most pressing impediments to our physical protection based upon the prudent management of threats, vulnerabilities, and risks. This is only the beginning, however, of a long and challenging journey.

As we begin, we must also keep in mind the nature of the adversary we now face. The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon highlight our national-level physical vulnerability to the threat posed by a highly adaptive, patient, cunning, and flexible enemy. The attacks also demonstrate the extent of our



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enemy's determination and sophistication, and the lengths to which terrorists will go to further their causes.

We no longer assume that terrorists are incapable of undertaking a devastating physical attack on our homeland and infrastructure base. In fact, given the creative and adaptive nature of our terrorist adversaries, we can expect future strikes to be even more sophisticated in terms of capability and synchronization. Ironically, the very nature of our free society greatly enables terrorist operations and tactics, while, at the same time, hinders our ability to predict or prevent terrorist acts or mitigate their effects. Given these realities, the imperative to implement the comprehensive national physical protection strategy outlined in this document is most pressing.

The issues and enabling initiatives outlined in the *Cross-Sector Security Priorities* chapter of this document represent important near-term national priorities. They focus on impediments to physical protection that significantly impact multiple key sectors of our government, society, and economy. Potential solutions to the challenges identified—such as information sharing and threat indications and warning—are high-leverage areas that, when realized, will enhance the Nation's overall ability to protect critical infrastructures and key assets across the board.

These action areas, which include the prompt identification and protection of nationally critical infrastructures and development of processes and systems to properly warn and protect specifically threatened assets will be the focus of the federal government's near-term critical infrastructure and key asset protection effort. Accordingly, DHS and designated federal lead departments and agencies will prepare detailed implementation plans to support the cross-sector and sector-specific priorities outlined in this document.

As we work to refine and implement our priority protection initiatives, we must bear in mind the guiding principles set forth in this document. First and foremost, our efforts must assure public health and safety, critical services, and public confidence in our government and economy. To accomplish this, we must establish clear roles and responsibilities, accountability, and coordinating structures and processes that will govern the interaction of all stakeholders.

We must also build and foster a partnership among all levels of government, as well as between government and the private sector. This public-private partnership should be based on a commitment to a two-way communications flow and the timely exchange of information relevant to critical infrastructure and key asset protection. This partnership should also extend to the research, development, and fielding of advanced technology solutions to common protection problems. Collaborative efforts should also include the development and sharing of modeling and simulation capabilities to enable public-private sector decision support and interdependency analysis.

Terrorists do not respect international boundaries and are, therefore, not restricted by them. Hence, we must extend our infrastructure and key asset protection partnership to include our Mexican and Canadian neighbors, as well as other friendly nations around the globe. Finally, as we take action to overcome the major impediments to our physical protection, we must take care to safeguard the fundamental constitutional freedoms that have long been the hallmark of this great Nation.

Federal departments and agencies, state and local government, and private sector owners and operators have made great strides to enhance the security of the critical infrastructures and key assets they respectively control. An intense cooperative spirit and tremendous sense of urgency have characterized our national domestic protection environment in the aftermath of the terrorist strikes of September 11. We have come a long way, but much work remains. We must act together now—through aggressive leadership at all levels inside and outside government—to build on this shared cooperative spirit and carry out the implementing activities endorsed in this document.

Our desired end state is the protection of our most nationally critical infrastructures and assets; timely warning and protection of those infrastructures and assets that face a specific, imminent threat; and a collaborative environment in which all stakeholders can effectively and efficiently carry out their respective protection responsibilities. Make no mistake—the road ahead will be fraught with challenges. Unified in our approach, however, we will overcome these challenges and secure our critical infrastructures and key assets from terrorist exploitation.