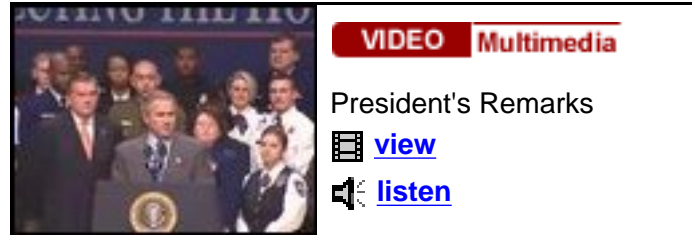


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President Marks Homeland Security's Accomplishments at Year One

Remarks by the President on the One-Year Anniversary
of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, D.C.



10:06 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all, please be seated. Please be seated -- unless, of course, you don't have a seat. (Laughter.) Thanks for the warm welcome. I'm honored to join the proud men and women of the Department of Homeland Security in celebrating this agency's first anniversary.

Many of you were here from day one. Others have come aboard in the days since. Yet, from the President to the Secretary to the newest employee, all of us here are tasked with a single, vital mission: to secure the American homeland and to protect the American people. (Applause.) There is no duty more important. We're meeting that duty together, and on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you all for what you do to defend our country.



I appreciate Secretary Ridge's leadership. I plucked him out of the ranks of the governors because I knew he knew how to manage and to set an agenda. He has not let me down. Along with the other leaders here, he and the team are doing a fantastic job of leading this Department. I appreciate Deputy Secretary Jim Loy, as well, for his outstanding leadership. I want to thank all the officials who are here. I appreciate the members of the United States Congress who have come. Two Texans, Mac Thornberry and Jim Turner, I appreciate you all being here. I appreciate Jennifer Dunn, from the great state of Washington; and Chris Cox, from the state of California. Thanks for taking time to honor these employees today.

I appreciate all the employees who are here. I appreciate you working hard for the American people. I'm sure people don't thank you enough. Well, I'm here to thank you as much as an individual possibly can, for working the long hours, for taking the risks on behalf of the security of this country.

Today, I had the honor of meeting the family of Agent Jimmy Epling. Jimmy was the first Department of

Homeland Security employee to be killed in the line of duty. He did so rescuing an individual. He risked his life to save a life. And on behalf of our nation, Monica and Seth and Shaine and Sean and James, and his loving parents, Ken and Amy, thank you for raising such a good son and thank you for having such a good husband; boys, you need to be proud of your daddy. Thanks for coming. (Applause.)

Two-and-a-half years ago, our nation saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning. From that day to this, we have pursued a clear strategy: We are taking the offensive against the terrorists abroad. We're taking unprecedented measures to protect the American people here at home. The goal of the terrorists is to kill our citizens -- that's their goal -- and to make Americans live in fear. This nation refuses to live in fear. We will stand together until this threat to our nation and to the civilized world is ended. (Applause.)

We have been called to service. We've been called to action. And we accept that responsibility. With fine allies, we are winning the war against the terrorists. We're disrupting terrorist operations. We're cutting off their funding. We are chasing down their leaders one person at a time. We are relentless. We are strong. We refuse to yield. Some two-thirds of already Qaeda's key leaders have been captured or killed. The rest of them hear us breathing down their neck. We're after them. We will not relent. We will bring these killers to justice. (Applause.)

It is vital our nation speak with a clear voice, and when we speak, we mean what we say. It's essential that this nation not be a nation of empty words, but a nation that is determined to do our duty. I laid out a doctrine a while ago, and it said if you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists. I meant what I said. And so did our nation. And the Taliban, the brutal dictators, the barbarians that ran Afghanistan now fully understand America will keep its commitments and means what it says. (Applause.)

We delivered an ultimatum to Mr. Saddam Hussein, that he listen to the world, disclose and disarm his weapons and weapons programs. It's what the world had said time and time again. The United States said the same thing. We saw a threat. It was time to deal with that threat Mr. Saddam Hussein had the choice to make. He chose defiance. He now sits in a prison cell, and the Iraqi people are free and America is more secure. (Applause.)

We have said we will deal with weapons of mass destruction. We have shown the world we mean what we say. With our allies, we're taking action to stop the spread of chemical and biological, radiological or nuclear weapons. We're working together with our friends to prevent terror networks from gaining the means to match their hatred. We're confronting states that develop deadly weapons. We're shutting down networks that trade in the means to produce the technologies of mass murder.

Nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their weapons programs. The proliferation network of A.Q. Khan, which sold nuclear secrets to Iran and North Korea, is being dismantled. Its top leaders are out of business forever. America will not allow terrorists and outlaw regimes to threaten our nation and the world with the world's most dangerous technologies. (Applause.)

As we work to make this nation more secure, we're also working with a broad coalition of nations to spread freedom. America believes that freedom is the Almighty's gift to each and every person who

lives in this world. That's what we believe. We have liberated more than 50 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those people have our help and the help of many nations to build free and democratic nations.

We seek to spread the benefits of democracy and tolerance and freedom throughout the greater Middle East. By opposing the stagnation and bitterness that feed terror, this great nation and our friends are bringing hope to millions, thereby strengthening the long-term security of America and making the world a more peaceful place. (Applause.)

We will stay on the offensive. We will not relent. And as we wage this war abroad, we must remember where it began, here in our homeland. Life in America, in many ways, has returned to normal, and that's positive. It means we're doing our jobs. But life will really never return to normal so long as there's an enemy that lurks in the shadows, that aims to destroy and kill. The enemies are wounded, but they're not broken. They still have desires to strike America again. That's the reality with which we live. The reality is, vast oceans can no longer protect us, and therefore we must have, and we do have, a clear strategy to defend our homeland. Oh, we'll do everything we can to prevent attacks on America. As we do so, we'll reduce our vulnerabilities and prepare for any attack that might come; that's our duty; that is our collective mission.

To meet the goals, we have tripled federal funding for homeland security since 2001, to some \$30.5 billion. I want to thank the Congress for working with the administration to make sure these good folks have got the ability to implement the strategy to protect our country.

We've undertaken the most sweeping reorganization of the federal government since the beginning of the Cold War. The FBI has transformed itself into an agency dedicated primarily to the prevention of future terrorist attacks. The Department of Defense has established a new top level command whose priority is to protect the American homeland. We established the Terrorist Threat Integration Center, to merge and analyze in a single place all vital intelligence on global terror. We created the Homeland Security Council within the White House -- John Gordon is here with us today -- to help coordinate all homeland security activities across our government.

We'll face the terrorist threat for years to come. Our government is prepared to meet that threat. One of the most important steps we've taken is creating the Department of Homeland Security, combining under one roof, with a clear chain of command, many agencies responsible for protecting our nation. All of you go to work every day with a single, overriding responsibility: to make this nation more secure.

Creating the newest department of our federal government was a tough task. It required a lot of hard work, changing some old habits, in order to merge into a new strategy and a new department. You've accomplished an historic task. In just 12 months, under the leadership of your President, you have made air travel safer, you've strengthened the security of our borders and infrastructure, you've taken steps to protect the American people from dangerous weapons, and you helped prepare our first responders for any emergency. You faced the challenges standing up this new Department and you get a -- and a gold star for a job well done. (Applause.)

Since September the 11th attacks, we've taken significant steps to ensure the safety of air travel. DHS

is completing a massive overhaul of security at our nation's airports. Federal air marshals are flying on hundreds of commercial flights every day. We are determined to protect Americans who travel by plane. We're determined to prevent those planes from being used as weapons against us.

The Department of Homeland Security is strengthening control of all our borders and ports of entry, to keep out terrorists and criminals and dangerous materials. We're using technology to allow law abiding travelers to cross the border quickly and easily, while our officials concentrate on stopping possible threats. We've increased the number of border inspectors and improved access to sophisticated data bases.

DHS personnel are checking ships and analyzing manifests to prevent high risk cargo from entering our nation by sea. DHS officials are also posted at foreign ports, working with other governments to inspect shipments before they're loaded and shipped to America. America welcomes tourists and students and business people, legitimate cargo. Yet, we're working hard, you're working hard, to make sure our border is closed to terrorists and criminals and weapons and illegal drugs.

Third, we've worked with state and local governments and the private sector to strengthen the defenses of our key infrastructure, communication systems and power grids and transportation networks. DHS is helping the operators of chemical facilities improve security.

We're working with Congress on new legislation that establishes uniform standards for securing chemical sites, and gives DHS the power to enforce those standards. We've established a national cyber security division to examine cyber security incidents and track attacks and coordinate nationwide responses. America's infrastructure drives our economy and serves our people. We're determined to provide the infrastructure with the best possible protection.

Fourth, we're bringing the best technologies to bear against the threat of chemical and biological weapons; we placed sophisticated equipment to detect biological agents in many metropolitan areas. We've greatly expanded the strategic national stockpile for drugs and vaccines and medical supplies. We now have on hand, for instance, enough smallpox vaccine to immunize every American in the case of an emergency.

Last year, I proposed Project BioShield, which will speed the development of new vaccines and treatments for biological agents that could be used in a terrorist attack. Congress needs to send this vital legislation to my desk. Attacks from a chemical or biological weapons is one of the gravest threats our country has ever faced. We're doing what is necessary to protect this country.

Even with all these measures, there's no such thing as perfect security in a vast and free country. So as a fifth step, we've worked to improve the ability of state and local authorities to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. My administration has provided over \$13 billion to equip and train local officials, such as firefighters and police officers and EMS workers and health professionals. I thank the Congress for their work on this important measure.

The new budget proposes additional money, \$5 billion, to continue to help the first responders. We're focusing more of our resources on the areas of greatest risk. It's essential we set priorities with the

taxpayer's money, to better protect the American people. And so DHS is creating a national incident management plan, a strategy to make sure taxpayer's money is wisely spent. Under this plan, first responders at all levels of government will know their responsibilities, will follow a clear chain of command, and will be able to work with each other effectively in a time of crisis.

Your hard work is already paying off. The system has proven its worth in coordinating responses to such emergencies as Hurricane Isabel and the California wildfires. America's first responders are the first on the scene of danger. They need a strategy. They need coordination. They need training. And they will get our help.

This administration has also worked to ensure that those charged with defending America from the threat of terror have all the tools necessary to fight the terrorists. One of those essential tools is the Patriot Act, which enables federal law enforcement officials to track terrorists, to disrupt their cells and to seize their assets. For years we've used similar provisions to catch embezzlers or drug traffickers. My attitude is pretty simple on this matter: If these methods are good enough for hunting criminals, they're even more important for hunting terrorists.

The Patriot Act made other important changes official to the success of this new department. It tore down the walls that blocked the FBI and the CIA from sharing intelligence. It's hard to track terrorists if we can't share information. It was essential that all elements of law enforcement be able to work together to secure this homeland. The Patriot Act imposed tough new penalties on terrorists and those who support them. We want to make it abundantly clear to anybody who wants to hurt America: there will be significant penalty. These are responsible measures, fully consistent with the United States Constitution.

Key provisions of the Patriot Act are set to expire next year. The terrorist threat will not expire on that schedule. You, and others in law enforcement, need this vital legislation to protect our citizens. We cannot afford to let down our guard. Congress must renew the Patriot Act. (Applause.)

For the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security, the past year has been one of progress and achievement. You have risen to confront a new threat and to meet unprecedented challenges. You have responded to hurricanes and tornadoes and wildfires with incredible skill and speed. You've worked hard to protect our borders, you've saved lives. You're prepared for greater dangers. You've passed every single test. You should be proud of all you've accomplished, and you need to know America is proud of you. (Applause.)

We have done a lot in a year. It's been an incredible year of accomplishment, but none of us charged with defending this nation can rest. We must never forget the day when the terrorists left their mark of murder on our nation. We must never forget that day. We will remember the sorrow and the anger. We'll also remember the resolve we felt that day. All of us have a responsibility that goes on. We will protect this country, whatever it takes.

God bless your work, and may God continue to bless our country. (Applause.)

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