



CHAIRMAN

Federal Communications Commission

Washington, D.C.

June 27, 2003

The Honorable Thomas J. Ridge
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge:

The events of September 11 underscored that each of us must do everything in our power to enhance the nation's capacity to fight terrorism and, in the event of an incident, to ensure that we recover as quickly as possible. I am writing to propose that we enhance the existing working relationship between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), with the goal of reaching a formal Memorandum of Understanding between our two agencies by the end of the summer. The focus of the Memorandum of Understanding will be a collaborative DHS/FCC effort to maximize communications infrastructure security.

Within days of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, I committed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to do its part in protecting homeland security. Communications infrastructure is not only a critical asset in itself, but also serves as the backbone for many other industries that are essential to our national well-being – including banking and finance, utilities, and transportation. It was therefore imperative that the FCC work cooperatively with our regulatees to ensure the reliability and security of their networks.

Without question, the most critical components in the FCC's Homeland Security initiative have been two of our Federal Advisory Committees (FACAs). You are already familiar with the Media Security and Reliability Council (MSRC), chartered in March 2002 and comprised primarily of representatives of the broadcast, cable, and satellite industries. Again, we appreciate your attendance and comments at that organization's May 28 meeting. Your candid remarks inspired us all and added meaning to MSRC's work.

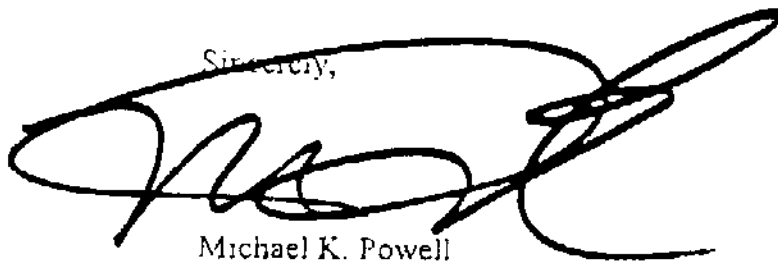
You may know that the FCC also has a second, more established FACA, the Network Reliability and Interoperability Council (NRIC), comprised primarily of representatives from communications networking industries. The FCC first chartered NRIC in 1993 to address network interoperability problems that led to several widespread service outages. NRIC members thus have a decade of experience working together to improve network reliability. When the FCC rechartered NRIC in January 2002, we incorporated the requirement that the organization address Homeland Security issues.

NRIC subsequently formed expert-based groups to deal with physical security, cyber security, business continuity, and public safety. No doubt in part because members of the groups had long-established relationships, they have been extremely productive. They have now published hundreds of best practices to help the industry better fortify communications network infrastructures and expedite service restoration after an attack. These best practices are aimed at all segments of the industry, including wireline, wireless, cable television, satellite, and Internet. I understand that members of our respective staffs have met several times to discuss forming an FCC/ DHS partnership regarding NRIC best practices and outreach efforts.

The challenge now, of course, is to ensure that the broadest possible industry segment learns about NRIC's voluntary best practices and incorporates those best practices into business plans on a going-forward basis. Members of both of our staffs recognize the benefits of a DHS/FCC partnership in meeting this challenge. NRIC and the FCC can in effect deliver to DHS and its existing Telecommunications Sector Coordinators a coherent, ready-to-use best practices program for the telecom industry as well as first-hand knowledge of the current state of the industry. DHS, on the other hand, can significantly augment the FCC's efforts to establish best practices awareness programs, bringing expertise in developing and implementing outreach campaigns that promote Homeland Security. The existing DHS Telecommunications Sector Coordinators themselves represent a very large cross-section of the telecommunications industry. If they endorse NRIC's best practices and mobilize to get the message out, those actions alone will amplify the impact of NRIC's good work by orders of magnitude.

I sincerely hope that you will share my enthusiasm for the proposed DHS/FCC partnership. I have asked Marsha MacBride, my Chief of Staff and Director of the FCC's Homeland Security Policy Council, to lead this coordination effort for the FCC. Jeff Goldthorp, NRIC's Designated Federal Official, will serve as the point of contact. Jeff will be contacting Nancy Wong, Director of DHS's Planning and Partnerships Office in the Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate, to work on a draft Memorandum of Understanding for your consideration. I look forward to working with you to make our communications sector safer and more reliable.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Powell', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Michael K. Powell