



BACKGROUND

Published by the Truman National Security Project

T Homeland Security Priorities for the 110th Congress

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01.09.07

The 109th Congress left much work to be done in implementing the best recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. Given the breadth and depth of the Commission's Report, Congressional leaders will need to select a few of the recommendations to prioritize for the beginning of the session. The 110th Congress can start with a plan for implementing those recommendations that are most urgent, feasible, and compelling.

PRIORITIZING RECOMMENDATIONS

Dozens of recommendations have yet to be implemented. In choosing priorities, Congress should look for issues that:

Require Congressional Leadership Congress is now in a unique position to begin to implement some of the most needed 9/11 Commission recommendations. Congress should use its spotlight to focus on some of the key areas in homeland security that have been underprioritized by the Bush administration.

Provide Bang for the Buck. Among thousands of worthy proposals, some make more efficient use than others of funding, people, effort, attention, and administrative energy. Congress should prioritize recommendations that will have the most immediate impact and are still fiscally possible.

National Security Importance: A handful of 9/11 Commission recommendations require immediate attention as top priorities for America's national security—but never received their due because they fall afoul of conservative ideology and conservative politics. The 110th Congress can offer the bold leadership on these essential issues that only progressives can provide.

5 PRIORITIES FROM THE 9/11 COMMISSION

With these criteria in mind, policy leaders can offer a bold yet feasible agenda that highlights concrete steps that the public can understand and support. These proposals all focus on intelligence and hard risk analysis as the drivers of our homeland security spending--not pork-barrel spending or politics.

1. Keep Nukes out of the Hands of Terrorists. The Commission's recommendation #12 called for an aggressive effort to keep WMD away from terrorists by "strengthening counter proliferation efforts, expanding the Proliferation Security Initiative, and supporting the Cooperative Threat Reduction program." The recent assassination and widespread contamination caused by an estimated one-millionth of a gram of Polonium-210 suggests the dangers that loose nuclear materials could pose. Besides swift support for these ongoing and crucial programs, the new Congress can use hearings to establish interagency coordination that brings together

diplomatic, military, and domestic government efforts to prevent and intercept WMD attack at every possible stage from acquisition to deployment.

2. Protect our Rail and Mass Transit Systems. Since 9/11, terrorists have detonated multiple bombs on subways and busses in the United Kingdom and Spain. The United States continues to be left open to many of the same vulnerabilities that allowed terrorists to attack in England. One of the first measures that needs to be implemented is the development and implementation of a national rail and transit security strategy that will protect the infrastructure that is so vital to both our safety and economy.

3. Comprehensive Immigration Security. The conservative's xenophobic focus on our southern border ignores the real security issue we face: the need to know who is in our country by providing a comprehensive security overhaul of our immigration system, including our visa system and airline arrivals, as well as border security on both borders. The increased al Qaeda threat from Europe, and especially England, which has a visa waiver with America, is particularly worrisome. Voters understand the need for comprehensive reform: a January 2007 poll conducted by Lake Research Associates and commissioned by the Truman National Security Project found that immigration security was the most important homeland security issue to 27% of voters, ranking three points above border security alone.

4. Fight Radicals Dollar for Dollar in the Ideological War for Hearts and Minds: Saudi Arabia spends over \$1 billion each year funding radical sentiment worldwide. Pakistan allows madrassas to exist that teach young children to hate. For the long term war on terror, we must fight these initiatives dollar for dollar by getting the American voice heard in the Muslim world,

as Commission recommendations 1-9 suggest. Congress can hold hearings on fighting the war for hearts and minds via public diplomacy, increase funding for student exchange with Muslim countries, and engage directly with Arab satellite media. Recent experience suggests that introducing American voices in media outlets like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiyya reaches a vastly greater audience than U.S. government sponsored media outlets such as Al Hurra, whose effectiveness should be re-assessed.

5. Create the Legal Foundation to Fight a Long War Against Radical Jihadism. America is a brave and resilient country; the only way that terrorists can truly defeat the United States is if they compel us to take away our own liberties and freedoms. Our military and Congress both take an oath to defend our Constitution—we must ensure that we can fight radical jihadism for many years without undermining the values we fight for. Congress should establish a Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board which will make sure we can fight the long war on radical jihadism under a workable legal framework, one which restores habeas corpus and builds on legal precedent such as the Geneva Convention, so that our military and legal system are not left negotiating unclear legal boundaries on the fly.

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