



# Executive Memorandum

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## CREATING AN INTELLIGENT DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

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The proposed Department of Homeland Security (DHS) cannot be effective without an intelligence mechanism to identify real threats against the United States. While both the House and Senate homeland security bills (H.R. 5005 and S. 2452) would create an intelligence section within DHS to integrate information and analyses about potential terrorist threats, neither version is ideal. They both leave other agencies, not DHS, in charge of deciding what information is relevant and important and then providing that information to the Secretary of DHS.

While there is still time to improve the Senate version before it goes to the floor for a vote, it is important that whatever bill reaches the President's desk provides an intelligence mechanism that truly protects Americans from acts of terrorism. It must not make the DHS dependent on information "stovepipes"—isolated sections of the government that refuse to share data. This compartmentalization of data is the real reason the U.S. government failed to "connect the dots" and predict the September 11 attacks. Congress must not send the President a final DHS bill that creates yet another disconnected "stovepipe" of intelligence information and increases the problems associated with a splintered intelligence bureaucracy.

**Effective Intelligence Fusion.** Effective intelligence support for the Department of Homeland Security will require access to raw information

gathered by intelligence agencies and law enforcement organizations. It also will require DHS to draw analysts from existing organizations to take advantage of their different skills and knowledge. The department must be able to access other government databases, such as those of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Bureau of Consular Affairs, and Federal Aviation Administration, and it must be able to "fuse" that information in a way that is not being done by any of the nation's intelligence agencies and sources today.

In short, an intelligence fusion center must be able to: (1) access and explore all government databases, including intelligence, regulatory, and law enforcement; (2) integrate the information found in those databases; (3) make independent judgments about that information; and (4) provide warning. This focus on the fusion of information from multiple sources will help to break down the bureaucratic cultures that keep crucial need-to-know government employees in the dark. Utilizing automated data-mining technology will

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speed the process and help DHS make sense of otherwise disparate bits of information. As DHS analysts gain experience, this process will improve greatly, providing the vital linkage of crucial information to prevent terrorism.

The House proposal most closely resembles what President George W. Bush has requested. H.R. 5005 explicitly requires “all executive agencies to promptly provide to the Secretary [of DHS] . . . all information relating to significant and credible threats of terrorism in the United States, whether or not such information has been analyzed.” On the surface, this seems far-reaching. Moreover, it seems to cover not only foreign intelligence, but also information concerning domestic threats. Similar language in the Senate version requires that such information first be provided to the counterintelligence center of the Director of Central Intelligence. Neither version, however, will ultimately provide better protection for the American people, because they leave the decision of what information to provide to DHS up to the discretion of separate law enforcement agencies and elements of the intelligence community.

**The Need to Query Other Databases.** DHS intelligence analysts must come from a cross-section of the intelligence and law enforcement communities and be equipped with security access so that they can query a variety of government databases and make informed decisions. Forcing them to depend on the decisions of other agencies adds an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy that does not improve security but does leave Americans vulnerable.

A simple analogy makes the point clear. Those who read a book or watch a movie about it will know much more about the plot than those who read reviews about them in the newspaper. The latter group is dependent on whatever tidbits of information a particular reviewer chooses to include. Their knowledge of the plot will be limited by what the reviewer believes is important. Those who read or view the entire book or movie will have significantly more information and may make entirely different connections of events and deduce different points about the plot.

Therein lies the weakness of the Senate and House homeland security bills. Without access to

all the intelligence information in the government's databases, the Secretary of Homeland Security and DHS's intelligence staff would remain dependent on information or analysis that others decide is relevant. They would never have full access to all the relevant information—the very situation characterizing the intelligence community on September 11.

**Not the Time to Reform the Intelligence Community.** The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence have wisely put off debate on conducting a full review and perhaps reorganization of the official intelligence community until after the DHS is established. The government's first priority must be to make the American people more secure from terrorist attacks. While an improved intelligence community must be an important component of the national homeland security strategy, proper attention and resources must first be devoted to establishing a department that will truly improve the safety and security of all Americans.

Ensuring that DHS's intelligence/analytical element can independently access intelligence, law enforcement, and other relevant databases to glean and connect seemingly unrelated bits of information about terrorists will indeed make Americans much safer. Once this capability is in place, Washington should conduct a thorough, thoughtful, and methodical review of the intelligence community and system. But the security of the United States and its people cannot wait for that process to take place.

**Conclusion.** The Department of Homeland Security needs its own integral intelligence analytical center with personnel drawn from the intelligence and law enforcement communities. This “fusion center” must be capable of querying various government databases. Simply requiring other federal departments and agencies to pass on to DHS information they think is important would leave in place the “stovepipes” and compartmentalization of information that contributed to the intelligence failures of September 11.

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