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The Role of the Department of Homeland Security Overseas

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The attacks of 9/11 reinforced the notion that homeland security does not start and stop at a nation's borders. As Secretary Tom Ridge of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has stated, "Homeland security can't stop at a nation's border. The same threats are present for all of us and we must work together to meet them." We understand that we have to take actions far away from our shores and borders in order to ensure that the systems that connect us with the rest of the globe cannot be used by terrorists to travel to the United States or to transport the instruments of terrorism. The interconnectedness of the world today spans many sectors—political, military, economic, educational, and even homeland security. No one country can be truly safe without the cooperation and like-minded commitment of others.

I appreciate the opportunity to review a topic that is not well understood by many—the international roles of DHS. In fact, I've heard some say that "international" and "homeland" make as little sense when combined as does the term "military intelligence."

Yet we are very active internationally. We have personnel assigned or active on a temporary basis in 77 different countries. In my remarks today, I will give you an overview of their activities and of the importance of our international activities to the accomplishment of DHS missions. I will do so by referring you to the chapter on "International Cooperation" in the National Strategy on Homeland Security. It contains a succinct vision statement that orients our international homeland security activities:

Talking Points

- The U.S. has to take actions far away from its shores and borders in order to ensure that the systems that connect it with the rest of the globe cannot be used by terrorists.
- The Department of Homeland Security is working to attain this vision and is making progress across the board on these and other international initiatives.
- New programs, like SEVIS and US-VISIT are assisting in these efforts by documenting the presence and purpose of foreign nationals in the United States.

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The United States will work with traditional allies and new friends to win the war on terrorism.... We will sustain a high level of international commitment to fighting terrorism through global and regional organizations (UN, OAS [Organization of American States]).... major international fora (such as the G-8).... specialized organizations (WHO [World Health Organization], ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organization], IMO [International Maritime Organization]).... multilateral and bilateral initiatives, and where needed, new coordination mechanisms.

We will work with our neighbors and key trading partners to create systems that allow us to verify the legitimacy of people and goods entering our country.

We will increase information sharing....

We will increase international cooperation on scientific and technological research....

We will work with our partners to prepare to support one another in the wake of an attack....

The strategy also identifies the following “major initiatives”:

- Create smart borders.
- Combat fraudulent travel documents.
- Increase the security of international shipping containers.
- Intensify international law enforcement cooperation.
- Help foreign nations fight terrorism.
- Expand protection of transnational critical infrastructure.
- Amplify international cooperation on homeland security science and technology.
- Improve cooperation in response to attacks.
- Review obligations to international treaties and law.

The Department of Homeland Security is working to attain this vision and is making progress across the board on these and other international initiatives. Allow me to describe how we are organizing

our international activities before going into some detail about the overseas operational activities of our directorates and agencies.

The Office of International Affairs

Section 879 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 established within the Office of the Secretary an Office of International Affairs. This is the office that I head. Our statutory missions are:

1. To promote information and education exchange with nations friendly to the United States in order to promote sharing of best practices and technologies relating to homeland security. Such exchange shall include the following:
 - A. Exchange of information on research and development on homeland security technologies.
 - B. Joint training exercises of first responders.
 - C. Exchange of expertise on terrorism prevention, response, and crisis management.
2. To identify areas for homeland security information and training exchange where the United States has a demonstrated weakness and another friendly nation or nations have a demonstrated expertise.
3. To plan and undertake international conferences, exchange programs, and training activities.
4. To manage international activities within the Department in coordination with other federal officials with responsibility for counter-terrorism matters.

My office of ten individuals is organized regionally as follows: a) Mexico and Latin America, b) Canada and the Caribbean, c) the Mid-East, d) Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, and e) Asia. We are staffed by a combination of detailees from within the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department: This gives us functional expertise (e.g. customs, immigration, Coast Guard).

We work closely and on a daily basis with our regional and functional counterparts at the Homeland Security Council, the National Security Council (NSC), and the State Department (e.g., geographic and functional bureaus).

We support the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, and the Department’s leadership in all their interac-

tions with foreign counterparts and their international travel. We also ensure that the subordinate components of the Department of Homeland Security have situational awareness of the entire Department's international activities so that they have a contextual understanding of their respective activities.

Within the Department headquarters, we have also established an International Coordinating Council. This council is chaired by the Deputy Secretary and has representation from all agencies within the Department that have an international portfolio and from the key staff advisors to the Secretary. It meets on a regular basis and is the formal mechanism for "checking signals" on issues of importance to the Department.

There are numerous international offices distributed across the Department of Homeland Security. Some are so-called legacy organizations—like the high performing Coast Guard, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and Secret Service offices. Many are new—including international coordinating elements that support our under secretaries of Border and Transportation Security, Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, and Science and Technology, and the new agencies formed by the Homeland Security Act of 2002: Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). One of our ongoing challenges is completing the process of reorganization of the former Customs and Immigrations and Naturalization Service (INS) overseas.

Finally, at our overseas diplomatic missions (where there are some 1,200 DHS employees), we are in the process of designating DHS Attachés. These attachés will help 'brand' the new Department and also provide members of our country teams identified points of contact to address issues to DHS.

Major Activities

Let me give you a snapshot of our activities overseas. Major categories of duties/missions include:

1. Pre-clearance inspectors.
2. Container Security Initiative (CSI): Five positions are funded in each of the 47 ports identified for

inclusion in CSI. The positions will be manned as additional ports are incorporated in the initiative.

3. Attachés at embassies (Immigration, Customs, and Coast Guard).
4. Trainers, advisors, instructors.
 - The Coast Guard provides training to foreign maritime forces under authority of the Security Assistance program. The State Department funds these missions.
 - Training and technical assistance is a major part of Customs and Immigration work overseas. They provide such support to foreign governments through bilateral agreements or under programs funded by the State Department.
 - Customs assists several foreign governments in establishing customs services.
5. Criminal investigators and law enforcement liaisons to governments and international organizations.
 - Customs and Immigration conducts law enforcement collection, analysis, and information-sharing with foreign governments.
6. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) is responsible for the adjudication of a significant number of benefit applications overseas—including refugee applications and applications for benefits submitted by U.S. citizens living overseas.

As is the case with most agencies, our overseas positions are staffed in various ways. We have permanent positions, which are formally approved by the State Department. These individuals have either country-specific or regional responsibilities. We have people on tours of duty (TDYs): In some cases, the regular rotation of individuals on a TDY basis to perform the same mission has the effect of creating quasi-permanent positions. Several agencies (e.g., Customs and TSA) also have attachés with regional responsibility (e.g., the Caribbean or Central America) assigned in gateway cities (e.g., Dallas, Miami). Finally, we have hired numerous Foreign Service Nationals who perform a variety of duties dependent on mission needs.

When I assumed my duties as the Director of International Affairs last summer, I was struck by the

following aspects of our international presence:

- About one-third of our international presence is in Canada. We have more than 400 pre-clearance (Customs, Immigration, Agriculture) inspectors assigned in Canada and *none* in Mexico. Pre-clearance inspectors abroad are essentially performing a function normally performed at a port of entry.
- INS officers were assigned to only one country (Pakistan) of the 21 National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) countries.
- There was no single individual that represents the Department of Homeland Security to our ambassadors abroad at diplomatic missions with multiple DHS agency representation. As I mentioned earlier, we are now designating DHS Attachés.

Now, almost one year later, our overseas footprint has not changed dramatically, but I have a much keener appreciation of the breadth of our activities. Let me highlight a couple of major activities.

Securing Travelers and Cargo. We are working with our trade partners and cargo shippers to secure vulnerable links in the international supply chain. One example of this work is the Container Security Initiative administered by our customs agency. Nearly 20,000 containers of cargo arrive in our ports every day. Today, we inspect just 1 percent or 2 percent of those containers upon arrival at our ports. We are now stationing security inspectors at the world's major ports to work alongside foreign port authorities to identify, target, and search high-risk cargo. This side-by-side effort is happening in the world's busiest foreign ports, such as Rotterdam, Singapore, Hong Kong, Hamburg, and Le Havre. We also have foreign inspectors in major U.S. ports, such as Los Angeles, Long Beach, Newark, and Seattle.

We are striving to increase security of all modes of transportation—air, land, and sea. The purpose is to prevent terrorists from traveling or transporting the instruments of terrorism. Our basic philosophy is one of risk management. Rather than look for the needle in the haystack, we want to remove that haystack, and look for the needle in a much smaller space. That is why we are instituting alternate inspection systems for “trusted” travelers and importers. There is no need to dedicate scarce inspection

resources at movements that have been vetted and deemed secure or low-risk. While spot-checking must always occur, it is better to efficiently identify shipments that pose a potential risk and then to scrutinize them.

“Smart Borders.” Given that we have essentially undefended borders with our two neighbors and enormous amounts of movement across them, the United States government has entered into border accords with Canada and Mexico. Our shared intent is to build “smart borders” that facilitate commerce and the legal movement of people while increasing security for the North American continent as a whole. These two accords focus action in three areas: the secure flow of people; the secure flow of goods; and securing cross-border critical infrastructure. The importance of this last initiative was underscored by the recent blackout that affected both Canadian and U.S. power grids and by the single episode of “mad cow” disease that disrupted our integrated cattle market.

We are also making inroads into the challenge of increasing the security of our immigration processes. For example, several hundred thousand international students attend our colleges and universities every year. The new Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is registering them in a user-friendly on-line fashion. This past fall, more than 200,000 foreign students arrived in the U.S. for the new academic year. Nearly all foreign students were properly registered and admitted into the country without incident. However, more than 140 people who arrived in the U.S. claiming to be students were not. Through our partnerships with colleges and universities, we were able to establish that these people were not registered at any U.S. school and they were denied admission into the United States.

Each year, we welcome nearly 600 million workers, tourists, students, business travelers, and families at our air, land, and sea ports of entry. DHS is implementing United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT)—a continuum of security measures that begins overseas at the Department of State's visa-issuing posts and continues through arrival in and departure from the United States. Using biometrics such as digital, inkless fingerscans and digital photographs, the identity of visitors requiring a U.S. visa is now verified upon

entry in order to ensure that the person crossing our border is the same person who received the visa. Upon exit, a visitor will check out by scanning his or her two index fingers—verifying his or her departure and enabling us to know that he or she complied with the terms of admission. For travelers, the process is fast and simple and the biometrics help secure their identities in the event that their travel documents are lost or stolen. US-VISIT entry procedures are currently in place at 115 air-

ports and 14 seaports. This year, US-VISIT will be expanded to the 50 busiest land ports of entry. Since the program began, 209 individuals (out of some 2.4 million entrants processed) have been matched against the FBI's watch lists.

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