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September 11 Chronology

IMPLEMENTING 9/11 COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Progress Report 2011

Read the [Implementing 9/11 Commission Recommendations, Progress Report 2011](#)

DHS and its many partners across the federal government, public and private sectors, and communities across the country and around the world have worked since 9/11 to build a new homeland security enterprise.

Below we've laid out some of the concrete measures that have been put in place since 9/11.

Chronology of Events

Lead up to 9/11

Early 1999: Osama Bin Laden summoned operatives to Afghanistan to discuss using commercial aircraft as weapons and developed a list of potential targets in the United States.

April 1999: The hijackers began to obtain passports and visas for travel to the United States.

1999 and 2001: Many of the hijackers prepared for the 9/11 attack while living in Germany.

April 2001: The hijackers began arriving in the U.S. on tourist visas with cash and travelers checks acquired in the Middle East.

Today

Today, in concert with public and private sector partners as well as international allies, this Administration has developed a multi-layered information sharing security strategy to target and identify both known and unknown individuals that may pose a threat to the United States wherever the operational planning might occur with the goal of preventing such persons from entering the country.

DHS and other federal partners have built a capacity to more extensively vet those individuals applying for visas or travel to the U.S.

For example, through the [Visa Security Program](#), which did not exist on 9/11 and is now operational at 19 posts in 15 countries, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, in conjunction with the State Department, deploys trained special agents overseas to high-risk visa activity posts to conduct targeted, in-depth reviews of particular visa applications and applicants before they reach the United States.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in collaboration with the Departments of Justice and State, has signed Preventing and Combating Serious Crime Agreements with 18 countries, including Germany, to share information about terrorists and criminals.

DHS partners with the [Terrorist Screening Center](#), the [National Counterterrorism Center](#) and other federal entities to analyze travel-related data in order to better understand and anticipate the travel patterns of known or suspected terrorists.

Today's travel related databases along with threat-related intelligence have been essential in identifying, targeting,

National Terrorism Advisory System

2001: The hijackers enrolled in flight schools and conducted cross-country surveillance flights in order to identify aircraft that would produce their desired impact.

2001: Several of the hijackers were apprehended by U.S. law enforcement for various traffic violations.

September 11, 2001: The hijackers passed through security checkpoints at four U.S. airports, allegedly carrying knives, box cutters and concealed weapons on their person or in carry-on luggage.

September 11, 2001: Eight of the hijackers were randomly selected for additional screening and a gate agent flagged two as suspicious, none were prevented from boarding their flights on 9/11.

September 11, 2001, 8:19 AM: Flight attendants and passengers began reporting hijackings of the aircraft via airphone.

September 11, 2001: Air traffic control operators, military personnel and first responders on the ground lacked situational awareness of what other agencies were doing to address the developing crisis.

and interdicting known and suspected terrorists as well as suspicious cargo before it enters the United States.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has responsibility for ensuring that foreign students seeking training at flight schools do not pose a threat to aviation or national security. TSA performs background checks, including government watchlist matching, a criminal history check, and an immigration status check.

Today, fusion centers throughout the country serve as focal points at the state and local level for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat and vulnerability-related information.

In addition, the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative helps to train state and local law enforcement to recognize behaviors and indicators related to terrorism, crime and other threats while standardizing how those observations are analyzed and disseminated.

Finally, state and local law enforcement officers can determine whether an individual is on a watchlist through the National Crime Information Center.

Multilayered security measures are now in place to enhance aviation security including the prescreening of passengers; the deployment of new technologies; and training of airport security and law enforcement personnel to better detect behaviors associated with terrorism. Since 9/11, the capacity of frontline security personnel and new technologies has significantly expanded. Through Secure Flight, DHS now prescreens 100% of the 14 million passengers flying weekly to, from, and within the U.S. against government watchlists. In addition, all checked and carry-on baggage is now screened for metallic and non-metallic threats by new technologies as well as over 52,000 transportation security officers at more than 450 airports across the country.

Today, TSA's Behavior Detection Officers utilize non-intrusive behavior observation and analysis techniques to identify potentially high-risk passengers who exhibit behaviors that indicate they may be a threat to aviation and/or transportation security and refer them for additional screening.

TSA also conducts screening of passengers at boarding gates based on current intelligence and passengers of interest.

Following 9/11, all commercial aircraft have been secured through the hardening of cockpit doors. In addition, the risk-based deployment of Federal Air Marshals, the Federal Flight Deck Officer program, in which eligible flight crewmembers are authorized by TSA to use firearms to defend against violence, and the crewmember behavior recognition and response training program, all provide additional layers of aviation security.

Through the use of mobile and fixed site technologies, voice radio systems used by first responders are more interoperable than ever before. Since 9/11, the federal government has made significant organizational changes and investments in training and technical assistance to improve emergency communications capabilities.

Moreover, the National Emergency Communications Plan and Incident Command System have established

Chapter 1: Introduction

Effect of the 9/11 Attacks

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 exacted a devastating toll on so many of our families, profoundly and dramatically transforming government, the private sector, and our daily lives. The suddenness of the attacks on American soil and the loss of so many lives made us feel vulnerable in our homes, and caused us to question whether our government was properly organized to protect us from this lethal threat. The economic damage resulting from the attacks was severe. In short order, we shifted from a “peace dividend” at the end of the Cold War to massive expenditures of taxpayer dollars on new security measures.

The human tragedy was, of course, the greatest loss. Nothing can replace the loved ones lost to that act of terrorism. But the consequences for our economy and the private sector have been striking. More than 80 percent of our nation’s critical infrastructure is owned by the private sector, and protecting it from terrorist operations has become an urgent priority. Working together, the government and private sector have improved their information sharing and, therefore, our security posture.

Businesses in all sectors have adapted to this new reality. They have focused on how best to protect personnel as well as food and water supplies; they have developed continuity plans to prepare for possible disruptions; and they have adopted innovative safety features into building construction. U.S. importers, working with the Department of Homeland Security, have pioneered new ways to ensure the integrity of shipping containers that bring goods into the country. The insurance industry’s risk analysis has evolved to reflect new realities. These necessary innovations have increased the costs of doing business, and future innovations may raise costs even higher.

The Government’s Response

Over the past 10 years, our government’s response to the challenge of transnational terrorism has been dramatic. At the federal level, we have created major new institutions. The Department of Homeland Security itself was a massive reconfiguration of government, combining 22 agencies into a new department, with a workforce of 230,000 people and an annual budget of more than \$50 billion. In total, some 263 organizations have been established or redesigned.

The intelligence community has also adapted. In response to the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, Congress created the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) and the National Counterterrorism Center in 2004 to advance a unified effort across the intelligence community. Four DNIs in six years have worked with the Intelligence Community (IC), sometimes with difficulty, to establish appropriate and effective roles and responsibilities. Today, key IC relationships in the new order appear to be improving and moving in a constructive direction.

At the same time, the intelligence budget has surged to more than \$80 billion – more than double what was spent in 2001. And throughout the national security community, a flexible and resilient workforce has been trained to protect the American people in a new environment. The FBI, CIA, and the broader intelligence community have implemented significant reforms, disrupting many plots and bringing to justice many terrorist operatives.

Despite this considerable progress, some major 9/11 Commission recommendations remain unfulfilled, leaving the U.S. not as safe as we could or should be. These unfulfilled recommendations require urgent attention because the threat from al Qaeda, related terrorist groups, and individual adherents to violent Islamist extremism

persists. In late July, a U.S. soldier was arrested on suspicion of plotting to murder U.S. soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas. Other brands of extremism are also highly lethal and threaten all of us, as the recent events in Norway so painfully remind us.

Evolving Terrorist Threat to the U.S.

Former CIA Director and current Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, declared that we are “within reach of strategically defeating al Qaeda.” Only the future will tell whether that is accurate, but certainly the death of Osama bin Laden is our most significant advancement to date in our efforts to defeat al Qaeda.

The bin Laden raid resulted from years of hard work, cooperation, vigilance, and tenacity. It involved surveillance, the analysis of many bits of information, and seamless interaction between the CIA and the military. Bin Laden’s capture reflected the highest level of collaboration among IC agencies and the military.

Although Osama bin Laden is dead, al Qaeda is not; it is a network, not a hierarchy. Over a period of years, al Qaeda has been very adaptive and resilient. Al Qaeda and its affiliates will almost certainly attempt to avenge his death, however, they will not necessarily attack soon.

Al Qaeda’s capabilities to implement large-scale attacks are less formidable than they were 10 years ago, but al Qaeda and its affiliates continue to have the intent and reach to kill dozens, or even hundreds, of Americans in a single attack.

Al Qaeda has been marked by rapid decentralization. The most significant threats to American national security come from affiliates of core al Qaeda, such as al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula where U.S.-born Anwar al-Awlaki has played a prominent role. Al Qaeda’s influence is also on the

rise in South Asia and continues to extend into failing or failed states such as Yemen and Somalia.

In assessing terrorist threats to the American homeland, senior U.S. counterterrorism officials now call attention to al Qaeda’s strategy of “diversification” – attacks mounted by a wide variety of perpetrators of different national and ethnic backgrounds that cannot easily be “profiled” as threats.

Most troubling, we have seen a pattern of increasing terrorist recruitment of American citizens and residents to act as “lone wolves.” In 2009, there were two actual terrorist attacks on our soil. The Fort Hood shooting claimed the lives of 13 people, and a U.S. military recruiter was killed in Little Rock, Arkansas. Today, we know that Americans are playing increasingly prominent roles in al Qaeda’s movement. Muslim-American youth are being recruited in Somali communities in Minneapolis and Portland, Oregon, in some respects moving the front lines to the interior of our country.

Alarmingly, we have discovered that individuals in the U.S. are engaging in “self-radicalization.” This process is often influenced by blogs and other online content advocating violent Islamist extremism. While there are methods to monitor some of this activity, it is simply impossible to know the inner thinking of every at-risk person. Thus, self-radicalization poses a serious emerging threat in the U.S.

Because al Qaeda and its affiliates will not give up, we cannot let our guard down. Our terrorist adversaries and the tactics and techniques they employ are evolving rapidly. We will see new attempts, and likely successful attacks.

Our enemy continues to probe our vulnerabilities and design innovative ways to attack us. Such innovation is best exemplified by the discovery in October 2010 of explosives

packed in toner cartridges addressed to synagogues in Chicago and shipped on Fed Ex and UPS cargo flights from Yemen. This plot constituted an assault on our international transportation and commerce delivery systems and it was committed without the terrorists ever having to set foot within the U.S. Although the plot failed, terrorists will not abandon efforts to develop new ways to inflict great harm on us.

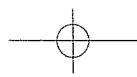
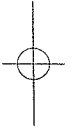
Another way that terrorists can attack without ever physically crossing our borders is through a cyber attack. Successive DNIs have warned that the cyber threat to critical infrastructure systems – to electrical, financial, water, energy, food supply, military, and telecommunications networks – is grave. Earlier this month, senior DHS officials described a “nightmare scenario” of a terrorist group hacking into U.S. computer systems and disrupting our electric grid, shutting down power to large swathes of the country, perhaps for a period as long as several weeks. As the current crisis in Japan demonstrates, disruption of power grids and basic infrastructure can have devastating effects on society.

This is not science fiction. It is possible to take down cyber systems and trigger cascading disruptions and damage. Defending the U.S. against such attacks must be an urgent priority.

All of these continued and nascent threats mean that we must not become complacent, but remain vigilant and resolute. We have significantly improved our security since 9/11, but the work is not complete. We should begin by tackling the unfinished recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

This is not science fiction. It is possible to take down cyber systems and trigger cascading disruptions and damage. Defending the U.S. against such attacks must be an urgent priority.

THE 9/11
COMMISSION
REPORT



PREFACE

WE PRESENT THE NARRATIVE of this report and the recommendations that flow from it to the President of the United States, the United States Congress, and the American people for their consideration. Ten Commissioners—five Republicans and five Democrats chosen by elected leaders from our nation's capital at a time of great partisan division—have come together to present this report without dissent.

We have come together with a unity of purpose because our nation demands it. September 11, 2001, was a day of unprecedented shock and suffering in the history of the United States. The nation was unprepared. How did this happen, and how can we avoid such tragedy again?

To answer these questions, the Congress and the President created the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (Public Law 107-306, November 27, 2002).

Our mandate was sweeping. The law directed us to investigate “facts and circumstances relating to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001,” including those relating to intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies, diplomacy, immigration issues and border control, the flow of assets to terrorist organizations, commercial aviation, the role of congressional oversight and resource allocation, and other areas determined relevant by the Commission.

In pursuing our mandate, we have reviewed more than 2.5 million pages of documents and interviewed more than 1,200 individuals in ten countries. This included nearly every senior official from the current and previous administrations who had responsibility for topics covered in our mandate.

We have sought to be independent, impartial, thorough, and nonpartisan. From the outset, we have been committed to share as much of our investigation as we can with the American people. To that end, we held 19 days of hearings and took public testimony from 160 witnesses.

Our aim has not been to assign individual blame. Our aim has been to provide the fullest possible account of the events surrounding 9/11 and to identify lessons learned.

We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined, and lethal. The enemy rallies broad support in the Arab and Muslim world by demanding redress of political grievances, but its hostility toward us and our values is limitless. Its purpose is to rid the world of religious and political pluralism, the plebiscite, and equal rights for women. It makes no distinction between military and civilian targets. *Collateral damage* is not in its lexicon.

We learned that the institutions charged with protecting our borders, civil aviation, and national security did not understand how grave this threat could be, and did not adjust their policies, plans, and practices to deter or defeat it. We learned of fault lines within our government—between foreign and domestic intelligence, and between and within agencies. We learned of the pervasive problems of managing and sharing information across a large and unwieldy government that had been built in a different era to confront different dangers.

At the outset of our work, we said we were looking backward in order to look forward. We hope that the terrible losses chronicled in this report can create something positive—an America that is safer, stronger, and wiser. That September day, we came together as a nation. The test before us is to sustain that unity of purpose and meet the challenges now confronting us.

We need to design a balanced strategy for the long haul, to attack terrorists and prevent their ranks from swelling while at the same time protecting our country against future attacks. We have been forced to think about the way our government is organized. The massive departments and agencies that prevailed in the great struggles of the twentieth century must work together in new ways, so that all the instruments of national power can be combined. Congress needs dramatic change as well to strengthen oversight and focus accountability.

As we complete our final report, we want to begin by thanking our fellow Commissioners, whose dedication to this task has been profound. We have reasoned together over every page, and the report has benefited from this remarkable dialogue. We want to express our considerable respect for the intellect and judgment of our colleagues, as well as our great affection for them.

We want to thank the Commission staff. The dedicated professional staff, headed by Philip Zelikow, has contributed innumerable hours to the completion of this report, setting aside other important endeavors to take on this

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all-consuming assignment. They have conducted the exacting investigative work upon which the Commission has built. They have given good advice, and faithfully carried out our guidance. They have been superb.

We thank the Congress and the President. Executive branch agencies have searched records and produced a multitude of documents for us. We thank officials, past and present, who were generous with their time and provided us with insight. The PENTTBOM team at the FBI, the Director's Review Group at the CIA, and Inspectors General at the Department of Justice and the CIA provided great assistance. We owe a huge debt to their investigative labors, painstaking attention to detail, and readiness to share what they have learned. We have built on the work of several previous Commissions, and we thank the Congressional Joint Inquiry, whose fine work helped us get started. We thank the City of New York for assistance with documents and witnesses, and the Government Printing Office and W.W. Norton & Company for helping to get this report to the broad public.

We conclude this list of thanks by coming full circle: We thank the families of 9/11, whose persistence and dedication helped create the Commission. They have been with us each step of the way, as partners and witnesses. They know better than any of us the importance of the work we have undertaken.

We want to note what we have done, and not done. We have endeavored to provide the most complete account we can of the events of September 11, what happened and why. This final report is only a summary of what we have done, citing only a fraction of the sources we have consulted. But in an event of this scale, touching so many issues and organizations, we are conscious of our limits. We have not interviewed every knowledgeable person or found every relevant piece of paper. New information inevitably will come to light. We present this report as a foundation for a better understanding of a landmark in the history of our nation.

We have listened to scores of overwhelming personal tragedies and astounding acts of heroism and bravery. We have examined the staggering impact of the events of 9/11 on the American people and their amazing resilience and courage as they fought back. We have admired their determination to do their best to prevent another tragedy while preparing to respond if it becomes necessary. We emerge from this investigation with enormous sympathy for the victims and their loved ones, and with enhanced respect for the American people. We recognize the formidable challenges that lie ahead.

We also approach the task of recommendations with humility. We have

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made a limited number of them. We decided consciously to focus on recommendations we believe to be most important, whose implementation can make the greatest difference. We came into this process with strong opinions about what would work. All of us have had to pause, reflect, and sometimes change our minds as we studied these problems and considered the views of others. We hope our report will encourage our fellow citizens to study, reflect—and act.

Thomas H. Kean
CHAIR

Lee H. Hamilton
VICE CHAIR

Chapter 2: Nine Major Unfinished 9/11 Commission Recommendations

To be sure, substantial progress has been made in fulfilling many of the 9/11 Commission’s 41 recommendations. Dedicated men and women in government and private sector should be credited for their tireless efforts and accomplishments in improving our national security during

the last decade. This report does not chronicle all of their successes here, but highlights the transformation of the intelligence community and improvements to screening airline passengers.

Primary Responsible Entity

Recommendation	DHS	State and Local Governments	Executive Office of the President	Congress
	Unity of Command and Effort			
	Radio Spectrum and Interoperability		●	●
	Civil Liberties and Executive Power			●
	Congressional Reform			●
	Director of National Intelligence			
	Transportation Security	●		
	Biometric Entry-Exit Screening System	●		
	Standardize Secure Identifications	●	●	
	Develop Coalition Standards for Terrorist Detention			

● Improvement Needed ● Unfulfilled