

Thinking Anew—Security Priorities for the Next Administration

*PROCEEDINGS REPORT OF THE HSPI PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION TASK FORCE
April 2008-January 2009*



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About the Institute

Founded in 2003, The George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute (HSPI) is a nonpartisan “think and do” tank whose mission is to build bridges between theory and practice to advance homeland security through an interdisciplinary approach. By convening domestic and international policymakers and practitioners at all levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors, and academia, HSPI creates innovative strategies and solutions to current and future threats to the nation.

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The Homeland Security Policy Institute
Presidential Transition Task Force*

Initiated by HSPT's Steering Committee in Spring 2008, the Task Force sought to further policy discussions of the top strategic priorities in the area of security in order to generate actionable recommendations, for the Administration taking office in January 2009, designed to effectively meet the most vexing challenges the United States faces today.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Chapter 1: Thinking Anew—Security Priorities for the Next Administration	5
Chapter 2: A National Approach to Prevention, Preparedness, and Response: Shaping Expectations, Enhancing Capabilities	9
Chapter 3: International Strategy: Re-Invigorating Our Role in the World	12
Chapter 4: Citizen Preparedness: Harnessing an Engaged Public	15
Appendix A <i>Task Force Briefing Participants</i>	18
Appendix B <i>Task Force Event Media Coverage</i>	19
Appendix C <i>Task Force Event Participants</i>	21

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The nation is in the midst of a crossroads in its consideration of security policy. A coherent strategy to address 21st century threats to the United States, one that treats national and homeland security as a seamless whole, has yet to emerge. Washington is now marked by a new Administration, a new tone, and a new space – offering a rare opportunity to catch our collective breath, to think creatively and anew about the most vexing challenges this country faces, and to put the most powerful of those reasoned ideas into action.

To help fuel this process, in April 2008 The George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute (HSPI) established the Presidential Transition Task Force, comprised of national and homeland security experts, policymakers and practitioners. Task Force members included representatives from past Administrations, State government, Fortune 500 companies, academia, research institutions and non-governmental organizations with global reach. The goal was to determine the top strategic priorities to advance the nation’s security in the coming decade and to further policy discussions by identifying the benefits and challenges to achieving these goals, as well as the way forward. Given prevailing fiscal realities, prioritization of security efforts and resources becomes all the more important.

The Task Force held internal deliberations, which included a number of briefings from subject-matter experts at the forefront of their fields.¹ From these discussions and debates, four strategic priorities emerged that serve to inform the new Administration:

- development and implementation of a proactive security strategy at the federal level that integrates international and domestic aspects of security, is founded upon the concepts of resilience, and is effectively resourced;
- enhancement of a national approach to preparedness and response through the development of a risk-based homeland security doctrine that effectively draws upon and coordinates all available assets (governments, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and the public);
- realistic public discussion of the threats the nation faces and constructive engagement of the American public in preparedness and response efforts; and
- re-invigoration of the United States’ role in the world, through a recognition that our security and that of our allies depends upon the stability and engagement of other nations.

To further develop and vet these priorities, HSPI and the Presidential Transition Task Force hosted a series of public roundtables titled, *Thinking Anew – Security Priorities for the Next Administration*, to draw upon the expertise, insights and perspectives of the broader policy community. The

¹ For a list of briefers, see Appendix A.

roundtables drew significant audiences and featured respected speakers from a variety of relevant arenas, including policymakers; federal, state and local government officials; concerned and involved citizens; recognized think tank experts and academics in international studies; leaders in the NGO community; and media experts steeped in an understanding of new media and behavioral research. Reports of these proceedings follow; a roster of participants and an overview of media coverage is also included at the end of this document.

The security policy priorities identified by the Task Force, as well as key findings and recommendations, are as follows:

Proactive Strategy and Resilient Foundations: Striking the Right Federal Stance

Challenge and opportunity within the security realm exist for the new Administration. The chance to think creatively and anew accompanies the myriad complex matters on the horizon. The Task Force determined that a coherent strategy to address 21st century threats to the United States requires that national and homeland security be treated as a seamless whole; but that strategy has yet to emerge. To achieve a proactive and resilient posture, U.S. strategy, policy, practice and organizational structures may need to be revised or recalibrated. The following findings and recommendations underscore gaps in the current circumstance, and suggest specific steps for how the new Administration might best meet the challenges ahead.

Findings

- The US has adopted reactive rather than proactive strategic approaches to homeland security and national security.
- The US has not built sufficient resilience into its strategic security posture.
- Since 2003, homeland security and national security policy have been treated as separate and distinct enterprises.
- The budgeting process for homeland security investment priorities is opaque and oriented towards the short-term.

Recommendations

The President should:

- more closely align homeland and national security entities within the executive branch of government in order to get ahead of the threat;
- use the forthcoming Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR) to leverage long-term planning and budgeting for homeland security and national security priorities; specifically, align the QHSR with the Quadrennial Defense Review;
- streamline congressional oversight of homeland and national security entities by working with Congress to enact Department of Homeland Security authorization legislation;
- embed privacy protections and due respect for civil liberties in homeland and national security program development; and
- invest in education and professional development training, to include rotation details, for the homeland security professional civilian corps.

National Approach to Preparedness and Response: Shaping Expectations, Enhancing Capabilities

A truly national approach to prevention and preparedness for natural and man-made disasters is lacking. A national approach would integrate the capabilities and efforts of all levels of government, the private sector, and the not-for-profit sector. Though a robust regional structure led by the Department of Homeland Security has long been discussed as a means of coordinating federal interagency support, as well as drawing forward State and local government capabilities, current efforts continue to be limited. Incidents of a catastrophic magnitude that require federal support need a proactive, coordinated federal response. The Task Force noted that the next Administration should consider whether presidential policies and associated plans and frameworks should be adjusted or created anew to provide such a response. In light of how crucial state and local law enforcement efforts are to prevention, preparedness and response, policies should reflect and capitalize on those efforts to successfully adapt to 21st century needs.

Findings

- Catastrophic disasters that compel state and local governments to request federal assistance require a proactive, coordinated federal response capability.
- A robust national regional structure for planning and response efforts led by the Department of Homeland Security is necessary, but has thus far been limited in scope.
- Incident management roles and responsibilities at the federal level remain unclear.
- Public and private sector efforts for catastrophic disaster response are not fully integrated.

Recommendations

The President should:

- develop homeland security doctrine that includes a multi-layered approach to threat response—utilizing all aspects of the federal government, to include homeland and national security entities—to improve regional capability;
- incorporate anti-crime and counterterrorism planning, “intelligence-led policing,” and all-hazards preparedness into preparedness planning;
- utilize and foster State and local law enforcement intelligence relationships with DHS via fusion centers;
- continue incorporating the National Guard into Northern Command’s mission; and
- encourage the formulation of strategic relationships with academia and the private sector at the national and regional levels to inform security policy.

Engage and Enlist the American Public: People—Our Greatest Strength

The absence of a sustained “culture of preparedness” has been lamented over the years. The new Administration should foster such a culture, in which individuals take seriously the responsibility of being prepared to survive for three days on their own, create evacuation plans for themselves and their families, and get out of harm’s way when appropriate. New or bolstered programs to engage the public in preparedness efforts should also harness new communications technologies to enable social networks to act as bases for civic literacy as well as a volunteer response network during crises, incorporate lessons learned from human behavioral studies, and lay guidelines for responding to those with special needs. Moving forward, the Task Force found these to be the channels in which the

government could enlist the public to be most constructively and meaningfully engaged in these endeavors.

Findings

- A culture of preparedness as recommended by congressional and White House reports following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 has yet to prevail in America.
- The American public has yet to be constructively and meaningfully engaged in disaster planning and preparedness efforts.
- New communications technologies give rise to new opportunities to productively engage the American public in preparedness efforts.
- Volunteers have little or no liability coverage in the event that they assist during a crisis.

Recommendations

The President should:

- utilize local opinion leaders to engage the public in preparedness efforts, and to deliver messages in the event of a crisis;
- invest in or leverage existing communications technologies to advance public preparedness initiatives; and
- release area-specific risk-assessment information to enable a local population to prepare more effectively for higher probability events.

International Strategy: Re-Invigorating Our Role in the World

America's security depends upon the stability and engagement of other nations. Historically, the U.S. has been a good global partner, making full use of the range of tools of statecraft, including humanitarian and development assistance, and trade initiatives. Yet, U.S. standing in the world has suffered for reasons both real and perceived. The current international landscape is marked by a number of complex foreign policy challenges. The Task Force determined that the nation would be well served by efforts to elevate the instrument of diplomacy, and to examine the lessons of post-conflict reconstruction, in part to recapture and reinvigorate key elements of the country's past which recognized that we cannot go it alone.

Findings

- U.S. security depends on the stability and engagement of other nations.
- A coordinated outreach and strategic communications strategy is a necessary, but lacking, precursor to confront radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups in a non-kinetic manner.

Recommendations

The President should:

- employ a strategy that amplifies voices within the Muslim world that seek to counter radicalization and recruitment, and that exercises care regarding the use of lexicon;
- foster respect for and adherence to international law in the form of longstanding, fundamental and widely accepted norms; and
- engage productively with international organizations and institutions to build security abroad

Chapter 1

Proactive Strategy and Resilient Foundations: Striking the Right Federal Stance



On October 15, 2008, The George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute (HSPI) launched its Presidential Transition Task Force Roundtable Series titled “Thinking Anew: Security Priorities for the Next Administration.” The panel discussion featured leading experts in the field: P.J. Crowley of the Center for American Progress; Stephen Flynn of the Council on Foreign Relations; and Fran Townsend, former Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

The next Administration will meet both challenge and opportunity in the security realm. The chance to think creatively and anew accompanies the myriad complex matters on the horizon. What should be the top strategic priorities for the next Administration? A proactive and resilient posture is needed, but what is the best way forward to achieve it? To further policy discussions of these and other crucial issues, HSPI's Presidential Transition Task Force convened the first in a series of forums intended to identify the benefits, challenges, and way forward to achieving objectives critical to our nation's security in the coming decade.



Townsend began by citing the need to create 21st century structures and strategies to meet 21st century threats. Current threats to U.S. security must be addressed through integrated national and homeland security initiatives. She noted that the tribal areas of Pakistan are the source of the greatest immediate threat originating from outside U.S. borders, along with nuclear terrorism and cyber security.

These threats affect everyday life in America and demand greater focus and coordination across the federal government as well as between the federal and state and local governments. Townsend illustrated how a cyber attack could cause a lack of confidence in e-commerce, undermining local businesses and the economy. To address the cyber security threat as well as many others, the federal government must enlist the help of Americans in academia and the private sector because it lacks the intellectual capital and understanding to address these threats alone.

Asked for guidance that she would share with the incoming Administration, Townsend encouraged the next president to engage the public in a discussion on the necessary balance between security and privacy and civil liberties. The decisions made immediately after 9/11 might not be right for today, and the U.S. requires a national dialogue to bring balance to this issue. Further, Townsend believes the next president can take a lead in improving information sharing across federal, state, and local



levels. Effective information sharing requires a closer alignment of homeland and national security strategy to develop a national approach to preparedness and response. The civilian side of the national and homeland security structure needs to implement “jointness,” drawing from the benefits that have emerged from the military reforms under the Goldwater-Nichols Act. This not only includes structural reform, but a revised system of education and a new budget process as well. Crowley built upon the issue of integration, by noting that important adjustments need to be made in terms of strategy, priorities, resources, and structure. To this end, he suggested that the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review and the Quadrennial Defense Review “must talk to each other,” meaning that each must acknowledge

and take into account the imperatives of the other. In addition, it is imperative to bind homeland security and national security together because what the U.S. does abroad impacts threats at home. Implications from the national security realm affect the homeland security realm; thus a change in mindset must accompany a change in structure. Crowley also mentioned that the U.S. is not self-sufficient, and it can't tackle security issues alone. As a result, the concept of homeland security must adjust to consider global security in partnership with other countries.

Elaborating on the concept of strategy, both Crowley and Flynn discussed the importance of prioritizing specific security issues. Crowley pointed out that the 15 threat scenarios determined by DHS should be prioritized. As a result of this lack of prioritization, government officials have taken the worst possible threat—terrorists with nuclear weapons—and made it the standard for which we prepare. The upshot is a lack of preparedness for those disasters we are most likely to confront. A new national security budget should make some tradeoffs to address issues such as public health and public safety, because these are the bottom line issues where security becomes important. Too much of the current national security budget is on offense, some of which should be recalibrated to defense. Capabilities-based planning should be implemented to prioritize those items that will be vital to preventing an attack, mitigating consequences, and enabling recovery.

Tying strategic priorities to the need for a national approach to preparedness and response, Flynn posited that the most probable and consequential risk to the public in terms of mass casualties and property is likely to arise from natural events, not an attack. Unfortunately, current security spending fails to reflect this reality. Instead, the federal government presently leaves natural disaster management to state and local governments, but appropriates most of the available funds to its own national security programs.

Furthermore, Flynn related strategic priorities to the need to engage the public and bolster resiliency. He asserted that terrorism, while a major hazard, is not an existential threat to the U.S. because it's too big and too populous. A terrorist's goal is to cause U.S. leaders and the public to overreact in ways that are incredibly costly and destructive, which is an internal problem, not external. Consequently, the leadership challenge for the next president will be to build a greater level of confidence in American society.

In addition, Flynn argued that a more resilient society has deterrent and economic value. Resiliency erodes the justification for why terrorists will initiate attacks and it also involves ordinary citizens in the national security process. Through public engagement and a holistic approach to national and homeland security, the U.S. can develop a more open and inclusive security apparatus that offers greater support to citizens.



Crowley added that U.S. strategy has to do more to take public expectations into account. If something happens on one particular day, it could mean the “bad guys” were better, but it doesn't

mean the strategy is wrong or the system is broken. The important thing is for the government to communicate with the public to form realistic expectations about the security it can provide.

Finally, all three speakers emphasized the need to revamp U.S. international strategy and reinvigorate our role in the world. Townsend encouraged the next administration to increase foreign assistance and to tie foreign aid to policy goals. In her view, the U.S. fails to take advantage of this critically important measure.



Flynn urged the next administration to identify the things Americans value and to reinvest in them, because these are the same values that the rest of the world admires. Crowley specified, saying it was imperative for the next administration to practice transparency and the rule of law, which means closing Guantanamo Bay. HSPI Director Frank Cilluffo went further, stating that we ought to abandon the label “Global War on Terror”, which has the effect of elevating our adversaries and isolating our allies. In

response, Crowley agreed and suggested the British term, “struggle against violent extremism,” as a more viable alternative.

“Fundamentally,” said Flynn, “We must step back and be an open society that engages the world.” The next president must help Americans to exercise greater confidence. When reassessing security strategy, we must think of it not as a cost, but as an investment in our future. Communities that can think anew about security priorities and that can best deal with disruptions—whether natural or man-made—will be more adaptable and viable in the 21st Century.

Chapter 2

National Approach to Preparedness and Response: Shaping Expectations, Enhancing Capabilities



On October 23, 2008, The George Washington University’s Homeland Security Policy Institute (HSPI) hosted the second event in its Presidential Transition Roundtable Series – “A National Approach to Prevention, Preparedness and Response: Shaping Expectations, Enhancing Capabilities.” The panel discussion featured leading experts in the field: Michael Balboni, Deputy Secretary for Public Safety for the State of New York; William Bratton, Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department; George Foresman, former DHS Under Secretary for National Protection and Programs; and Michael Hickey, Chairman, U.S. Chamber of Commerce National Security and Emergency Preparedness Task Force.



America has yet to achieve a genuinely national approach to prevention, preparedness and response. The roundtable considered how best to integrate the capabilities and efforts of all levels of government, the private sector, and the not-for-profit sector.

Foresman observed that we are not truly prepared for a catastrophic event in the United States, whether natural, man-made, or cyber. Of the four pillars of preparedness, we are strongest on response and recovery, but need to shore up our prevention and protection capabilities. He noted that the system for managing disasters is broken, and reforming it will be a fundamental challenge for the incoming Administration. The different levels of government in this country were not designed to be interoperable, but rather, are independent levels of government that interoperate. Moving forward, the United States must figure out how best to marry up anti-crime, counter-terrorism and other efforts, so as to achieve a

more robust preparedness posture overall.

Foresman emphasized that building a culture of preparedness is crucial, and this means engaging and galvanizing the American public. In response to a question from HSPI Senior Fellow and Task Force Member David Heyman about “engaging the public without scaring the public,” Foresman noted that it is important for the next Administration to “take some time to listen to lessons learned from this Administration” in terms of public messaging. He added that there is at least a 100-day window where the next Administration can help shape expectations for preparedness and response to future national crises.

The private sector is also instrumental to a national approach sustained by enhanced capabilities. Hickey noted that resilience “starts at home” with the individual corporation, and is multi-layered. Looking to the future, he suggested that a wide range of partners should come together, including the National Governors Association and the National Emergency Management Association, in order to take a regional approach that will enable effective response to crises.

Former U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese, an HSPI Steering Committee Member and the lead for the 1980 transition efforts of then President-elect Reagan, raised the issue of the role of the National Guard. In response, Foresman stressed the importance of training and equipping the Guard for its 21st century mission. Balboni noted that New York State now has a rapid reaction force staffed by National Guard troops and based in Hamilton, which will allow for onsite arrival in one hour. In the context of this discussion, HSPI Director Frank Cilluffo cited the need for pre-arranged mutual assistance between, among and across States in the form of emergency management “compacts.”



The panelists offered a few simple, concrete pieces of advice to the next Administration. Bratton suggested that getting the right people in the right positions is of first and foremost

importance, while Foresman suggested that incoming individuals with key leadership roles should participate in exercises designed to enhance their crisis decision-making abilities. Balboni accentuated the need to exert real leadership – to make tough decisions in tough times, while Hickey encouraged the next Administration to bring the private sector into prevention, preparedness and response efforts in an ever-more integral manner.

To meet prevailing challenges, Bratton also called for a “convergent strategy” that weaves together community policing and counterterrorism strategies under the “guiding philosophy” of intelligence-led policing. For maximum operational effectiveness, a supporting culture, capability and awareness of the “first preventer” role of local police must be created. Strategic relationships must be forged and an “international consciousness” attained, with both grounded locally. Collaboration with a wide range of partners, including academia and the private sector, is necessary. Building and leveraging intelligence at the State and local levels also means resourcing their law enforcement authorities.

Balboni, in turn, emphasized that “disconnects” still exist seven years out from 9/11. Spending continues on fusion centers meant to remedy the pre-9/11 failure to “connect the dots,” but creating an infrastructure does not solve the problem. We have yet to define what a “successful” fusion center looks like, and further national discussion is needed with regard to privacy concerns. Intelligence products and information flows are not yet standardized, and we are still relying on a “leap of faith” that the individual who hands out information actually knows who needs it. In sum, he argued for a homeland security system and strategy that is scaleable and flexible, tailored to current needs (rather than fighting the last war), and that does more with less given the economic constraints that prevail.

An all hazards, all crimes approach is needed. Cilluffo reinforced this idea, observing that fighting terrorism and fighting crime “is not an either/or proposition.”

