

US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY  
IN RESPONSE TO 11 SEPTEMBER 2001

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## *Preface*

This project was started on 25 September and the framework was completed by 28 October 2001. It was initiated out of a personal sense of frustration and duty to address what I thought was the way ahead in light of 11 September. In the weeks following the completed framework of this project, the Bush administration has implemented many of the actions I had envisioned in this effort. As a result, this project could be seen as simply a review of what has transpired since 11 September. I would ask that you remember the time frame in which it was created. It also must be considered that much of what has transpired in the response to 11 September was probably in the works at the time I created this project. My effort was created independently and was an attempt to harness and combine all the instruments of national power to formulate our response to the terrorist attacks of September. As a student of the Air War College class of 2002, it seemed to me only appropriate to formulate a national security strategy for this challenge. As much, but not all, of what I recommend here has been implemented, I can only chalk up to an effective and successful professional military education (PME) program. To be that much in step with the actions of the Bush Administration is probably a result of the PME and the probability that many of my peers, with the same education, were in positions to influence national security strategy.

## *Abstract*

The events of 11 September 2001 were a result of a complex, deliberate, and preplanned effort. These events caught the United States off guard and ultimately shocked the country and indeed the world. In the aftermath of these attacks, the US is left with a challenge of huge proportions. The US government must prevent further attacks, rescue and recover at the attack sites, investigate, hunt down and bring to justice those organizations and individuals responsible for the attacks. In order to do this correctly, and in contrast to recent military conflicts, we must use all the instruments of national power-together. The stakes are too high to get it wrong. This effort attempts to coordinate all the instruments of US national power, to weave them into a comprehensive national security strategy to respond to the attacks of 11 September. It is presented as a proposal letter from the National Security Council Principals Committee to the President on the way ahead after 11 September. The methodology used to research this effort involved articles and subjects search and subject matter expert interviews. This paper addresses three parts of the response: the immediate plan of action, the homeland security, and the international war on terrorism. It also recommends several new directives and initiatives: a director of public diplomacy, director of homeland security, new level of interagency cooperation, a reexamination of our foreign policy, and a new direction for US government agencies. The coordination of the instruments of power along with these directives and initiatives provide our best chance to be successful in our war on terrorism.

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# **US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY IN RESPONSE TO 11 SEPTEMBER 2001**

**12 September 2001**

**Mr. President,**

Yesterday, 11 September 2001, terrorists commandeered four US flagged commercial aircraft full of passengers and deliberately, without warning, flew them into both towers of the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington DC, and into the ground in rural Pennsylvania. The FBI believes the last plane, which crashed in Pennsylvania, probably was intending to hit an unknown target in the Washington DC area. Reports from the airlines and plane's passengers, in the form of in-flight cell phone calls, all point to an unknown number of males of Middle East decent brandishing knives and box-cutters. All of the attacks were unprovoked and came without warning and brought a previously unknown level of violence and tragedy to the US. The human toll for these attacks may not be known for weeks, maybe even months, but is expected to approach 10,000 killed. As of yet, no group or individual has claimed responsibility but the pattern of the attacks, previous attacks on the world trade center and elsewhere, and the small amount of available information all point to Osama Bin Ladin involvement.

The United States and the civilized world stand shocked and challenged to address this unprovoked and evil attack. The US should lead the civilized world in an organized, coordinated effort to find those responsible, bring them to justice, and ensure these attacks never happen again, anywhere.

This response should be addressed in two parts, US homeland security and International war on terrorism. The Administration could act unilaterally but should build a strong international coalition, garnering support from nations throughout the world to seek out the causes, organizations, leaders, and governments that support or harbor terrorists.

Extreme vigilance should be exercised, as these attacks may be the first of a multi-wave attack on US targets here at home or around the world. As we embark on this two-part effort, it is imperative that we utilize every instrument of national and international power that we have access to, to fight this conflict. We must prevail in this just endeavor for the sake of Americans and civilized people everywhere.

## **Immediate plan of action-Prevention and Consequence Management**

At this time, 24 hours after the attacks, civil aviation is grounded and military aircraft are flying combat air patrols over our nation. The first priority is to identify any terrorists and thwart any further attacks along with rescue response at the attack sites. Commercial aviation will resume as soon as practical but not until passengers are screened for weapons and possible links to these terror attacks. This goes for any flight originating in or terminating in the US, including stopovers. Defense and Transportation will monitor US airspace to identify non-complying flights in or near US airspace. Flights that exhibit threatening behavior will be challenged, directed, and considered hostile if they do not comply with direction. Ultimately, hostile flights will be taken down before they can crash into other high-value targets. When commercial aviation resumes, Transportation should review airport approach and departure routes for vulnerability and necessity.

Aviation is not the only avenue for possible attack against the US homeland. Transportation and Justice should also monitor US ports; ships and boats will have to be screened and checked coming in and out of major ports. Large trucks will also be monitored and access restricted around any lucrative target. At this time New York City and Washington DC seem to be the targets of all the attacks, however, all large metropolitan area or vital government facilities should be considered potential targets.

FEMA response efforts have, and will continue to be, paramount at the attack sites. With the collapse of both of the World Trade Center Towers and a portion of the Pentagon, entry into the wreckage for rescue, recovery, clean-up, and investigation

should start as soon as possible. Accountability efforts and aid to victims' families are commencing and will continue to be a top priority for government agencies.

Although the shock and frustration level is high, we must not declare war on the perpetrators of this attack. To do so would only elevate their legitimacy in the eyes of the world.<sup>1</sup> A declaration of war on terrorism is an appropriate response and is recommended to harness and focus both national and international support for this effort. Not declaring war on the specific terrorists gives us more latitude in dealing with the pursuit and ultimate capture of the ones responsible for the attacks. By not declaring war on them, the terrorists do not become prisoners of war when captured but are labeled as criminals. This denies the terrorists protection under the Geneva Convention.

When the terrorists are ultimately caught we should give them a trial by military commission. They should not be given a "domestic-civil" trial because they are not US citizens. By utilizing a military commission trial, we do not have to have a trial by jury. This will protect US sources regarding evidence brought against the terrorists.<sup>2</sup> Care should be taken to provide the transparency that the world will require in these trials so we should be absolutely clear as their involvement before we embark on international actions to stop and apprehend those responsible for the attacks.

## **Homeland Security Plan – Vigilance, Investigation, Apprehension and Prevention**

We have just experienced an unprovoked attack on American soil, against not only Americans but against citizens from throughout the international community. We also have reason to believe that there may be more attacks planned against US targets. Stringent short term and long term personnel and baggage screening methods should be

implemented, short term to apprehend any terrorists that remain as part of the initial attack, and long term to minimize our vulnerability to future attacks. These stringent screening methods should become permanent fixtures to ensure the safety of air travel. Other measures should be implemented as soon as possible as well. These include controlling cockpit access, placing armed US Marshals on flights, and arming airline pilots. Close control of airport personnel and aircraft service personnel including aircraft mechanics, food service, baggage handlers, and other ground service personnel is also required. These measures are critical to ensure the viability of the US transportation industry.

Defense should formulate a plan to ensure we retain control of our skies. The plan should include both monitoring and active defense of all aircraft over our country. Whether this plan involves active air combat patrols over key cities and other high value targets, or active air defense by other means, 11 September-type attacks should not be allowed to occur.

Law enforcement will investigate these attacks to determine whom the terrorists were, where they operated from, where they were trained, who supported them, and the whereabouts of the rest of the organization. Immigration officials should implement measures to prevent and detain terrorists from entering the country. We must increase our border control measures if we hope to catch terrorists as they try to enter our country. Among these border control measures should be the increased level of scrutiny given to foreigners here on visas, especially from specific countries. International immigration and law enforcement should increase communication and cooperation to allow tracking and apprehending terrorists before they can perform evil acts on mankind.

We must enable our law enforcement officials to protect us from further determined terrorist attacks. Existing legalities are designed to protect the individual rights of US citizens in a legal system that operates in a civil society where most people obey the law and few engage in systematic murder. In other words, our legal system protects our citizens, not foreign trained and equipped soldiers of terror whose only reason for being in this country is to destroy it and its citizens.<sup>3</sup> Increased monitoring, detention, and prosecution permissions should enable us to stop terrorists before they strike instead of after they attack. These new tools should not impinge on the rights of US citizens or erode any of our individual rights but they should be aimed at those who would do us harm. This issue before us is more of national defense than it is of law enforcement and it is critical in the effort to eradicate the terrorists and to bring them to justice.

The Administration should prepare legislation that will allow us to track and confiscate terrorist assets in this country. Measures should also be introduced to make it a crime to contribute to a terrorist cause, either of foreign or domestic origin. We cannot hope to stop international terrorists if we won't stop its support base at home.

The attack of 11 September illustrates the measures terrorists will employ to cause large-scale mass casualty and damage to this nation. Furthermore, the mode of attack illustrates a propensity to use our existing infrastructure as a potential weapon against us. Health and Human Services should increase monitoring to detect possible chemical, biological, and radiological events across the nation. Possible avenues of attack could be but are not limited to water and food supply, restaurants, newspapers, money, mail, aerosols, and the introduction of infected persons to the population. A nation-wide civil

defense monitoring network should be formed with connectivity to law enforcement, medical, and response agencies. This network will be used to detect, at the earliest possible moment, and mitigate any possible attack in this realm.

These measures should be directed and coordinated by a newly created Director of Homeland Security. Many of the agencies involved will be operating in new areas with different responsibilities. Despite much work by talented and dedicated professionals the task of homeland defense has not evolved to a satisfactory level to date. The deliberate bureaucratic process no longer has time to play out as we have been thrust into a mode that requires an effective and immediate defense of our homeland. This newly created level of leadership should be sufficient to accomplish the task of homeland security. This director should also coordinate with the director of the international effort to battle terrorism, proposed to be the National Security Advisor. This level of leadership is intended to assure the entire effort is properly coordinated to maximize its effectiveness.

### **International War on Terrorism – Intelligence, Deterrence, Dissuasion, and Elimination**

We must take every reasonable precaution to protect the US against terror. Terrorist organizations, leaders, supporters, and governments that harbor them should be stopped. We should use every instrument of national and international power to detect and prevent terror attacks against this nation and eliminate individuals, organizations, and even governments that can not be deterred. Terrorists, their organizations, and their supporters should be isolated economically, diplomatically, informationally, and militarily. We should also work to isolate them culturally and religiously as well.

The Administration should work to garner international support for our cause of stamping out terrorism. We should introduce a draft Security Council resolution to the UN condemning and allowing for extradition of terrorist suspects. We will use the legitimacy of the UN Security Council to justify and leverage our pursuit actions in this endeavor. Security Council resolutions should be chosen because they are binding, they carry compliance responsibilities from member countries. In the event some of our efforts encounter resistance by certain countries we will build an international coalition to further our actions in this matter. This diplomatic initiative is the fulcrum, the critical first step in the international effort to fight terrorism. This important first step enables all the other actions and increases their effectiveness once initiated. This UN condemnation resolution should capture and maintain the international support we need to carry us through the duration of this fight against terrorism.

Specifically it is imperative that we gain the support of the moderate Muslim nations and leaders to diffuse the “Jihad” factor. Moderate Muslim leaders and clerics are of critical importance in this effort and should be a major part of an information superiority campaign. Efforts should be focused on discrediting those responsible for the attacks and separating them from the Muslim faith. This effort is critical to avoid a split in world opinion along religious lines. Our goal is a combined international effort to dissuade and destroy terrorist organizations.

The Administration should effectively and aggressively embark on a public diplomacy campaign that will seek to separate these extremists from the mainstream of the Muslim faith and to discredit their methods. This effort should be more visible, aggressive, and proactive than similar efforts in the past. Information superiority should

be achieved as the US and coalition partners work to dominate the TV, radio, and print. We need to send our message and limit and discredit the terrorist and supporter access to the media. Our spokesmen need to be proactive in this endeavor as we set the agenda and force the terrorists and their supporters to react to our actions. This has not been the case in past operations. Senior Administration Officials should approach the media for cooperation in this endeavor. Again, this is not an attempt to blind the public with lies, quite the contrary. This effort is only as effective as it is truthful and accurate. However, truths can be repeated and timed to keep the adversaries on the information defensive. Additionally, every effort should be made to trace terrorist whereabouts through media access attempts.

The US and the rest of the international effort should impose strict economic sanctions on any organization and government that is found to engage in or support the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Oil, weapons, energy, specialized equipment, and financial support are good candidates for exclusionary products as well. Armed with the condemnation resolution, the Administration should pressure all nations to sever economic ties with and blockade of the organizations and governments that perpetrated this attack.

The UN Security Council resolution condemning the attacks and calling for the extradition of the terrorists should be the first of three Security Council resolutions that should be introduced. These resolutions will enable the US to seize, not just freeze the entire financial holdings of the organization or individuals responsible for these attacks. This effort requires us to be able to track the financial trail to identify these assets. We should not only coordinate and concentrate our own efforts but also incorporate the

intelligence, banking and other information and financial networks from throughout the world. Using this condemnation resolution as leverage, we should then introduce a Security Council resolution calling for all nations to freeze the financial assets of the terrorist organization found responsible for the attacks. We should stress that no country should allow banks or persons within their borders to financially benefit from conducting business with these terror organizations. This asset freezing resolution will bring significant international pressure to bear on nations holding terror organization assets. Both UN member and non-member countries that are found to hold assets belonging to the terrorist organizations responsible for the attacks should be approached quietly to gain their cooperation in this effort. These resolutions should set the international standard of behavior so that we can seek cooperation from both UN member as well as non-member countries. If they chose not to comply with the asset freezing resolutions they risk losing their status in the world, possibly becoming a pariah state. After the assets are frozen, we should introduce a UN resolution to seize them in an effort to obtain reparations for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and any other possible targets.

The critical part of this finance effort is for the UN resolution mentioned above condemning the attack and calling for justice for the attackers. Armed with that, the US should seek reparations from the attacks. Armed with a resolution, banks will come under pressure to cooperate. This seizure effort will be both challenging and precedence setting but is an important element of the coordinated approach we will pursue to bring those responsible for the attacks to justice. The combination of economic isolation and asset seizure efforts should erode a significant portion of their financial support.

The Director of Central Intelligence should seek out cooperation with coalition and other nations to gain the strategic advantage that other nations may provide. The US intelligence community, in combination with cooperating foreign intelligence agencies, should target the persons and organizations involved in the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Special efforts should be taken to incorporate and maximize foreign collection capabilities as an intelligence multiplier in this effort, particularly intelligence agencies in the Middle East. The Director of Central Intelligence should seek and should be given more latitude to invest in human intelligence with regard to collection capabilities. The current lack of human intelligence will be covered by the foreign agencies, some of which already have access to the culprits.

It is very possible, even probable, that the terrorists that conducted these attacks are part of a non-state actor organization. If this were the case, the organization would probably have some degree of support from a state government. This possibility will pose challenges for US forces and responses. Responses may require the US forces to violate some national sovereignty. This will be a new concept as we depart from the traditional Westphalian concept of national sovereignty. The degree of host nation support for the terrorist organization or for our response efforts will, to a large part, determine how we should proceed. We should anticipate, for planning purposes, the probability that the terrorist organization responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon has had some degree of support from nations that are run by either Islamic fundamentalists-extremists, or failed nation states that are under pressure from the same. This anticipation results from the previously discussed pattern of attacks and the

preponderance of the early evidence. If subsequent investigations find otherwise, then planning should proceed accordingly.

In the event this international effort encounters certain nations or governments that harbor and support terrorism, either overtly or covertly, those nations or governments will be labeled hostile to the international community and will be subject to further sanctions and actions. We must not leave intact any government or nation that has as its policy supporting or encouraging such terrorist actions. In this effort, possible resulting US and international actions aimed at punishing those governments that support or harbor terrorists organizations could include altering or removing those governments. It is essential that in this event, those removed or altered governments should be replaced or influenced by moderate regional powers along with US influence. Regional input will increase the security and peace that results from neighboring nation buy-in.

Militarily, the US-led coalition must take down the persons, organizations, or governments responsible for these attacks. The military instrument should be the last instrument of national or international power to be employed. The other measures mentioned above should be employed quickly and as simultaneously as possible but must precede the military option. As part of that effort, the build-up and preparation phase of military operations should be modestly but deliberately reported and prolonged to maximize its coercive effect. An approximate 90-day build-up period is entirely within reason to allow sufficient time to allow the other instruments of power to reach their maximum effectiveness. This point is critical to the proper coordination of the different instruments of power. Once the first bomb is dropped, the effectiveness of our other instruments becomes limited. Certain coalition members become less willing to

participate once the fog and friction of war begins to take its toll. Even with this build-up period, we should continue to be up front with the world on our intention to undertake military operations in this terrorism eradication effort. This pause before undertaking overt military action is critical and will maximize its coercive effectiveness in this pre-hostility period.

Once hostilities begin, Defense should anticipate a combined operations environment to isolate and eliminate terror organizations and possibly hostile government forces. Coalition and friendly indigenous forces should be included as part of the anti-terror campaign to demonstrate international support and legitimacy for our cause. Recent military history has produced an expectation of few or no US losses and limited enemy losses. The military campaign to eliminate terrorists and hostile supporting organizations may involve both US and enemy casualties. Terrorists that will give their lives in attacks against the US will probably not be deterred from their cause and may have to be eliminated. In this event Defense planners should plan for the eventuality of a significant number of enemy casualties. As for US casualties, the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> represented a direct attack on Americans involving a great loss of life. As such the American public's tolerance for casualties should be greater, however, Defense should plan to address US casualty and prisoner of war possibilities to prevent public support erosion.

All of these measures should be combined as an integrated effort to create a synergy aimed at the terrorist organizations that were responsible for the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. In order to assure this effort is coordinated, the National Security Advisor should direct this effort. This level of leadership should be sufficient to direct

the major Federal Agencies and to ensure a unity of effort in this endeavor. State, Defense, Justice, Director of Intelligence, Public Diplomacy, and other government agencies should all coordinate their efforts under the authority of the National Security Advisor and ultimately, the President. Only the close coordination of all our instruments of national power, not just their concurrence, will be enough to win in this struggle against terrorism.

## **New Directives**

### **The Director of Public Diplomacy**

A new position will be created to assure both unity of effort as well as the appropriate level of emphasis given to manage the information instrument of power. An example of why we need this level of attention can be illustrated by the events of the military operations in Kosovo where the NATO forces were generally kept on the information defensive. This new position also reflects the importance of information management in this effort to combat terrorism. Perception management will be critical to coalition building and maintenance as well as maintaining the initiative in public diplomacy. Maintaining the initiative in the public diplomacy arena should ensure that we increase the effectiveness of our message and reduce the effectiveness of our adversary's efforts to manipulate information for their own purposes.

Part of this public diplomacy effort should be the limitation of the broadcast or print of sensitive security operations and critical national vulnerabilities. We should seek to obtain voluntary participation by media companies to limit, to a reasonable extent, the information that would help the terrorist cause and hinder ours. An example of this kind of information management could be the timely broadcast of secret operations by US or Allied Special Operations Forces or security forces to stop, attack, or apprehend terrorists or their supporters. This effort should be aggressively pursued, even though this may become a challenge given the stakes and the possibility that the media may themselves become targets. Also, the US government should publicly discourage "experts" from speculating in and disclosing too much detail in the media. This should not be perceived

as censorship but rather, a voluntary limitation of disclosure of information that may be used to kill Americans.

### **The Director of Homeland Security**

This new position should be created to focus the government's efforts to bolster our domestic security. Much attention has been given to homeland defense and security in the last couple of years in the government. The time for effective, immediate and deliberate action has come. This effort will be one of the more challenging adjustments for the various government agencies that will be tasked to provide for our domestic security. To facilitate this effort, a Director should be established and given the resources and authority to accomplish the new mission of homeland security. Some of the government functions will overlap the homeland and international security communities, such as intelligence, defense, and justice. Several of these agencies have legislative limits that determine what they can and can not do in each realm. For instance, Defense intelligence agencies can not collect information on US citizens. To respect the legislative limits, an unprecedented level of information sharing should allow these agencies to remain relevant and effective in both arenas. The new word in the US government is cooperation.

### **New Level of Interagency Cooperation**

Faced with the increased seriousness of terrorist attacks on Americans and American property, our government's many agencies and departments will have to increase their level of cooperation and coordination. The many different roles and

missions of our government agencies create stovepipes that prevent information sharing and coordination among them, thereby limiting their effectiveness. There may be challenges to information sharing and coordination in some areas, however, we should address these challenges and not tolerate a system that prohibits one agency from passing critical information or interdicting a terrorist operation due to conflicts in responsibilities. In addition to allowing information sharing and cooperation, a requirement of regular and frequent meetings at both the leadership as well as the operations level should be enacted.

### **A New Look at Our Foreign Policy in Asia and the Middle East**

The Administration should seriously reexamine its foreign policy in the Middle East and Asia. At the present time we lack a degree of credibility in the Arab world that could and may hinder our efforts to combat the proliferation of terrorist organizations in these areas. Over the last eleven years we have seen our political clout, that was so skillfully built for the war against Iraqi aggression, lapse. A more even-handed approach to the Palestinian situation would be a key part of this effort. The US should exert pressure on Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and supporting nations to achieve a stable peace, one that will allow Palestinian sovereignty and land.

This should not be done at the expense of our relationship with Israel. The Israeli people are also enduring this rash of terror and deserve a peace that will guarantee her right to exist. Care should be taken to prevent this from being perceived as a ransom payment to the terrorist cause. This even-handed approach should be pursued with the goal of settling the Middle East into a sustainable peaceful coexistence such as the relationship between Israel, Egypt, Jordan and to a lesser extent Syria. US and

international financial aid could be leveraged to attract wary governments to accept a peaceful coexistence agreement.

The growing movement of Islamic fundamentalism that stretches from Algeria, through the Middle East and South Asia into Southeast Asia is not in itself a concern. To the extent it can be manipulated into extremism could spell the end of strong US allies such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, and Pakistan. One only has to recall the fall of the Shah of Iran and the acrid aftermath in American relations to imagine the probable consequences.

The US policy toward Iraq should also be reexamined to determine a more effective strategy to contain Saddam Hussein. American policy towards Iraq may not be as critical to this anti-terrorism effort, however, if Iraq is found to be responsible or partially responsible for attacks against the US, then we should undertake a comprehensive reevaluation of the continued present policy.

### **A New Direction for US Government Agencies**

This is a turbulent time as we are still attempting to ascertain the extent of, and reason behind, the attacks. While there is much turmoil and shock, the country does not have the luxury of a leisurely adjustment to the new threat. As government leaders start to sort out their new responsibilities, we need look no further than the Cold War for assistance. During the Cold War all of the various government agencies worked towards containing the Soviet Union. We employed all of our instruments of national power in this effort. The last fifteen years have been turbulent for these agencies as many started

to work by themselves. We had few large common enemies and an ambiguous national strategy. Key government agencies saw their efforts diverge.

Now the view is vastly different. We have a clear purpose, to find the terrorists responsible for the attacks, destroy their organizations and work to ensure this never happens to the US or any other country again. Now we have to turn the gaze of all of our government agencies towards that aim, much the same as we were all postured and working towards keeping the USSR and communism at bay. We do however need a new and immediate level of interagency cooperation, vastly improved from the days of the Cold War. We also need to incorporate homeland security into the forefront of our defense effort. This new direction, level of interagency cooperation, government posts, and tasks are the requirements to successfully fight terror. Only after we implement these measures will we achieve victory in this new war.

**Respectfully,**

**The National Security Council Principals Committee**

#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Darrell Phillips, GS-13 and Maj Thomas J. Herthel, US Air Force Judge Advocate General School, International and Operations Law Division, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, interviewed by author, 26 November 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ruth Wedgwood, "Cause for Alarm: Legal Action Can Bring Victories, But Preventing Terrorism Calls for Tougher Tactics," *The Washington Post*, Sunday, 3 June 2001, sec. B1.

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