



Transcript of Remarks by Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton
Former Chair and Vice Chair
National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States
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Kean: Four months ago, we issued our final report, a unanimous report signed by five Republicans and five Democrats. And we fulfilled our mandate to tell the story of the 9/11 attacks and make recommendations to improve the security and safety of the American people.

Today, we come before you as former Commissioners. We are here because remain deeply committed to the recommendations we made.

We are pleased that the Congress responded promptly to our report. Last summer, we testified 20 times before Committees of Congress. In October, the Senate and House approved comprehensive bills, both based on our report.

Through the leadership of Senator Collins and Senator Lieberman, Representatives Hoekstra and Harman, and Speaker Hastert, a strong bill that would implement the Commission's reforms emerged from conference committee.

The bill has the support of the President. It has the support of Congressional leaders in the House and Senate, on both sides of the aisle. It has the support of majorities in both chambers and the support of the vast majority of the American people. Our request to our nation's leaders is simple: Give this bill a vote. Pass this bill.

The choice is between this bill and the status quo. The basic structure of the Intelligence Community has not changed since 9/11. The status quo failed

us. The status quo does not provide our leaders with the information they require to keep the American people safe. Reform is an urgent matter and reform simply must not wait until after the next attack.

This bill creates a comprehensive counterterrorism policy with scores of provisions relating not only to intelligence but information sharing, border and transportation security, terrorist financing, FBI reform, foreign policy, assistance to first responders, and the protection of our civil liberties.

The bill enables unity of effort across the 15 agencies of the Intelligence Community. It puts a National Intelligence Director in charge of budgets, personnel, and information technology. That person can make sure that information is shared, and that agencies cooperate with one another. We need a person in charge who is empowered and accountable.

The bill creates a strong National Counterterrorism Center and a comparable national center to counter proliferation, so that there is unity of effort across the government on these two very prominent national security concerns. It creates centers to ensure that information is shared, and that agencies act jointly. The bill goes far beyond what the President could do by Executive Order. The bill makes reforms permanent. It initiates landmark reforms to link intelligence, law enforcement and homeland security information, so that it is available to federal, state and local authorities.

The bill reforms border security, authorizing thousands of additional border patrol agents and customs and immigration inspectors, and thousands of additional bed spaces for immigration detention and for removal. It focuses vital attention on the analysis and sharing of information on terrorist travel, and strengthens immigration laws and visa requirements.

The bill sets new strategies in transportation and aviation security, including tighter baggage screening, explosive detection, maritime security, and very importantly the use of watchlists to screen passengers.

The bill strengthens counter-terrorism laws, and provides new authorities to fight terrorist financing, extend the reach of our laws to “lone wolf” terrorists, and to establish strong criminal penalties for terrorist activity, such as possession of, or trafficking in, weapons of mass destruction or missile systems designed to destroy aircraft. It bolsters reform in the FBI, to create a modern workforce to carry out the FBI’s national security mission.

The bill protects civil liberties, creating an independent Privacy and Civil Liberties Board as a check and balance within the Executive branch to counter new authorities.

And this bill strengthens foreign policy. It calls for stronger efforts to identify terrorist sanctuaries, and a long-term commitment to development and security of Afghanistan. It emphasizes expanding exchanges, improving secular education, and promoting economic development in the Islamic world.

And this bill at home helps emergency responders, enhancing public safety communications interoperability, and requiring the development of a strategy so that broadcast spectrum is available for public safety purposes. It also promotes the adoption of voluntary standards for private sector preparedness.

Hamilton: Two major objections have been raised to this bill: that it endangers the flow of intelligence to our troops, and fails to deny driver's licenses to illegal aliens.

First, it is wartime. We would not support a bill that undercuts support to our troops. The Commander in Chief supports this bill.

The military gets and should get priority for intelligence support. Any time troops are in harm's way, the military goes to the top of the priority list for intelligence collection, to support troops or save lives. National systems, including satellites, get tasked with military priorities.

Nothing in this bill changes intelligence support to our troops. The National Intelligence Director's authorities for collection and tasking are the same as the DCI's authorities.

This bill will also make our intelligence better. By tearing down the stovepipes, and unifying effort within the Intelligence Community, this bill ensures that information is shared and carefully assessed. It will ensure that one individual is accountable. Not only our civilian leaders but our troops will benefit from more accurate intelligence.

Second, this bill requires the establishment of nationwide minimum standards for driver's licenses and ID necessary to board commercial aircraft and to enter federal facilities, as the Commission recommended. The question of access to driver's licenses for illegal aliens goes beyond the scope of the Commission's recommendations. We take no position on the merits of this proposal. We respectfully request that this important topic be considered in separate legislation so that it does not delay enactment of this bill with so many important counterterrorism provisions.

We recognize that change is not easy. Our own history shows us that we can change, that we can rise to new challenges.

Next week, we commemorate the attack on Pearl Harbor and how it changed this nation's history. Determined statesmen of both parties responded to the challenges of World War II and the Cold War. They put into place the kind of defense and intelligence structures needed to withstand assaults from new forms of enemies. We must do so again.

When we were appointed to the 9-11 Commission, all ten of us came together determined to do what was best for the country. We set aside partisan differences because we saw it as our mission to do whatever we could to protect our fellow citizens.

The conference report now pending responds to a substantial number of the Commission's recommendations. It comes at a moment when there is broad consensus on the need for reform: a time when our Nation is at risk, and a time when we have the rare opportunity to enact substantial reform to meet that risk.

We have one request to our Nation's leaders before the 108th Congress adjourns. We ask for a vote on the conference report implementing the Commission's recommendations, so that the President can sign a good and urgently needed bill into law.

The window of opportunity for reform will not stay open long. We must not let this moment pass. We must seize this moment, to institute reforms that will make the American people safer and more secure.