

9/11 Public Discourse Project: Securing the Homeland
June 28, 2005

Moderator Bob Kerrey
Opening Remarks

Good morning. On behalf of the Board Members of the 9/11 Public Discourse Project—my friends and colleagues, the former 9/11 Commissioners—I'd like to welcome all of you here today.

Once again, we would also like to thank the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars for hosting today's discussion.

This is the fourth in our series of panels reviewing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and what progress has been made since we issued our Report. What we learn in these sessions will help inform our report card on the progress of reform later this year.

This morning we will be looking at a topic of ongoing importance: is the homeland secure? Are we doing the right things at home to protect our people and our critical infrastructure?

Homeland security encompasses transportation security, ground, air and maritime, as well as border security and national preparedness.

It is clear we cannot protect everything. Instead, we, as a nation, must determine our priorities, and identify those areas of greatest risk and vulnerability.

The 9/11 Commission stated:

“Hard choices must be made in allocating limited resources. The U.S. government should identify and evaluate the ...assets that need to be protected, set risk-based priorities for defending them, select the most practical and cost-effective ways of doing so, and then develop a plan, budget and funding to implement the effort.”

Congress responded to this recommendation last December. In the Intelligence Reform Act of 2004, Congress set a deadline for the Department

of Homeland Security to submit such a plan. However, the deadline has come and gone, and no plan has been submitted.

The 9/11 Commission also recommended that homeland security funding is allocated based on risk and vulnerabilities, not pork barrel politics. So far, those funding formulas have not changed. We still have state-based revenue sharing formulas on the books driving the distribution of funds. Congress needs to complete action this year, to apply our scarce resources against the targets most at risk.

First responders deserve the same protection. On 9/11 lives were lost because first responders – firefighters, police officers, trained medical professionals – could not communicate. The 9/11 Commission found that if Congress expedited and increased the assignment of radio spectrum for public safety, lives can and will be saved.

There are currently bills in Congress that would accomplish this goal. They need to reach the President’s desk. Nearly four years after 9/11, we owe it to our first responders to give them the tools so they can do their job – to protect themselves so they can protect us.

On 9/11, there were 12 people on the FAA’s “no-fly” list. Just 12. Yet the State Department’s list of known and suspected terrorists was over 60,000 names long.

We commend the establishment of a Terrorist Screening Center and efforts to create a consolidated watchlist. But problems remain. The GAO reports that the list contains faulty data. Timely communication is still a big problem. We need a system for issuing visas, crossing borders, and boarding airplanes that is quick and accurate in checking identities – keeping the bad guys out, and letting everyone else proceed without delay.

To help us explore these topics this morning – to see how we are doing and what needs to be done – we have assembled a distinguished panel of experts.

Clark Kent Ervin, the former Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security;

C. Stewart Verdery, Jr., former Assistant Secretary for Border and Transportation Security Policy at the Department of Homeland Security;

Dr. Stephen Flynn, author of the critically acclaimed bestseller, *America the Vulnerable* which discusses America's defense shortcomings in the war on terror;

William Raisch, founding Executive Director of The International Center for Enterprise Preparedness (InterCEP) at New York University; and

Mayor Edward M. Lambert, Jr, mayor of City of Fall River, Massachusetts since 1996 and representative of the National League of Cities.

We will begin this morning asking each of our panelists to speak for five minutes. First up is Clark Kent Ervin.

Mr. Ervin was the first inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Before that, he served as the Inspector General of the Department of State. He is currently chairing the Homeland Security initiative at the Aspen Institute here in Washington.

We are very fortunate to have Mr. Ervin here with us today. Clark....