

# Organizing for Homeland Security

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## Organizing for Homeland Security

The war on terrorism has produced a fundamental reorientation across a wide range of U.S. policies—from defense and foreign affairs to fiscal and monetary policy to law enforcement and intelligence collection. Shortly after the horrific attacks of September 11, President George W. Bush announced that from that point forward the anti-terrorism campaign would be “the focus of my administration.”<sup>1</sup> In subsequent weeks, the Pentagon revised its quadrennial defense review and declared defense of the U.S. homeland to be “the Department’s primary mission.”<sup>2</sup> The social security “lockbox” of campaign 2000 fame was thrown out by Democrats and Republicans alike, as Congress passed a \$40 billion relief package and prepared to stimulate a rapidly deteriorating economy with budget allocations of many billions more. Law enforcement and the intelligence community refocused their efforts, feverishly sifting through the evidence in an effort to determine what had happened, while simultaneously trying to head off potential new attacks. And throughout the United States, at harbors, ports, border crossings, and major installations—from nuclear power stations and hydroelectric dams to tunnels and bridges to computer networks and electricity grids—enhanced security measures became the singular focus of activity.

This reprioritization of U.S. policy will go a long way to focus the nation’s energies on fighting the evident threat of global terrorism. But ultimate success in this effort will at least in part depend on how the U.S. government is reorganized to reflect this new priority. As Dwight D. Eisenhower famously remarked at the end of his long and distinguished career, although “organization cannot make a genius out of an incompetent, ... disorganization can scarcely fail to result in inefficiency and can easily lead to disaster.”<sup>3</sup> The Bush administration moved swiftly to begin the process of reorganization, with the president using his address to a joint session of Congress on September 20 to announce the creation of the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) as the central coordinating mechanism within the White House. The duties of this office are spelled

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<sup>1</sup> George Bush, “Remarks in Telephone Conversation with New York Mayor Giuliani and New York Governor Pataki” (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, September 13, 2001)

<sup>2</sup> *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, September 2001), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1963), p. 114.

out in an executive order signed by President Bush on October 8, 2001. That same order also announced the creation of a Homeland Security Council (HSC), which, like the National Security Council on which it is modeled, consists of the president, vice president, and key cabinet members and agency heads with responsibility for advising and assisting the president with respect to all aspects of homeland security.<sup>4</sup>

President Bush's organizational designs have, from the get-go, been derided as inadequate to the task. Although Bush's decision to appoint Pennsylvania Governor and former Congressman Tom Ridge as head of the new OHS has been widely welcomed given Ridge's record and long-standing personal connection to the president, many fear that Ridge lacks the leverage and authority to get the job done. As Democratic Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) put it, "This is the most important responsibility the federal government will have in the near future, and to give Mr. Ridge less power in this office than he has as the governor of Pennsylvania is just not what the nation needs."<sup>5</sup> Lieberman's Republican colleague, Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL), agreed, noting that while Ridge was a good choice for the job, "he's got to have power to do things—budgets, demand accountability [from agencies], everything."<sup>6</sup> A number of bills have been introduced on the Hill to give Ridge more authority—by making his position subject to Senate confirmation, providing the director with responsibility for spending money, and/or centralizing some or all of the homeland security functions within OHS and thus under Ridge's direct control.<sup>7</sup>

Most of these legislative initiatives—and the commission proposals on which they are based—sound better in theory than they are likely to prove in practice. The basic reason is that

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<sup>4</sup> "Executive Order Establishing the Office of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, October 8, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Sarah Lueck and Yochi Dreazen, "Rifts Begin to Open Up Between Lawmakers Over Powers of Counterterrorism Czar Ridge," *Wall Street Journal*, October 5, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Eric Pianin and Bradley Graham, "New Homeland Defense Plans Emerge," *Washington Post*, September 26, 2001, p. A4.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., *Preparedness Against Domestic Terrorism Act of 2001*, H.R. 525, 107 Cong. 1 sess. (introduced by Rep. Wayne Gilchrest, February 8, 2001); *National Homeland Security Agency Act*, H.R. 1158 107 Cong. 1 sess. (introduced by Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 21, 2001); *Homeland Security Strategy Act of 2001*, H.R. 1292, 107 Cong. 1 sess. (introduced by Rep. Ike Skelton, March 29, 2001); and *To Establish the National Office for Combating Terrorism*, S. 1449, 107 Cong. 1 sess. (introduced by Sen. Bob Graham, September 21, 2001).

centralization of all the functions involved in homeland security is a practical impossibility—as all advocates of this process recognize, at least implicitly. Responsibility for preparing, preventing, protecting against, and, if necessary, responding to and recovering from a terrorist incident is not only widely dispersed across the executive branch, but also among federal, state, and local authorities. Homeland security is in its very essence a highly decentralized activity—dependent for its success on hundreds of thousands of individuals, from border guards and customs agents to doctors and policemen making the right decisions. These functions simply cannot be brought into a single agency.

What is needed instead is leadership, coordination, and mobilization of the responsible agencies and their leaders—at the federal, state, and local level. That is the task President Bush has handed Gov. Ridge—and given the number of agencies, interests, and people involved, it is a task of truly mammoth proportions. But it is a job that must be done. Past experiences in similar coordinating efforts—of national security and economic policy, for instance—provide some lessons on how Ridge should go about the task. Within such a coordinating context, some consolidation of activities makes sense—as would enhancing Ridge’s authority over budgetary matters and perhaps making his position subject to Senate confirmation. But on their own, the structural reforms championed by many critics of the current arrangement will make little, if any, practical difference.

### **Problems Reorganization Seeks to Solve**

Before embarking on any organizational change, whether minor or major, it is crucially important that we ask what the problems are that we are trying to solve in making these changes. Organizational adjustments are wrenching—and often prove unresponsive to the need at hand, in part because the problems identified are not readily resolvable through organizational tinkering. This may well be true of organizing for homeland security.

Prior to September 11, a major reason why a succession of government commissions and legislators called for organizational changes in the homeland security area was to draw attention to the problem of terrorism and the need to respond. Advocates of change argued that terrorism constituted a very real threat to U.S. security—yet, this threat did not receive the priority attention of

the U.S. government that they believed it deserved.<sup>8</sup> Consolidating homeland security functions would give it that priority—by creating what the General Accounting Office called a “focal point.”<sup>9</sup> Most proposed placing the new organization within the Executive Office of the President in an effort to make homeland security a White House priority.

Clearly, before terrorists turned commercial jetliners into conventional weapons of mass destruction and killed more than 5,000 people on U.S. soil, homeland security was not a top priority for the U.S. government. To be sure, successive presidents had talked about the threat of terrorism. Clinton frequently worried, often publicly, about a germ weapons attack by terrorists on U.S. soil. Bush mentioned the threat of terrorism during his campaign, and continued to talk about the threat as president (although often as an argument for developing missile defenses). Spending on counterterrorism activities also increased dramatically—from \$6 billion in 1998 to well over \$10 billion in 2001. And with the appointment of a national coordinator for security, infrastructure protection, and counterterrorism in 1998, there was an attempt to improve coordination among the myriad of agencies and interests involved in preparing for, preventing, and responding to terrorist attacks.

But even with heightened presidential interest, increased funding, and improved coordination, the terrorist threat had not moved to the top—or even near the top—of the daily agenda of the president and his senior national security advisers. The national coordinator was a special assistant to the president and senior director on the NSC staff, reporting to the national security adviser—not the president. And while the issue of terrorism was rising in importance in every agency with a role to play in guarding against the threat, terrorism remained just one among their many concerns. For the Pentagon, preparing to fight two major theater wars remained the

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change*, The Phase III Report of the U.S. Commission on National Security/21<sup>st</sup> Century, March 15, 2001, co-chaired by Gary Hart and Warren B. Rudman; *First Annual Report to the President and the Congress: I. Assessing the Threat*, Report of the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, December 15, 1999, and *Second Annual Report to the President and the Congress: II. Toward a National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, December 15, 2000, chaired by Gov. James S. Gilmore III; and *Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism*, Report of the National Commission on Terrorism, pursuant to Public Law 277, 105th Congress, June 2000, chaired by Amb. L. Paul Bremer III.

<sup>9</sup> General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Selected Challenges and Related Recommendations*, GAO-01-822 (Washington: General Accounting Office, September 2001), pp. 34-43.

priority—and in the distance loomed the rise of China and acquisition of long-range missiles by nuclear-armed rogue states. The customs agents searched luggage and shipments coming across borders—to sniff out illegal drug shipments more than germ weapons. Foreign service officers working their first tour of duty in consular sections in U.S. embassies abroad, and Immigration and Naturalization Services personnel at U.S. ports of entry, worried more about preventing entry of people who wished to stay for good than keeping out people who wished to do the U.S. harm. The FBI tracked federal criminals at home and sought to garner evidence that could stand up in U.S. courts against terrorists abroad, but did not take the initiative to track people that might terrorize our nation. And the list goes on. In each and every case other critical agency functions were, for very understandable reasons, given priority over countering the terrorist threat.

September 11 changed all that. Now, for each and every person, agency, and department at every level of government involved in securing the U.S. homeland, the terrorist threat stands front and center. The newly installed director of the U.S. customs service told the *New York Times* that “terrorism is our highest priority, bar none. Ninety-eight percent of my attention as commissioner of customs has been devoted to that one issue.”<sup>10</sup> Similar reprioritization has occurred in other agencies—down to the Internal Revenue Service, which has shifted some of its criminal investigators to assist others in helping determine how terrorist groups are funded.

It is a sad, but very real fact, that no amount of organizational surgery could have forced agencies to focus on the terrorist threats as much as the actions of nineteen individuals did on September 11. For now, the lack of priority attention is not an issue—though some organizational changes may be necessary to sustain interest in countering terrorism in the years to come.

The second main reason for considering any organizational adjustments has been the fact that responsibility for homeland security is widely dispersed. The number of federal departments, agencies, and offices involved in the task is nearly impossible to quantify. According to the Office of Management and Budget, nearly 70 agencies spend money on counterterrorist activities—and that

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Pear and Philip Shenon, “Customs Switch Priority from Drugs to Terrorism,” *New York Times*, October 10, 2001, p. B11.

excludes the Defense and State Departments as well as the Intelligence community!<sup>11</sup> One organizational chart of federal government agencies involved in responding to terrorism compiled by the Center for Nonproliferation Studies contains 151 separate boxes.<sup>12</sup> Even by more discriminating accounting standards, anywhere between 40 and 50 agencies are believed to be involved in the homeland security effort—ranging from the departments of defense, treasury, justice, transportation, health and human services, and agriculture, to intelligence agencies like the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency, to law enforcement agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, to agencies monitoring points of entry into the United States like the Border Control, the Coast Guard, the Custom Service, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, to agencies responsible for responding to an attack, like the Federal Emergency and Management Agency, the Centers for Disease Control, the National Guard Bureau, and the Pentagon's Joint Task Force for Homeland Defense.

This diffusion of responsibility is inherent in the problem these entities seek to tackle. Homeland security is, by its very nature, a highly decentralized activity—one where decisions at the outer edges of activity are at least as crucial to success as decisions made at the center. Success in the fight against terrorism depends on a multitude of individuals making decisions. The customs service agent who sensed something amiss with a car traveling from Canada to the United States in December 1999 and discovered a car loaded with materials to make explosives designed to blow up LAX in Los Angeles at the turn of the millennium made a split-second decision that was arguably more important to success than any decision her superiors might have made. The flight instructor had to find it suspicious that a student was interested only in steering a commercial jetliner, not in taking off or landing, and then report his suspicion to law enforcement authorities. It was important that the firefighter yell at people coming up from the World Trade Center subway station to go back down, before himself climbing up the stairs to the fires burning on the 75<sup>th</sup> floor of one of the towers. Ultimately, the security of the American homeland depends upon the decisions of these

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<sup>11</sup> Office of Management and Budget, *Annual Report to Congress on Combating Terrorism* (August 2001), available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/nsd\\_annual\\_report2001.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/nsd_annual_report2001.pdf) (accessed October 2001)

<sup>12</sup> "Organizational Chart for Terrorism Response," available at <http://www.cns.miis.edu/research/cbw/domestic.htm#wmdchart> (accessed October 2001).

people—and the millions of others like them. Managing, coordinating, leading, and mobilizing these people so that their individual decisions add up to a nation more secure, better prepared, and more responsive to the terrorist threat is the organizational challenge of homeland security.

### **Why Centralization (Alone) Won't Work**

The fundamental precept behind nearly all proposals for organizing homeland security activities is centralization: the consolidation of functions now scattered across numerous organizations under a common organizational roof. As one astute commentator put it, “there is nothing that has the force of an uncompromising and powerful new entity. A Department of Homeland Security, with power and budgets and subordinate agencies, is also the only way to avoid the disconnected roots of Sept. 11. Only a department would have the ability to set changing priorities between a terrorist and non-terrorist focus, and prepare and respond accordingly.”<sup>13</sup>

Among the earlier and more prominent proposals for centralization is that of the Hart-Rudman Commission, released in early 2001. Prophetic in its anticipation of an “end [to] the relative invulnerability of the U.S. homeland to catastrophic attack,” the commission put forward “organizational realignment” as its centerpiece recommendation.

The President should propose and Congress should agree to create, a National Homeland Security Agency (NHSA) with responsibility for planning, coordinating, and integrating various U.S. government activities involved in homeland security. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should be a key building block in this effort. . . . The President should propose to Congress the transfer of the Customs Service, the Border Patrol, and the Coast Guard to the National Homeland Security Agency, while preserving them as distinct entities.<sup>14</sup>

This proposal was put forward in legislation by Representative Mac Thornberry (R-TX) earlier this year and has since the September 11 attack been endorsed in slightly different form by Senator Lieberman, chair of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. At hearings that Lieberman

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<sup>13</sup> William M. Arkin, “Protecting the United States,” *Washingtonpost.com*, October 7, 2001, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A21218-2001Oct7.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Hart-Rudman Commission, xiii, 13, 14.

called ten days after the attacks he called for consolidating and integrating many of homeland security activities in a “permanent, statutory agency” whose director would be a member of the president's cabinet. This should be “a robust agency, with budget and line authority, that could pull together anti-terrorism resources that are now widely scattered across government.”<sup>15</sup>

Critics are right about the problem, but their solution is inadequate to the task. Within the bold Hart-Rudman Report rested a fundamental contradiction: homeland security was the paramount challenge facing 21<sup>st</sup> Century America, but it was to be secured by pulling three significant but second-order operations—the border control, the customs service, and the coast guard—into an enhanced FEMA, a well-regarded agency whose prime role has been response to natural disasters. Inevitably, most of the 40-plus federal offices with pieces of the problem would be left outside the walls of the new entity.

More important, institutions and functions that are critical to the task *could not*, by their nature, be included. The FBI would necessarily remain in the Justice Department (and resistant to *its* authority). The Centers for Disease Control, indispensable to combating bioterrorism, would remain (also loosely) within the Department of Health and Human Services. Perhaps most important, the intelligence arms of domestic law enforcement, and the vast and relevant resources of the CIA and the NSA, could not possibly be brought under the direct authority of Governor Ridge or any Cabinet-level homeland security official. This means that the absolutely critical information about which individuals, groups, and materials require priority border (or immigration) attention will have to come from outside any conceivable homeland security agency.

The intelligence connection is part of a daunting broader reality—the need for any domestically-oriented security authorities to coordinate with international policy agencies and activities under the aegis of the National Security Council. And looking in the other organizational direction, it has to link up effectively with police, health, rescue, and other units under the authority of governors and mayors throughout the land.

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<sup>15</sup> “Lieberman Supports Creation of National Homeland Security Agency,” Press Release, September 21, 2001, available at <http://www.senate.gov/~lieberman/press/01/09/2001921C21.html>.

And even for organizational units brought within a new agency, formal inclusion does not guarantee effective integration. Upon his appointment, Ridge alluded to the problems of intra-governmental conflict when he declared, “The only turf we should be worried about protecting is the turf we stand on.”<sup>16</sup> This warning, alas, applies inside as well as outside organizational walls. Even the Hart-Rudman commission inadvertently sounded a cautionary note when it recommended integration with a caveat: “transfer of the Customs Service, the Border Patrol, and Coast Guard” should be undertaken “*while preserving them as distinct entities*” (emphasis added).<sup>17</sup> Units brought into the Department of Energy under President Jimmy Carter in 1977 remained dispersed for years across the capital area in separate offices, operating substantially as they did before. Almost twenty-five years later, integration at DOE is far from complete.

### **The Fundamental Need: Leadership, Coordination, and Mobilization**

Recall the basic organizational need: to address activities that are highly diffuse and decentralized. How to ensure the border guard makes the right decision is more important than whether his boss is responsible directly to a central homeland security official. In the end, the need is less for central direction, than having the right people in the right place working together in ways that make their individual efforts larger than the sum of their parts.

This requires senior government officials working together, and a process that maximizes incentives for them to do so. It therefore requires homeland security adviser Ridge to play his role so as to engage and reinforce his senior colleagues in their efforts to make their departments instruments of presidential counterterrorism policy. The attorney general, for example, is an absolutely critical player in homeland security, with oversight over the FBI, the INS, and law enforcement generally. He is likely to see himself as the plausible government-wide leader in the domestic response to September 11, just as the secretary of state sees himself, not without cause, as the leader (short of the president) in U.S. foreign policy. And he could well be threatened by how the homeland security adviser plays his role, just as successive secretaries of state have waged bitter

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<sup>16</sup> “Remarks of Governor Ridge at his Swearing in to Lead Homeland Security Agency,” October 8, 2001, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011008-3.html> (accessed October 2001).

<sup>17</sup> Hart-Rudman Commission, p. 14.

battles with the Henry Kissingers or Zbigniew Brzezinskis who operate thirty seconds' walk from the Oval Office. If Governor Ridge appears to be challenging AG John Ashcroft's role, the prospects for an effective, integrated campaign against terrorism will plunge precipitously.

Fortunately, the executive order creating Ridge's position also established the Homeland Security Council, and tasked it with "advising and assisting the president with respect to all aspects of homeland security [and] ensuring coordination of homeland security-related activities of executive departments and agencies and effective development and implementation of homeland security policies." The HSC is headed by the president, and the attorney general is prominent among its members.<sup>18</sup> The homeland security adviser is simultaneously a council member and the official tasked with managing the HSC process. This offers him a vehicle for engaging senior colleagues, the AG above all, at a time when he has maximal presidential support and attention.

A highly relevant model is the role played by Robert Rubin at the beginning of the Clinton administration. Like Ridge, he was appointed presidential assistant in an area of top administration priority—economic policy in his case. Like Ridge, he was assigned responsibility for a new coordinating council—the National Economic Council (NEC)—created at the same time as his new position. And like Ridge, he was tasked to get government moving in a policy area peopled with senior officials holding strong mandates and strong views. Had Rubin seen his role as the new president's "economic czar," one of issuing orders for other Clinton economic officials to carry out, his governmental life might have proved nasty, brutish, and short. Instead, he took the initiative in organizing internal debate on key issues, with a process designed to force presidential decisions, but one that assiduously reached out to the secretary and deputy secretary of the Treasury, the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the chair of the Council of Economic Advisers. He gave them key issues to present at a pivotal, pre-inauguration meeting with the president-elect in Little Rock, Arkansas. The meeting ended with one key decision made, with all

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<sup>18</sup> The language is from the executive order. Others named as full members are the vice president, the secretary of defense, the secretary of health and human services, the secretary of transportation, the director of FEMA, the FBI director, the director of central intelligence, and the assistant to the president for homeland security.

the Cabinet and deputy-level economic players engaged, and with Rubin's NEC neatly ensconced at the center of the economic policy process.<sup>19</sup>

Rubin gave the leaders of the economic agencies something they wanted and needed—visible participation in, and influence over, the most important decisions of Clinton's early presidency. In so doing, he strengthened their credibility and influence within their agencies, and in Washington generally. Moreover, this seems to have been a conscious, calculated strategy on Rubin's part: rather than the sparring for turf typical of all too many debates among senior officials, he wanted a positive-sum process in which all would come out feeling like winners even though they couldn't, of course, win all of the policy arguments.

Ridge and the HSC can do likewise. By using this vehicle, by taking the initiative but exercising power collegially, the homeland security adviser can achieve much more in coordinated anti-terrorist action than he can through any conceivable organizational consolidation.

His job is, to be sure, harder than that of his national security and economic counterparts in one crucial respect: they could target, mainly, presidential decisions and actions, whereas he must concern himself, mainly, with how the system operates at ground level. They could focus primarily on relations with a few key countries, or what the balance in the budget should be; he must concern himself with building a system that will make airplanes and food and water distribution facilities and public buildings and entire communities across the land less vulnerable to attack. They can concern themselves with the top. He must look to the periphery. It is a daunting task.

But it is not his alone. The attorney general needs to assure that the FBI and the INS take timely preventive action or pass information on to others who can do so. The HHS secretary needs the CDC to raise the priority it gives to preparing for, detecting, and countering biological weapons threats. By helping them connect these tasks to the president's anti-terrorism program, which he and they will craft together, the homeland security adviser can strengthen their abilities to influence

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<sup>19</sup> I. M. Destler, *The National Economic Council: A Work In Progress* (Institute for International Economics, Policy Analysis No. 46, November 1996), p. 14; Bob Woodward, *The Agenda: Inside the Clinton White House* (New York: Pocket Books, 1995), chap. 11.

those below them. The AG can, in turn, help the FBI director bring about necessary changes in that organization's deeply imbedded culture.

### **Learning from the NSC**

The Bush administration can also learn from the experience of the oldest and most successful of White House-based coordinating councils, the NSC. To be sure, the HSC's problems are harder in three crucial respects:

- Its primary impact must be at the bottom of the organizational pyramid, not the top.
- Its family of agencies lacks a culture of cooperation such as the NSC has nurtured over its fifty-plus years.
- Its effectiveness will depend on effective linkage with activities—like foreign intelligence—that will remain in the NSC, not the HSC, orbit.

Nonetheless, there are concrete lessons to be gleaned. One lesson is for Ridge to emulate the best of national security advisers, Brent Scowcroft, by broadly engaging the leaders of key federal agencies and helping them connect to the president and his agenda. We have shown how another presidential assistant (Robert Rubin) did this for another newly created council in an area of presidential priority. In Ridge's case, however, he must add to this effective mechanisms for federal-state-local cooperation, exploiting relationships he developed while governor of Pennsylvania.

Drawing on past NSC experience, Ridge should use the HSC as an umbrella to establish a network of formal and informal interagency coordinating structures. Of critical importance is establishing his formal authority as the chief coordinator of the interagency process. Accordingly, Ridge should convince the president to establish a process akin to the NSC structure for the HSC, consisting of: a Principals Committee, chaired by Ridge and composed of all HSC members aside from the president and vice president to make recommendations for a presidential decision; a Deputies Committee, chaired by Ridge's deputy and composed of the deputies of all departments and agencies that have a seat on the HSC, to handle operational coordination of priority initiatives and review problems and disputes referred to them from lower levels; and Policy Coordinating Committees, chaired by senior officials on Ridge's staff, to coordinate, at the assistant-secretary level, policy areas such as law enforcement, intelligence, protection of critical infrastructures,

bioterrorism threats and responses, cybersecurity, response and recovery, etc. By adopting this interagency model, Ridge and his team would, as the NSC case has shown, quickly gain the authority necessary for making effective coordination and mobilization possible.

The NSC experience also suggests the importance of supplementing formal channels of cooperation with informal channels. The best NSC processes worked well because the national security adviser worked closely and often informally with his or her key counterparts at State, Defense, and, sometimes, the CIA. When Colin Powell was national security adviser in the last year of the Reagan administration, he met with Secretary of State George Shultz and Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci each day at 7:00 a.m. in his office to coordinate their day. Condoleezza Rice talks to Secretaries Powell and Rumsfeld by phone in a daily morning call at 7:15 a.m. And nearly all NSC advisers since Brzezinski have convened weekly lunches or breakfasts with their counterparts to work issues in a less formal setting. Ridge should institute a similar set of regular, informal meetings with his key counterparts, including especially the attorney general and perhaps also the defense and treasury secretaries.

Finally, Ridge and his top White House colleagues need to address the unique coordinating challenges of dealing with a transnational phenomenon like terrorism with organizations that are structured along the foreign-domestic divide. A step in this direction has already been taken with the appointment of two officials—General Wayne Downing as a deputy national security adviser for combating terrorism and Richard Clarke as special adviser to the president for cybersecurity—who will report directly to both the homeland security adviser and the national security adviser. But there must also be good coordination at the top, suggesting that Rice and Ridge meet and talk frequently. There is also room for regular “CRR” (Card-Rice-Ridge) meetings in the White House, connecting the two key assistants with the president’s chief of staff.

Ridge can further emulate national security advisers by using a device they have found particularly effective early in their tenures—commissioning analyses of first-order issues requiring presidential decision. This would involve the issuance of Homeland Security Study Directives (HSSDs) tasking interagency groups to present specific options, defined not as agency preferences but as real, alternative ways of addressing key problems. Some HSSDs could address questions of structure and process (organization, budget authority, intelligence-collection and sharing and

analysis). Some could address particular broad tasks—prevention, damage-limitation, countering particular threats like biological and chemical agents, cooperative law enforcement, etc. Such studies would be discussed and debated at HSC meetings chaired by the president, followed by his choosing among the options presented—which would then be codified in a Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD).

Commissioning such policy reviews in the early months of the new office and council serves several related goals. It gives the adviser the initiative in policy development. It engages other departments and agencies in the critical task of formulating realistic choices. It increases the chances for wise policy. And it connects the adviser/HSC to the president at a time when the chief executive is giving top priority and attention to homeland security issues.

As these specifics show, what the homeland security director most needs to do is to embrace and exploit his role as cross-government coordinator and mobilizer. He must conceive of himself not as a “czar” issuing orders, but as a leader working with and energizing his peers in doing their common work. Within this framework, however, three additional steps should be considered. One is limited organizational consolidation. A second is oversight of home-security-related agency budgets. A third is statutory authority.

### **Organizational and Budgetary Reform**

Conventional reorganization cannot be the *main* route to effectiveness for Governor Ridge, for it is impossible for him to secure direct authority over more than a fraction of the activities his office must seek to shape. Hence a coordination-mobilization strategy is essential. Within that framework, however, the homeland security assistant’s influence might be enhanced by some formal organizational changes.

In this context, the Hart-Rudman recommendation, inadequate as the main solution, bears revisiting as a supplemental measure. Consideration should be given to combining, in one agency, the customs service, border patrol, Coast Guard, and perhaps the likely-to-be-federalized function of airport security. The director of this new agency should have a seat at the HSC table, and its staff must be an integral part of the Ridge-led HSC coordination process. Farther out on the range of

possibilities for organizational transfer are the immigration and visa-granting functions of INS and the Department of State. Another possibility worth investigating in more detail is the possible creation of a new intelligence service for counter-terrorism.

The homeland security assistant might be given a strong role in the executive branch's budget process. Working with the OMB director, he might be directed by the president to review the budgets of counter-terrorism units across government and make changes, subject to override by the OMB director (or in the strongest version, only by the president himself).

Finally, the president might accede to congressional interest in statutory action by agreeing to legislation establishing the HSC in law (rather than, as present, just by executive order). In the current political environment, the administration might well be able to get a relatively clean law free of unwanted congressional add-ons. If this is a possibility, the president will want to consider whether he would like the office Ridge heads to be formally like some other EOP units (OMB, USTR) whose heads are subject to Senate confirmation and who testify regularly before the legislature. This could well enhance his ability to deal with members of Congress and other elected officials—from governors and mayors to county commissioners. Balanced against this is the danger Ridge would become over-encumbered with demands from Capitol Hill, thereby reducing his flexibility and usefulness as a presidential adviser.

## **Conclusion**

Leading the homeland to greater security against terrorism is a daunting challenge. Any new leader and organization would have to, simultaneously, act boldly to establish their authority and feel their way as they learn what works and what does not. For reasons detailed above, it is best to conceive of the task *not* as one of organizational centralization and consolidation, but rather cross-governmental coordination, mobilization, and leadership, with priority to establishing collaborative, positive-sum personal relationships at senior levels.

If the task is undertaken in this manner, there is room for cautious optimism. With the support and attention of the president—and the nation—Governor Ridge and his Bush

administration colleagues could make real headway in strengthening our capacity to meet the first great challenge of our 21<sup>st</sup> century.