

# Web Memo



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## Countdown to 9/11: Five Fixes for Homeland Security by the Fifth Anniversary of the Attacks

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(Part 1 in a series)

There has not been a successful terrorist attack on U.S. soil since the strikes in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001—almost five years ago. It took at least five years to plan the 9/11 attacks. While much has been done to make the nation safer since 2001, the agenda for homeland security is still unfinished. In particular, there are five steps that should have been taken within a year of 9/11 that are still not complete. These steps are fundamental to building the security infrastructure that the nation needs for the long term. The coming anniversary of the 9/11 attacks is a reminder of the urgency for the administration and Congress to act.

### **1. Create an Undersecretary for Policy in DHS**

Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff rightly sought to establish an Undersecretary for Policy within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to conduct program analysis, perform long-range strategic planning, and undertake net assessments. He has already established a Directorate of Policy under Assistant Secretary for Policy Stewart A. Baker. Now, Congress must elevate Baker's position to

the undersecretary level and ensure that his office is fully manned and funded.

### **2. Reform the Grant Formulas**

Washington's approach to funding state and local security has been flawed from the start. The Patriot Act requires a significant portion of homeland security grants to be divided among the states without regard to need or risk. Though DHS is attempting to implement Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8, which requires it to establish national performance standards, measure readiness, and allocate funds based on national priorities, lawmakers' failure to abolish or reduce the minimum grants to states hinder this effort. As a result, 40 percent of the state grants are simply entitlements. As the 9/11 Commission's report accurately stated, the current system is in danger of turning homeland security grants into "pork barrel funding."

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
<http://www.heritage.org/HomelandDefense/wm963.cfm>

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Grants should not be based on past funding or state population, but based on risk, vulnerability, and national priorities. Congress should repeal or substantially reduce the congressionally mandated state minimums.

### **3. Increase Coast Guard Modernization Funding**

Appropriators on Capitol Hill have doggedly held to the belief that giving money to ports across the U.S. bolsters maritime security. This is incorrect. If deadly cargo such as a nuclear bomb or a biological agent reaches American shores, it will be too late. Maritime security means preventing dangerous cargo from ever entering a U.S. port, and this is the domain of the U.S. Coast Guard. Yet the Coast Guard's modernization program is seriously underfunded. To make matters worse, since 9/11, increased activities are wearing out Coast Guard equipment much faster than anticipated. The Coast Guard needs at least \$1.5 billion per year for modernization.

### **4. Enact Comprehensive Immigration and Border Security Reform**

Secretary Chertoff's Secure Border Initiative, announced in November 2005, is a positive step but not enough on its own. Illegal crossings are only a part of the problem; after all, every 9/11 hijacker entered the country legally. Some, however, remained here after their visas expired, joining the country's burgeoning illegal population, which includes smugglers, criminals, and terrorists.

Effective reform must focus not only on curbing illegal entry through stronger border security, but also on internal law enforcement, economic factors, individual liberties, and international cooperation. Nothing less than a comprehensive package from Congress will do.

### **5. Create Regional Outreach Offices in DHS**

The country needs a national homeland security system that mobilizes state and local governments and public safety officials as partners in intelligence, emergency response, and domestic counterterrorism. For more effective coordination between these different levels of government, DHS should create regional field offices, as required by the Homeland Security Act of 2002.

#### **The Clock is Ticking**

These measures should have been among the first steps taken by the administration and Congress after 9/11. They are basic to the national security system that the nation needs for the 21st century. If they are not in place by the fifth anniversary of 9/11, the government's priorities are misplaced.

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