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your States and explaining to our citizens, our fellow citizens, what's ahead. This country is patient, and this country is united, and this country is plenty tough when it comes to defending that which we hold dear. And a lot of it has to do with what you do when you go home, and I want to thank you for that a lot. It means a lot.

It is much easier to be the Commander in Chief when the people are pulling in the same direction. And they're pulling in the same direction, much to the chagrin of the enemy.

So it's our great pleasure to welcome you here. I know sometimes we have squabbles with the legislative branch. If only you did it the way the Vice President and I wanted you to do it, everything would be fine. [*Laughter*] But I admire—I admire those who serve in the Senate and the House. I admire your steadfast love of democracy, and I appreciate so very much your love of our country.

May God bless your work, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Perini, chuckwagon cook, Perini Ranch Steakhouse.

Address to the Nation on the Proposed Department of Homeland Security
June 6, 2002

Good evening. During the next few minutes, I want to update you on the progress we are making in our war against terror and to propose sweeping changes that will strengthen our homeland against the ongoing threat of terrorist attacks.

Nearly 9 months have passed since the day that forever changed our country. Debris from what was once the World Trade Center has been cleared away in a hundred thousand truckloads. The west side of the Pentagon looks almost as it did on September the 10th. And as children finish school and families prepare for summer vacations, for many life seems almost normal.

Yet, we are a different nation today, sadder and stronger, less innocent and more courageous, more appreciative of life, and for many who serve our country, more willing to risk life in a great cause. For those who have lost family and friends, the pain will never go away, and neither will the responsibilities that day thrust upon all of us.

America is leading the civilized world in a titanic struggle against terror. Freedom and fear are at war, and freedom is winning. Tonight over 60,000 American troops are deployed around the world in the war against terror: more than 7,000 in Afghanistan; others in the Philippines, Yemen, and the Republic of Georgia, to train local forces. Next week Afghanistan will begin selecting a representative government, even as American troops, along with our allies, still continuously raid remote Al Qaida hiding places.

Among those we have captured is a man named Abu Zubaydah, Al Qaida's chief of operations. From him and from hundreds of others, we are learning more about how the terrorists plan and operate, information crucial in anticipating and preventing future attacks.

Our coalition is strong. More than 90 nations have arrested or detained over 2,400 terrorists and their supporters. More than 180 countries have offered or are providing assistance in the war on terrorism. And our military is strong and prepared to oppose any emerging threat to the American people.

Every day in this war will not bring the drama of liberating a country. Yet, every day brings new information, a tip or arrest, another step or two or three in a relentless march to bring security to our Nation and justice to our enemies.

Every day I review a document called the threat assessment. It summarizes what our intelligence services and key law enforcement agencies have picked up about terrorist activity. Sometimes the information is very general, vague talk, bragging about future attacks. Sometimes the information is more specific, as in a recent case when an Al Qaida detainee said attacks were planned against financial institutions.

When credible intelligence warrants, appropriate law enforcement and local officials are alerted. These warnings are, unfortunately, a new reality in American life, and we have recently seen an increase in the volume of general threats. Americans should continue to do what you're doing. Go about your lives, but pay attention to your surroundings. Add your eyes and ears to the protection of our homeland.

In protecting our country, we depend on the skill of our people, the troops we send to battle, intelligence operatives who risk their lives for bits of information, law enforcement officers who sift for clues and search for suspects. We are now learning that before September the 11th, the suspicions and insights of some of our frontline agents did not get enough attention.

My administration supports the important work of the intelligence committees in Congress to review the activities of law enforcement and intelligence agencies. We need to know when warnings were missed or signs unheeded, not to point the finger or blame but to make sure we correct any problems and prevent them from happening again.

Based on everything I've seen, I do not believe anyone could have prevented the horror of September the 11th. Yet, we now know that thousands of trained killers are plotting to attack us, and this terrible knowledge requires us to act differently.

If you're a frontline worker for the FBI, the CIA, some other law enforcement or intelligence agency and you see something that raises suspicions, I want you to report it immediately. I expect your supervisors to treat it with the seriousness it deserves. Information must be fully shared so we can follow every lead to find the one that may prevent tragedy.

I applaud the leaders and employees at the FBI and CIA for beginning essential reforms. They must continue to think and act differently to defeat the enemy.

The first and best way to secure America's homeland is to attack the enemy where he hides and plans, and we're doing just that. We're also taking significant steps to strengthen our homeland protections, securing cockpits, tightening our borders, stockpiling vaccines, increasing security at water treatment and nuclear powerplants.

After September the 11th, we needed to move quickly, and so I appointed Tom Ridge as my Homeland Security Adviser. As Governor Ridge has worked with all levels of government to prepare a national strategy and as we have learned more about the plans and capabilities of the terrorist network, we have concluded that our Government must be reorganized to deal more effectively with the new threats of the 21st century. So tonight I ask the Congress to join me in creating a single, permanent department with an overriding and urgent mission, securing the homeland of America and protecting the American people.

Right now as many as a hundred different Government agencies have some responsibilities for homeland security, and no one has final accountability. For example, the Coast Guard has several missions, from search and rescue to maritime treaty enforcement. It reports to the Transportation Department, whose primary responsibilities are roads, rails, bridges, and the airways. The Customs Service, among other duties, collects tariffs and prevents smuggling, and

it is part of the Treasury Department, whose primary responsibility is fiscal policy, not security.

Tonight I propose a permanent Cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security to unite essential agencies that must work more closely together: Among them, the Coast Guard, the Border Patrol, the Customs Service, Immigration officials, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Employees of this new agency will come to work every morning knowing their most important job is to protect their fellow citizens.

The Department of Homeland Security will be charged with four primary tasks: This new agency will control our borders and prevent terrorists and explosives from entering our country; it will work with State and local authorities to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies; it will bring together our best scientists to develop technologies that detect biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, and to discover the drugs and treatments to best protect our citizens; and this new Department will review intelligence and law enforcement information from all agencies of Government and produce a single daily picture of threats against our homeland. Analysts will be responsible for imagining the worst and planning to counter it.

The reason to create this Department is not to create the size of Government but to increase its focus and effectiveness. The staff of this new Department will be largely drawn from the agencies we are combining. By ending duplication and overlap, we will spend less on overhead and more on protecting America. This reorganization will give the good people of our Government their best opportunity to succeed by organizing our resources in a way that is thorough and unified.

What I am proposing tonight is the most extensive reorganization of the Federal Government since the 1940s. During his Presidency, Harry Truman recognized that our Nation's fragmented defenses had to be reorganized to win the cold war. He proposed uniting our military forces under a single Department of Defense and creating the National Security Council to bring together defense, intelligence, and diplomacy. Truman's reforms are still helping us to fight terror abroad, and now we need similar dramatic reforms to secure our people at home.

Only the United States Congress can create a new department of Government. So tonight I ask for your help in encouraging your Representatives to support my plan. We face an urgent need, and we must move quickly, this year, before the end of the congressional session. All in our Government have learned a great deal since September the 11th, and we must act on every lesson. We are stronger and better prepared tonight than we were on that terrible morning, and with your help and the support of the Congress, we will be stronger still.

History has called our Nation into action. History has placed a great challenge before us: Will America, with our unique position and power, blink in the face of terror, or will we lead to a freer, more civilized world? There's only one answer: This great country will lead the world to safety, security, peace, and freedom.

Thank you for listening. Good night, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters
June 7, 2002

Department of Homeland Security

The President. I want to welcome Members of the Senate and the House, members of both political parties, to the Cabinet Room this morning to discuss how best to implement the strategy that I talked about last night, that other Members of Congress have been talking about for awhile, and that is the development of the Department of Homeland Security.

We've got a lot of work to do to get this Department implemented. There's going to be a lot of turf protection in the Congress. But I'm convinced that by working together, that we can do what's right for America, and I believe we can get something done.

To this end, I'm going to direct Tom Ridge to testify before Congress about the need for the establishment of this Cabinet agency. I feel strongly that he is the—he can represent the interests of the administration on the Hill, and he can bring our message to the Hill.

And I look forward to working with Senators Lieberman and Specter and Members of the House to get this important legislation passed. Obviously, the sooner the debate begins, the sooner the passage of this bill can happen. And that's good for the country.

Again, I want to thank the Members who are here. I want to thank you for your leadership on this issue. Thank you for your willingness to speak out about the importance of protecting our homeland.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Yes, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press]?

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Thank you. If I could look ahead the next couple days, it's been a couple months now since you asked all the parties to step up in the Middle East, and there are still suicide bombings, still the incursions by the Israelis. Is there any hope for any progress in the next couple days with the President of Egypt and the Prime Minister of Israel?

The President. Yes, I mean, we're going to have good discussions, and that's always important. George Tenet has just come back from the Middle East. Ambassador Burns is coming back from the Middle East. There's been consultation with all the parties. And after my meetings with President Mubarak and Prime Minister Sharon, I'll talk to our country about how I think we should move forward.

Progress is being made. The Arab world now understands they need to be involved in pushing for peace and fighting against the terrorist actions that have—that make it very difficult to achieve a peace.

I still am disappointed in Mr. Arafat's leadership. He needs to cut off the terrorist activities.

Q. So you're talking about a speech on the Middle East?

The President. Well, I don't know if it'll be a speech. It may be a discussion. It could be a paper. I haven't decided the forum.

Q. But you'll lay out a new vision?

The President. No. I'm going to lay out—listen, if you're interested to know what I think, go back to the April 4th speech.

Department of Homeland Security

Q. Mr. President, how are you going to deal with some of the turf battles that come up? And what led you to change your mind about a Cabinet agency?

The President. Well, first of all, I have always been—ever since we first got going, I've been exploring this idea. My mind was never made up one way or the other. I knew I needed to act right after September the 11th, and that's why I called upon Tom