

THE FAILED REPUBLICAN RECORD: HOMELAND SECURITY

BUSH-CHENEY BUDGET CUTS AIR MARSHALS PROGRAM BY 20 PERCENT

The Bush-Cheney budget for the coming year includes a 20 percent reduction in the number of air marshals (which is classified), compared to the number Bush wanted immediately after 9/11. Additionally, last May, the Administration proposed reducing funding for air marshals and using it to fund wasteful spending at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). In one case, the DHS Inspector General revealed that TSA wasted \$7 million on duplicate screener background checks.

HOMELAND SECURITY DEPARTMENT OVERHEARD COSTS ON THE RISE

While the Bush-Cheney White House claimed the Department would reduce duplication and overhead, the Administration proposed to increase funding for departmental operations by 92 percent in the coming year. The bulk of this increase is for manager training and the implementation of the Department's proposed new personnel system. Funding requested for the new human resource system totals \$133.5 million.

DESPITE UNPRECEDENTED FLEXIBILITY, DHS NOT FULLY STAFFED

Congress provided the Bush-Cheney Administration with unprecedented flexibility to hire needed Homeland Security staff, yet, more than one year after the Department's formation, almost 30 percent of the key DHS positions in human resources, budget, and legal offices remain unfilled. At the same time, political appointees now make up one-quarter of all Departmental management staff.

BUSH-CHENEY PROVIDE LITTLE FUNDING FOR AVIATION TECHNOLOGY

Days after 9/11, President Bush promised the American people new investments in aviation technology, including transponders that cannot be switched off from the cockpit, cabin video monitors to assist pilots, and systems to allow controllers to take over distressed aircraft and land them by remote control. To date, less than \$2 million has been invested in this technology. There have been no investments in transponders that cannot be switched off from the cockpit or systems to allow controllers to take over distressed aircraft. Only last fall was \$10 million provided to the Defense Department so that military pilots and air traffic controllers can talk to one another. Squabbling between the Defense Department and FAA will delay the system's operability until 2006.

BAGGAGE SCREENING REMAINS INADEQUATE

As the 9/11 Commission clearly pointed out, we do not screen airline passengers for explosives. Even the mandate to screen all checked baggage with explosive detection machines has not been met. GAO reported: "Of the airports reporting that they were not screening 100 percent of checked baggage using ETD and EDS [new explosive detection machines], the number of consecutive days that they were not conducting this screening ranged from 1 to 371 days."

MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF AIR CARGO REMAIN UNSCREENED

No system exists to screen 100% of the cargo carried on passenger airlines. Up until a few months ago, Department of Homeland Security did not even know who all the "known shippers" are and these shippers are allowed to put cargo on passenger aircraft and most of it is not screened for explosives.

DEPORTATION BACKLOG CONTINUES TO GROW, ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS RELEASED

In early 2002, President Bush stated: “The INS estimates that 40 percent of the people who are here illegally have overstayed their visa ... And one of the things we want to make sure of is we find the 40 percent...” Yet more than one year later, there was a 396,000-person backlog that is estimated to grow by 40,000 a year. Lack of detention space has also resulted in the release of thousands of illegal immigrants into the U.S. from countries other than Mexico.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DRIVERS REMAIN UNCHECKED

The Bush-Cheney has failed to implement the Patriot Act mandate that all applicants for hazardous materials licenses be screened and does not plan to do so until January 2005 – more than 3 years after the requirement became law. In fact, Bush-Cheney policies require more thorough checks of airline passengers than of those who drive trucks filled with materials that could kill tens of thousands of people.

CHEMICAL PLANTS UNPROTECTED, DESPITE BUSH-CHENEY ASSURANCES

In February, DHS published procedures for voluntary submission of vulnerability information from the private sector, including chemical facilities. DHS has received only very few submissions from the private sector. The GAO in a March 2003 report concluded, “The federal government has not comprehensively assessed the chemical industry’s vulnerabilities to terrorist attacks. ... Consequently, federal, state and local entities lack comprehensive information on the vulnerabilities facing the industry.”

EVEN AFTER MADRID BOMBING, NO PLAN FOR TRANSIT SECURITY

The General Accounting Office recommended that the White House resolve the issue of who – DOT or DHS – is in charge of transit security. Nothing has been done to resolve this. While DOT funding of transit security totals \$37 million in 2004 and DHS has allocated \$115 million over the past two years, the transit industry estimates that \$6 billion is needed for security training, radio communications systems, security cameras and limited access to sensitive facilities. DHS responded that more funds are not necessary until they have a better opportunity to define the problem. Then DHS issued a security directive that basically told transit agencies to do what they are already doing.

UNDER BUSH-CHENEY, PORT SECURITY REMAINS UNDERFUNDED

The coming year’s budget is the first time Bush has ever specifically asked for port security grant funding, yet Bush proposed to cut this funding by over 60 percent below the \$124 million Congress provided last year, despite the President’s objection. The Coast Guard estimated in 2002 that at least \$7 billion would be needed to make port security improvements. Congress – in the absence of presidential leadership – has provided \$587 million to improve port security since 2001. Yet this is less than 10 percent of the total investment needed.

DESPITE BUSH-CHENEY CLAIMS, CONTAINER SECURITY INSUFFICIENTLY SUPPORTED

Bush requested no money for the Container Security Initiative (CSI) – which shifts suspicious container inspections overseas before the may enter the U.S. – in 2002 or 2003. Bush’s own Customs Commissioner said that he needed \$57 million to fully fund the initial phase of the program. When Congress provided \$39 million for it, Bush vetoed it. Despite no request from Bush, the Congress provided this \$57 million the following year. Only last year did the Bush-Cheney Administration request \$62 million for the CSI program, which Congress provided. Today, only a small percentage of cargo that is loaded on ships at foreign ports is inspected before it leaves these ports.

BUSH-CHENEY CUT FIRST RESPONDER FUNDING TWO YEARS RUNNING

Both this year and last, Bush proposed to cut funding levels for first responders. The funding reductions proposed by Bush total \$2.3 billion last year (37 percent) and \$1.2 billion this year (22 percent), primarily for law enforcement and firefighters. Bush recommended these cuts even in light a recent survey found that only 13 percent of fire departments are prepared to respond to a hazmat incident. In addition, an estimated 57,000 firefighters lack personal protective clothing needed in a chem-bio attack, 1/3 of firefighters per shift are not equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus and nearly half of the available units are 10 years old. Additionally, only half of all emergency responders on shift have portable radios.

BUSH-CHENEY UNDERFUND NORTHERN BORDER SECURITY

Since 9/11, Congress provided an additional \$308 million to beef up security on our northern border, and to add border patrol agents, inspectors and equipment. Bush requested only one-third of this funding. While the Patriot Act, passed in 2001, called for a tripling of inspectors and agents on our Northern Border, Bush has never proposed a budget that would meet this goal. Today, only one in 10 border patrol agents is assigned to guard the northern border, which is almost three times as long as the southern border. Today, there are almost 2,000 fewer inspectors than called for three years ago and the White House still has no plan identifying how many more agents and inspectors are needed and how much new technology is required to adequately guard our northern border.

STILL NO CONSOLIDATED TERRORIST WATCH LIST

Today, there is no fully consolidated terrorist watch list and twelve watch lists need to be checked. The task of consolidating lists has been shifted from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to the Terrorist Threat Integration Center, and now to the Terrorist Screening Center (TSC). While the TSC has developed a pointer system where only one call needs to be made to the TSC to see if a name is on any of these lists, the U.S. still does not have a single consolidated watch list.

BUSH-CHENEY FUZZY MATH ON HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

In early 2002, President Bush claimed to have doubled homeland security funding. Yet before 9/11, many of today's homeland security programs did not exist, making a comparison to pre-9/11 funding levels meaningless. For example, the Transportation Security Administration, for which Congress has provided \$15 billion since 2002, was not created until after 9/11. Additionally, the Administration creates the appearance of homeland security funding increases by simply redefining what programs it considers to be part of homeland security efforts. For example, last year Congress provided \$746 million for firefighter grants and Bush classified it as non-homeland security funding. This year, the President requested \$500 million for firefighter grants, but he now classifies it as homeland security funding. By re-labeling the request the president creates the appearance of an increase in homeland security funding when he is proposing to cut it, in the case of firefighter grants, by 35 percent.

###