

A Social Infrastructure for Hometown Security

Evolving the Homeland Security Paradigm

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The United States, through a concerted national effort that galvanizes the strengths and capabilities of Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments; the private and non-profit sectors; and regions, communities, and individual citizens – along with our partners in the international community – will work to achieve a secure Homeland that sustains our way of life as a free, prosperous, and welcoming America.

– Vision Statement, 2007 National Strategy for Homeland Security¹

The Nation's homeland security strategy calls on federal, state, and local governments, businesses, communities and individuals across the country to work together to achieve a shared vision of a secure way of life. Yet, for over seven years, through attacks, threats, and disasters, the core ingredient in efforts to achieve that goal remains elusive.² The American public has been left out and is largely missing in action.

In this paper we argue that this elusiveness persists because of a misdiagnosis of the way the American people experience homeland security practices, inappropriate application of border screening and verification techniques to domestic public life, and an incomplete strategic preparedness framework that relies excessively on top-down federal management. We argue for a new approach that engages the American people in ways that invites their participation in understanding, assessing, and mitigating risk. New community oriented techniques are needed that draw heavily on community policing models and public health philosophies; and we urge the federal government to invert its strategic planning and funding processes, seizing the moment and leveraging the restructuring of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other priorities as opportunities to put communities first. The new Administration has issued a national call to service. This call offers an opportunity to invest in a social infrastructure for homeland security that will bring the American people fully into strengthening their own preparedness.

ELUSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Nation's leaders often acknowledge a critical role for the American public in homeland security, but how to achieve it has proven elusive. Just two months after the 9/11 attacks, for instance, President Bush called on Americans "to serve by bettering our communities and, thereby, defy and

¹ Homeland Security Council, National Strategy for Homeland Security, 2007, 13.

² Amanda J. Dory, "American Civil Security: The U.S. Public and Homeland Security," *The Washington Quarterly* • 27:1, 2003, pp. 37–52.

defeat the terrorists.”³ A few years later, Homeland Security Secretary, Tom Ridge, reiterated the call: “President Bush has said, ‘The true strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens.’ He is absolutely right. The federal government cannot micro-manage the protection of America. Instead, homeland security must become a priority in every city, every neighborhood, every home, and with every citizen.”⁴

Yet, after Hurricane Katrina it became clear that many Americans were unprepared and uninvolved. The White House’s own after action report pointedly advised that, “[w]e as a Nation - Federal, State, and local governments; the private sector; as well as communities and individual citizens - have not developed a shared vision of or commitment to *preparedness*... Without a shared vision ... we will not achieve a truly transformational *national* state of preparedness.”⁵

The urgency to overcome this missing link is clear. Yet, misdiagnosis of the problem obstructs urgent action. The problem is not, as many emergency managers and security officials lament, the emergence of a “nanny society” that thrives on a general atmosphere of dependence on government aid that has eliminated individuals’ abilities and willingness to seek opportunities and accept responsibilities. Forced into a nanny role, the argument goes, federal and state officials must repeatedly remind local residents that they are on “on their own” for 72 to 96 hours before the government can reach them and provide assistance.

Rather, government officials and the public fundamentally misunderstand and mistrust each other. The American public, for instance, is much more interested in preparing for emergencies than government officials believe. Recent polling shows that a large majority of Americans nationwide have paid attention and gained information about terrorist threats.⁶ The problem is that they do not fully trust the government to inform them correctly or to deliver on its promises. They also do not know what to do to prepare effectively, having been told simply to live their normal lives⁷ and prepare individual ready kits⁸ that provide little confidence of protection in the face of large and uncertain risks. Most importantly, though, research suggests that the reasons why people do not behave the way government plans expect them to is that local residents and communities do not hold the same views and expectations that government planners believe they do. In short, government planners are out of touch with local residents. They are ill-informed about the very public that they lament does not care or listen to their instructions.⁹

³ President George W. Bush, November 8, 2001. Quoted in NCPC, page 1, National Crime Prevention Council, January 2002.

⁴ Homeland Security Secretary Ridge Speaks About the Patriot Act. Prepared Remarks of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge at the Allegheny County Emergency Operations Center, July 15, 2004.

⁵ The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned, 66.

⁶ Kano, Megumi, Michele M. Wood, Dennis S. Mileti, and Linda B. Bourque, *Public Response to Terrorism. Findings from the National Survey of Disaster Experiences and Preparedness*. Regents of the University of California. November 12, 2008.

⁷ An example is President Bush’s statement: ...Get on board. Do your business around the country. Fly and enjoy America’s great destination spots. Get down to Disney World in Florida. Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed. – Remarks by President Bush at O’Hare International Airport, September 27, 2001.

⁸ Department of Homeland Security Press Release launching a Citizen Preparedness Campaign urging all Americans to, “make a kit, make a plan, and be informed,” February 19, 2003.

⁹ Lasker, Roz D. “Redefining Readiness: Terrorism Planning Through the Eyes of the Public;” Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health, New York Academy of Medicine, September 14, 2004.

Lack of trust, perceived misplaced investments, repeated alerts to risks that are not explained, and bungled emergency responses have driven a deep division between federal government strategies and the willingness of the American public to embrace them. Even federal emergency officials accept this condition. FEMA Administrator Paulson, for instance, blames the agency's response to Katrina for a current lack of public confidence and admits that it will be difficult to earn the public's trust. "I don't know if people are going to believe what I tell them," he says, "and maybe they shouldn't."¹⁰

As candidate for President, then Senator Obama pushed hard on the need to overcome this division, issuing a call for the American public "to step into the strong current of history"¹¹ He chastised previous efforts that failed to mobilize communities across the land. Referring to Americans' readiness to serve after the 9/11 attacks, he said, "We were ready...to answer a new call for our country, but the call never came." "Instead of a call to service, we were asked to go shopping."¹²

By most accounts, the likely security challenges in the next few years will demand much greater involvement of the public, not only to sustain public support for large-scale funding, but more importantly, because the public will be crucial to greater effectiveness in preventing and responding to these threats. The treacherous currents ahead include homegrown terrorism and domestic radicalization; and as a recent bipartisan Congressional report on future threats emphasized, pandemic illness, whether natural or manmade, poses an almost certain threat in the next few years.¹³ Difficult crosscurrents ahead will also require emergency response and recovery strategies that do not depend on large-scale federal deployments ahead of every threatening storm. Effectiveness in each situation will fall as much if not more on the capacities of local communities, neighbors and families, than on federal response teams and billions of dollars of new equipment. The challenge is to understand how to engage the public *collectively and on a large scale* across the Nation to build this capacity.

TRANSFORMING THE MISSION

A first step in transforming homeland security strategy is to recognize that current efforts undermine preparedness every bit as much as they support it. Paradoxically, the successes of government initiatives in the last few years, and there have been many, have also made more evident and urgent the need to reach well beyond top-down governmental approaches. Progress in developing a "national management system," emanating from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has also decreased the participation of a broad range of joint decision-makers in communities across the country. Community engagement has been left to become a 'nice thing to do,' rather than to take its proper place as the cornerstone of effective security.¹⁴

¹⁰ Brad Heath, "Deeply set disturbance within American communities and the American faith in its government and core institutions," USA TODAY, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-05-09-emergencies_N.htm, 2007.

¹¹ Jonathan Weisman, "Obama Calls for National Service Democrat Visiting GOP Strongholds," Washington Post, Thursday, July 3, 2008; A04.

¹² Ibid, A04.

¹³ *World at Risk: The Report of the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism*. New York: Random House, December 2008.

¹⁴ Dallek reports on a study conducted after World War II that shows that local organizational preparedness during peacetime was the most effective strategy for saving lives from conventional attacks, Dallek, Matthew, "Civic Security. Why FDR's bottom-up brand of civic defense should inspire progressive plans for homeland security today," Democracyjournal.org, winter 2008, page 16.

After 9/11, the Nation's homeland security strategy focused heavily on governmental initiatives, primarily at the federal level, to improve information and intelligence sharing, screen persons and cargo entering the United States, harden critical assets, and improve government response capabilities. As is often noted, these initiatives launched the largest growth in the federal bureaucracy since World War II, founding entirely new mammoth agencies such as the Transportation Security Administration, DHS, U.S. Northern Command, and the Office of the Director for National Intelligence. All were designed to ensure the internal security of the U.S. homeland and to prosecute a Global War on Terror abroad. But they also involved top-down management systems and military-style command and control strategies in planning and implementation, often focusing on a doctrine of offense and preemption. As President Bush stated in his September 20, 2001 address to a joint session of Congress, "We will take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans....These measures are essential. But the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows."¹⁵

These largely impressive efforts to stand-up a new federal bureaucracy, however, have created a vast divide between a homeland security enterprise, with all the power and wealth of large government and corporate engagement, and the experiences of the American public. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the way that security measures have been implemented at our Nation's borders and within the United States. The current homeland security paradigm's offensive and defensive strategies converge at the Nation's borders in a layered system-of-systems approach to screening and verification of all things deemed a potential risk. The strategy and its tools promote early detection of potential threats, allowing time to analyze them and respond before reaching U.S. shores, and providing repeated opportunities to catch threats that successfully avoid an earlier screen. This strategy works well at the border where—starting with forward deployment overseas—the layered system of surveillance, screening, and analysis monitors and approves shipping, cargo, and people attempting to breach the Nation's perimeter. Under the circumstances, the strategy also optimizes efficiencies; as former Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, Admiral James Loy has described it, the approach does not "look for a needle in a haystack, but lifts the hay from the needle."¹⁶

However, as it has been applied to the American public—individuals and communities *inside* the United States—this screening, verification and approval approach is in conflict with a core value and faith of American democracy—the presumption of innocence. Subjecting Americans to numerous screening activities alone, as in what has become normal behavior at airports, is not necessarily the problem. Nor is increased use of new intrusive technology, much of which could be made more compatible with civil liberties and privacy protections. Rather, discarding the presumption of innocence, even if unintentional, is what does damage to public trust and engagement in homeland security. Walking through a public airport by itself, for instance, does not evoke particular privacy rights. But an individual does have a strong expectation that, in behaving normally, he or she is not considered a risk and therefore presumed guilty until screened.

Applying border strategies to the interior of the United States, as currently practiced, undermines the willingness of Americans to work with a government that has *de facto* raised questions about their trustworthiness. These strategies focus on passivity, not engagement, on technical expertise rather than public understanding, and on classified information rather than on transparency. This approach makes Americans more dependent on governmental protection, ceding their own personal security to bureaucratic skillfulness. In a real sense, the current homeland security strategy creates the very

¹⁵ Address by President Bush to Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001.

¹⁶ See Admiral Loy's testimony before the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Tuesday, January 27, 2004, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

dependence on government and the feelings of powerlessness that officials then misdiagnose as complacency, apathy and denial. Feeling at risk in everyday, normal behavior runs counter to the common sense vision of what Americans believe is a secure homeland. And, as Administration officials observed after Hurricane Katrina, without such a vision the Nation will not be prepared.

The way around this conundrum is not to abandon all screening, but to have citizens fully aware and engaged in why and how the screening and surveillance occurs. This calls for new approaches not borrowed from border screening and surveillance but ones that turn to community involvement and civic engagement as the skills needed to secure the homeland. Unfortunately, all that Americans have been offered is generalized information and abstract advice through web sites and marketing campaigns (e.g., www.Ready.gov) and an underfunded suite of programs aimed at increasing volunteer action that have reached, at best, one percent of local residents. Americans have not been engaged in the kind of joint decision-making and cooperative planning for homeland security that fully engages local communities.

Top-down national management initiatives and frameworks weaken the Nation's preparedness and communities' safety because they do not generate action among those who must perform well for the security effort to succeed. Fortunately, we can learn from other experiences in the Nation's history. As a Nation, for instance, we have rethought our approach to public safety to meet similar challenges. Over a twenty year period, community-oriented policing transformed a top-down enforcement strategy into an engagement-based model for public safety. The field of public health offers similar guidance. A vision of good health is not simply limited to highly skilled professionals responding to disease and does not only depend on the capabilities of government agencies employing the most advanced technology and techniques, although these are advantageous; public health relies on the willingness and success of healthy Americans to prevent illness through changed behaviors, greater knowledge, and acceptance of what is required of them. The Institute of Medicine embodies this approach in its very definition of public health: "what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions for people to be healthy."¹⁷

The challenge for the new Administration in homeland security is to find ways to transform a government-defined mission into a societal norm. Achieving this norm, and a greater level of resiliency as a Nation, calls for more than recognition of the problem and certainly more than rhetorical references to citizen and community preparedness. Taking a cue from public health and other disciplines more engaged with the American public, we must mobilize and focus on what we, as a society, can do collectively to ensure our safety and security.

A NEW HOMELAND SECURITY PARADIGM

A new strategy for securing the Nation begins with engaging the American people in their local communities. Recent nationwide polling confirms that most Americans continue to think poorly of their government overall: when asked to assess government performance, only one in four rate the federal government positively.¹⁸ Yet, when the public comes into direct contact with federal employees doing their jobs, the approval rate increases sharply.¹⁹

¹⁷ The Institute of Medicine, *Future of Public Health*, 1988, page 19.

¹⁸ In the Public We Trust. Renewing the Connection between the Federal Government and the Public, Partnership for Public Service and Gallup Consulting, November 2008, page 2.

¹⁹ Ibid, page 3.

Homeland security planners, professionals, and officials need to get out of their operations centers and office buildings and onto the street to work with Americans in ensuring our collective security. Priority initiatives need to focus on collective and connected activities in local communities. A new vision needs to be generated from and shared among local residents, businesses and the various levels of government. It needs to be a vision that is defined by what we can do collectively that will provide a desirable level of well-being, including safety, security, and peace. The American public must have the chance to ponder the tough choices, not just be the passive recipients of bad ones.

Such a community-oriented approach to public security will generate an array of new initiatives and redirect and strengthen existing programs. The following examples offer strategies to engage local communities fully in both planning and decision-making, and to build institutional partnerships that embrace and promote those new relationships.

A New, Joint Decision-Making Process

Perhaps the most critical first step is to find ways to overcome Americans' doubt and suspicion about the nature of the security challenge, including a realistic assessment of threats. Dependence and passivity result from continuously asking the American public to have faith in institutions that they have learned to suspect and which they believe have failed them.

- ***Dialog with the public about the risks we face and the actions we can take.*** The *National Strategy for Homeland Security* calls for the application of a risk-based framework across all homeland security efforts to identify and assess potential hazards, determine levels of acceptable relative risk, and prioritize and allocate resources among homeland security partners. However, despite widespread recognition of the value of such an effort, no inclusive, easily accessible, and repeatable process exists for evaluating risks and for using that information to shape decision-making. Communicating risk information also needs to encourage local decision-making rather than merely shaping grant applications for federal funds. Sharing national risk assessments in an appropriate form with businesses and the public should encourage and enable organizations, individuals, and communities to engage in providing for their own security.

The United Kingdom conducts and shares a risk assessment annually, combining national, regional and local results. It publishes a National Risk Register designed to, “encourage public debate on security and help organisations, individuals, families and communities, who want to do so, to prepare for emergencies.”²⁰ The conduct of such assessments nationally and at state and local levels, and the sharing of information on identified risks through public discourse and in town hall and community meetings by public officials is a critical first step to engaging the public in the homeland security mission.

- ***Include local communities as joint decision-makers.*** Although the new Administration's agenda clearly calls for renewed collaboration between the federal government and Governors, even a reinvigorated liaison function will not transform the nature of decision-making. Across a range of issues, from investments to setting priorities, local communities should be real partners in making security-related decisions. The Urban Areas Security Initiative and, in general, the federal grants process, offers a framework for financial assistance to be reorganized to include joint decision-making that involve local communities.

²⁰ Cabinet Office, *National Risk Register*, 2008, 3.

For example, priority could be given to local alliances, to include government agencies, that establish a direct connection among various sectors and groups in local areas.

In other areas of social policy a variety of planning and funding mechanisms have emerged that combine federal, state and local needs and interests. In workforce training, for instance, Workforce Investment Boards bring together private employers, job training providers, and local governments to set priorities and distribute funds. For certain needs, the federal government or state governments could directly fund common purpose projects, providing local communities with resources through mechanisms similar to the long-standing Community Development Block Grants.

Focusing on local involvement in joint decision-making could also mobilize and leverage the resources of local residents who routinely contribute to projects through community foundations. Few of these foundations currently focus on preparedness projects, though some offer disaster relief assistance. Safety and security-oriented projects that more closely connect with the involvement of local residents could significantly enhance participation and spread it among all subgroups in the local population.

- ***Seize on FEMA regionalization plans to recalibrate and reorganize the relationship between DHS and local communities.*** Current efforts to bolster FEMA regions as intermediaries between the federal, state, tribal and local governments respond in part to the need to engage in new forms of joint decision-making. An opportunity exists to transform these regional activities from “federal monitors” and hierarchical intermediaries to catalysts for a broad network of multi-sectoral, community partners. *DHS should restart and invert its annual preparedness strategic planning process.* Federal initiatives need to seek out and understand local and state risks and priorities, and clearly identify and distinguish truly national needs that require federal action from the vast array of capacities and authorities that rest in the hands of state and local governments and communities. Drawing on new forms of inter-sectoral collaboration that emphasize horizontal, shared interests and authorities, FEMA regional efforts could lead this effort, becoming promoters of community-oriented security initiatives rather than federal outreach managers to enhance programs designed and controlled from the Department of Homeland Security.²¹
- ***Establish a National Institute of Preparedness.*** The new Administration’s agenda promises to take a research-based approach to good public policymaking. Although DHS’ Science and Technology Directorate has led the way in testing new technologies and techniques, a broader independent agency is needed to promote a science of preparedness, especially in terms of the complexities of community involvement. This initiative could resemble the National Institute of Justice, housed within the Department of Justice, or could be established as a new independent agency similar to the National Institute of Health. Each of these entities is known for its independent research and evaluation of long-term issues of social and health policy and for putting rigorous scientific debate and demonstration ahead of short-term policy imperatives.

The goal would be to develop, test, and support initiatives among clusters of local and regional public, private and non-governmental groups aimed at increasing the effectiveness of preparedness activities. Establishing a National Institute of Preparedness would establish a

²¹ See for example, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Multi-Jurisdictional, Network Alliances and Emergency Preparedness, Naval Postgraduate School, December 2008.

vibrant national research program aimed at finding good strategies and truly assessing the extent to which the Nation's residents are prepared to prevent and protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

Leading from the Front

A clear weakness resulting from the federal government-led homeland security strategy has been its failure to appreciate and capitalize on local law enforcement agencies in support of the homeland security mission. In its report, *Leading from the Front*, the International Association of Chiefs of Police reminded the federal Administration that the foundation of policing in America, whether dealing with crime or terrorism, is deeply rooted in local law enforcement agencies, where the trust of the American people had to be direct and sustained.²²

Unfortunately, the Nation currently faces a potential schism between federal homeland security initiatives and local law enforcement communities over both funding and purpose. As Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton has described,²³ many local communities perceive that terrorist threats may be overblown, creating more fear than safety. Local police may also be using limited resources unnecessarily and inappropriately to monitor law-abiding citizens. At the same time, traditional crime continues to rise, transnational drug cartels and gangs are consolidating their presence in both rural and urban communities, and, ironically, the potential for these criminal activities and groups to help support terrorism is increasing.

The new Administration needs to act aggressively and quickly to prevent a counterproductive schism from further undermining public support for homeland security initiatives. While senior police officials have expressed concerns about the crime-fighting blind spots that domestic security efforts may have created, the Nation's homeland security leaders have cautioned against using domestic security programs to help pay for day-to-day policing needs. "I don't think we want to take a program designed for one purpose and slowly massage it into another purpose," DHS Secretary Chertoff has said. "If you are pursuing street crime, I don't think all the organs of national security should be involved in that."²⁴

The problem is that this schism will weaken the Nation's capacity to identify and prevent domestic terrorism and radicalization, two of the most important threats facing the country in the next few years. Simultaneously, it will also weaken the advances that local police departments have made in working with communities to counter other public insecurities. A federal-local schism is unnecessary. As various observers have argued, the purpose, advantages, and benefits of a community policing approach to local law enforcement are well suited to preventing and responding to terrorist activity.²⁵ Local law enforcement officers are far more likely to come into contact with those who may be directly or indirectly involved in terrorist activities than any federal official, and most certainly will be among the first responders to any future attack. For example, in 2005, in

²² International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Leading from the Front: Law Enforcement's Role in Combating And Preparing for Domestic Terrorism. The International Association of Chiefs of Police's Response to the Attacks on the United States of America on September 11, 2001*. Alexandria, VA, n.d.

²³ William Bratton, George Kelling and R.P. Eddy: *The blue front line. For cops, fighting crime and terror go hand in hand*. www.city-journal.org/html/eon2007-09-20.html, Monday, October 1, 2007.

²⁴ "A City's Police Force Now Doubts Terror Focus," David Johnston, NYTIMES.COM, July 24, 2008.

²⁵ Community Policing and Terrorism, Matthew C. Scheider and Robert Chapman, <http://www.homelandsecurity.org/journal/Articles/Scheider-Chapman.html>, April 2003.

Torrance, California, local police arrested two men for robbing a gas station—and wound up uncovering a militant plot to attack Los Angeles-area synagogues and military installations. Good police work is good counterterrorism.²⁶

The community policing approach employed by local law enforcement agencies offers several specific advantages in overcoming the deep divide between the federal homeland security strategy and public support and engagement.

- **Improved information-sharing.** Community policing offers a different approach to information-sharing and surveillance than the trap caused by top-down, federal-led efforts to screen and monitor local activities and verify the innocence of everyday American citizens. Although counterterrorism activities differ in some crucial ways from crime prevention, the philosophy of community policing encourages innovation in engaging local communities, defining problems, and sustaining connections between police and local residents that may be helpful to homeland security strategies. In particular, a community-led approach could provide a clear alternative to a top-down, federal strategy that has created disturbing tensions between policing, preparedness and civil liberties. Community policing officers could serve as trusted intermediaries to encourage the essential dialogue needed between security authorities and local residents on the nature of the risks that a community faces.
- **Preventing homegrown radicalization.** Radicalization is a social process that over time transforms otherwise well-established residents into disenfranchised militants willing to lash out with violence against people and property. The New York City Police Department, for instance, describes radicalized youths as otherwise “unremarkable” local residents who conceptualize and plan attacks against their country of residence inspired by or ideologically driven by al-Qaeda teachings.²⁷ Preventing this transformation from unremarkable to threat-laden requires a level of community engagement that is simply impossible from federal initiatives. Most importantly, it requires awareness and willingness on the part of local residents to cooperate with local police authorities. That awareness and willingness comes from experience working with or at least knowing about successful—and publicly accepted—police activities. The local officer who works in the same geographical area for several years, has helped with traffic, school and family problems, or worked with community groups to shut down drug houses and other safety risks, is far more likely to observe radicalizing behaviors before they reach the point of violent action than any federal network of information-sharing agencies. He or she is also a much better user of federally-produced intelligence information. They are more likely to observe the initial, nuanced acts of a terrorist plot that are typically obscured by links to other criminal threats such as a gangs, gun-running, drug trafficking, and recently-released prisoners who may have been radicalized while incarcerated.
- **Reducing Americans’ fear of uncertainty and risk.** If the goal of terrorism is to create fear far beyond the immediate harm, community policing offers a model for directly combating that objective through engagement and cooperation. Local law enforcement agencies have a strong self-interest in understanding fear in their communities if they hope to be effective. As recent debates over issues related to racial profiling and hate crimes have shown, local police

²⁶ Bratton et al. 2007.

²⁷ Silber, Mitchell D., and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*. New York City Police Department, 2007.

agencies' abilities to prevent terrorism may turn on how well they are able to understand their communities and work to solve everyday crime in those same communities.²⁸

Applying the lessons from a community policing approach to community-oriented terrorism prevention could open a new line of thinking about the role of DHS regional offices and officers. As noted previously, FEMA regionalization offers an opportunity to begin to change the relationship between federal, state, tribal and local agencies. Beyond becoming a catalyst for inter-sectoral coordination, however, a community oriented philosophy will require FEMA and its sister DHS components and agencies to reorient some of their operating approaches. Community policing agencies are more “flat” than most organizations – that is, they are decentralized, network oriented organizations in which officers working with neighborhood groups have more authority than usual to make decisions. This structure allows and even encourages officers to work as partners in joint decision-making, not having to always withhold judgment while they check with geographically distant and organizationally remote authorities. Community-oriented agencies are also more focused on smaller geographical areas that have organic rather than jurisdictional connections. This focus and flexibility allows more effective alignment of problem solving with the diverse partners needed to make necessary changes in programs and funding. A major challenge for DHS and FEMA regional efforts will be to create and maintain a cross-jurisdictional focus that is not so broad that the relationships become merely consultative rather than oriented toward joint problem-solving and decision-making.

A Call to Service

“Through service, I found a community that embraced me, citizenship that was meaningful.”

– Barak Obama

Throughout the most recent Presidential campaign, nearly all candidates embraced a call to service, urging the American public to do more in their communities to improve the quality of life. The new Administration’s plan calls for a significant investment in expanding the volunteer corps, including AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Energy Corps, and Environmental Corps. Joining others, the plan calls for tax breaks, summer jobs, internships and college tuition in exchange for some form of public service.

Obviously, homeland security and emergency management should take their place in this roll call of valued public services. The problem is that, under current strategies, there is little room for this type of public service in homeland security. The current citizen corps programs unfortunately offer only limited opportunities for engagement. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, which has been useful, is limited to specific training activities and, by itself, does not generate continuous activities in a community;²⁹ and Citizen Corps Councils have generated far less activity than expected or needed.³⁰

At a local and regional level, the mobilization of residents to become educated, trained and involved in homeland security needs to take on a more sustainable effort. For this to happen, it needs to be integrated into the community’s routine activities, its local governance, work life, recreation, and

²⁸ Community Policing and Terrorism, Matthew C. Scheider and Robert Chapman, April 2003.

²⁹ CERT programs have, however, been used as the catalyst for community-wide initiatives in some small towns.

³⁰ Heyman, David, and James Jay Carafano, *Homeland Security 3.0: Building a National Enterprise to Keep America Safe, Free, and Prosperous*. The Heritage Foundation, Heritage Special Report, SR-23, Washington, DC, September 18, 2008.

shopping. Locally, the rich diversity of the Nation's communities means that no one type of program or set of initiatives will work everywhere. Yet, every community could become involved. A national campaign is needed that focuses on community preparedness, starting perhaps with public health.

Numerous creative ways to release this community engagement exist. We need to find and expand the moments in which Americans routinely defy the allegations of complacency and denial and where they value the connectivity to their community which homeland security and emergency management strategies have ignored. A block grant challenge—a Community Preparedness Block Grant (CPBG)—modeled perhaps after the success of infrastructure repair and historical preservation funds, could be a useful example. A preparedness corps of diverse local residents could organize neighborhood campaigns to, among other activities, canvas and teach the elderly how to turn off their natural gas in an emergency and link them to neighbors to whom they can turn if an incident occurs. These and many other ideas already exist in local communities across the country. They can be heard anecdotally in conferences, local newspapers, and researchers' stories, but they await more widespread mobilization, support, and leadership.

The challenge is not simply to acknowledge the need for such community activities, but to find their proper place within our homeland security strategy and execute their role effectively.³¹ Currently, these efforts are primarily considered ways to get the government's message across and perhaps add helpers to the professional response cadre during an incident. A community-oriented homeland security strategy, in contrast, would value the ideas and the people engaged because they are the turning point of effectiveness. In the same way that the Nation relies on the professional expertise of its intelligence officers, border screeners, and critical infrastructure protectors, it must rely on the ability of local residents to be effective public citizens.

TOWARD A SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

From a shared vision of a way of life to everyday interactions with neighbors, an effective homeland security strategy requires the full participation of the American public. The full array of these social activities, programs, and relationships constitutes an essential foundation, what can easily be called a "social infrastructure for homeland security." Like other infrastructures, it needs priority attention and support. And like other infrastructures, it has fallen into disrepair.

During the Cold War, the American public had a social compact with the federal government to lend its political and financial support for distant, not well understood actions overseas against a communist threat. The public came to expect protection from these overseas risks and, in exchange, wanted to go about its business of working hard, raising families, and enjoying the prosperity that lasted nearly half a century.

Today's asymmetric threats have changed the way we think about the world, and the compact between the federal government and the public. The initial round of homeland security strategies has not yet caught up with this global and internal transformation. While the Nation fights overseas, a new social compact at home is needed that redefines opportunities and responsibilities just as much as the world is changing the risks and challenges to the American way of life.³²

³¹ See Dory, 2003, for an earlier attempt to define such a role.

³² Emanuel, Rahm, and Bruce Reed, *The Plan. Big Ideas for America*. New York: Public Affairs, 2006.

Ask any homeland security or emergency management professional what makes them most successful in their activities and most will say that it is the trust that they developed in their coworkers and colleagues *well before* an incident or operation. Trust is also the glue that makes communities work. At a time when trust in government, trust in public health institutions, and trust in the financial system are weakening, it is unlikely that efforts to mobilize the public to be prepared for emergencies will work. The first step in the long transition to a new social compact, then, may be the most direct – to repair and build the trust that makes our most critical activities succeed. Social trust may be the meaning we can all find in community service, and strengthening it may be the way to navigate through the deep currents of our future.

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