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October 15, 2001

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The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing regarding the appointment of Governor Tom Ridge to the new cabinet-level post of Director of Homeland Security. The appointment provides an important opportunity to address one of the most serious shortcomings in our national security policy: the lack of a national strategy based on a comprehensive threat assessment. We believe conducting this type of analysis and developing this kind of plan should be among Governor Ridge's top priorities.

The need for a comprehensive threat assessment has been documented by independent national commissions and other experts. Earlier this year, the U.S. Commission on National Security, a bipartisan group headed by former Senators Warren Rudman and Gary Hart, found that "no overarching strategic framework guides U.S. national security policymaking or resource allocation."¹ A panel headed by Governor James Gilmore made a similar finding, concluding that "the United States has no coherent, functional national strategy for combating terrorism."²

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) has pointed out several times that the basis for our national security strategy should be a comprehensive analysis of the full spectrum of potential threats.³ Proceeding without such an assessment, according to GAO, risks wasting

¹The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change* (Mar. 15, 2001).

²Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, *Toward a National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (Second Annual Report)* (Dec. 15, 2000).

³See, e.g., U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Threat and Risk Assessments Can Help Prioritize and Target Program Investments* (April 1998) (GAO/NSIAD-

limited resources on unlikely threats, while neglecting potential dangers that are more apt to materialize. As GAO states:

Threat and risk assessments are decision-making support tools that are used to establish requirements and prioritize program investments. Without the benefits that a threat and risk assessment provides, many agencies have been relying on worst case chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear scenarios to generate countermeasures or establish their programs. By using these worst case scenarios, the federal government is focusing on vulnerabilities (which are unlimited) rather than credible threats (which are limited).⁴

The terrorist acts of September 11 dramatically illustrate the need for a comprehensive and comparative analysis of all threats to national security. According to the RAND Corporation:

Our national security architecture is fundamentally a cold war-era artifice, created more than half a century ago to counter a specific threat from a specific country and a specific ideology. That architecture, which is oriented overwhelmingly towards military threats and hence to gathering military intelligence, was proven anachronistic with last Tuesday's devastating attacks carried out by non-state/non-military adversaries.⁵

Currently, the annual defense budget totals about \$329 billion, while the federal government spends just \$12.8 billion to counter all forms of terrorist threats combined.⁶ In light of the recent attacks, these priorities need to be rethought, and the starting point should be a comprehensive threat assessment. Although we may hold divergent views about the best use of resources to protect the country, all of us — both in Congress and the Administration — would benefit from the information conveyed in a comprehensive threat assessment.

98-74); and U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Need for Comprehensive Threat and Risk Assessments of Chemical and Biological Attacks* (September 1999) (GAO/NSIAD-99-163).

⁴U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Selected Challenges and Related Recommendations* (GAO-01-822) (September 2001).

⁵Testimony of Dr. Bruce Hoffman, Director, RAND Washington Office, Committee on Government Reform, *Preparing for the War on Terrorism: Understanding the Nature and Dimensions of the Threat*, 106th Cong. (Sept. 20, 2001).

⁶Office of Management and Budget, *Annual Report to Congress on Combating Terrorism* (2001).

The President
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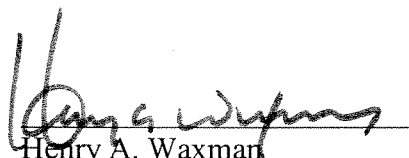
For these reasons, we believe one of the first jobs of the Director of Homeland Security should be to obtain intelligence from all agencies to evaluate all risks to the United States — military, terrorist, state, non-state, foreign, domestic, conventional, and unconventional. He should evaluate these threats comprehensively, comparing them side-by-side. He should analyze their causes, whether political, economic, or social, examine their likelihood, and gauge their potential effects. He should then prioritize them in a way that will foster rational decision-making to counter all the dangers we face.

We wish Governor Ridge the best of luck, and we stand ready to assist him in this critical endeavor.

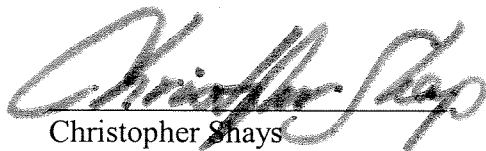
Sincerely,



Dan Burton
Chairman



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member



Christopher Shays
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans
Affairs and International Relations



Dennis J. Kucinich
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans
Affairs and International Relations