

**A Brookings Leadership Forum**

**SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS (D-NC)**

**"Agenda for Homeland Security"**

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**JAMES B. STEINBERG:** The issue of homeland security has been very prominent in the work that Senator Edwards has done in the Congress. Among his many achievements in the area includes co-sponsoring legislation on nuclear waste shipment safety, a major author of portions of the Seaport Security Bill as well as the Federal Cyber Security Bill. He's also been active in offering proposals on bioterrorism, focusing on strengthening the state and local capacity to deal with this new challenge.

As I'm sure most of you noticed this morning, Senator Edwards had an OpEd in the Washington Post outlining his views on the need for a new Domestic Security Agency. I think this is a very timely opportunity to have his views on the challenges facing the country in light of the fact that we are now just about a month away from the standing of the new Department of Homeland Security and what will be a major debate I think in the coming Congress about funding for resources on homeland security and on the organization of our intelligence community.

So without further ado let me ask you to join me in welcoming John Edwards.



**SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS:** Thank you Jim -- one of the great thinkers in America on foreign policy and has been a very good friend to me, and I appreciate the introduction.

It's also good to be here in this institution which has provided so many of the ideas, the scholars in this institution have provided so many of the ideas on the issues that I'll be talking about today.

I love this time of year. Families come together. The whole country seems to take a breath. All Americans have a chance to pause long enough to remember what we all believe is really precious, and to think about what really matters for our families, for the communities we live in, and for the country that we all love.

It's natural when you think about what it is we love to also think about what we need to do to protect it. That's what I want to talk about today. Our sacred responsibility to safeguard America. It's a responsibility all of us share as Americans and I'll talk more about that and what all of us can do in a little bit. But let me begin by talking about the responsibility of government.

The first and foremost responsibility of any government is to protect its citizens from harm. It's time for all of us, without regard to party, to say what every one of us already knows. Washington is not doing enough to make American safe. If the Administration continues to do too little, it will be too late again. We must do better.

I don't accept the notion that another devastating attack is inevitable. I will never accept it. It's fearful, it's defeatist, and it's a victory for the terrorists. Our job is to do everything we can to stop them. We have to summon every last bit of American strength, guts and wit to win this war. If we do, we will

win it.

Protecting America requires clear leadership from America around the world and a comprehensive homeland defense here at home. Today I'm going to focus on what we need to do to strengthen our domestic security. Offensively first, to catch terrorists before they attack, and defensively to prevent harm if an attack comes.

First, we need to dramatically improve our ability to find and stop terrorists in our midst.

Second, we need to secure our borders.

Third, we need to harden the likeliest terrorist targets to make sure that they're less vulnerable.

Fourth, we need to significantly strengthen domestic readiness so we're always prepared to respond to threats.

What we do here of course is cast in the context of America's responsibilities abroad. I've said this before and I'll say it again. I reject what I believe is a false choice between fighting a war on terrorism and containing the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. Specifically the looming danger of Saddam Hussein. We must disarm Iraq. Peacefully if possible, but by force if necessary.

At the same time we have to remember why disarming Saddam is critical to American security, because halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction and ensuring they don't fall into the wrong hands, including terrorist hands, is critical to American security. This is a problem much bigger than Iraq. We have to do more to support the many disarmament programs already in place to dismantle weapons and prevent access to weapons grade materials in Russia and the former Soviet states. We have to commit maximum resources necessary to support cooperative threat reduction initiatives like Nunn/Lugar.

When it comes to fighting the war on terror around the globe we have to keep the big picture in mind, and to stay true to our principles. The Administration needs to rethink its visceral shortsighted rejection of additional leadership and post-Taliban Afghanistan. We need a new relationship with Saudi Arabia, one that no longer ignores that regime's pattern of tolerance and denial when it comes to terrorists.

We need to address the gray proliferation threat posed by North Korea and we need to do it in a clear, confident and consistent way. Last week's stop right there, now go ahead routine in the Arabian Sea makes America look indecisive and it undermines our credibility. Extraordinary risks require extraordinary measures. North Korea does not play by international rules and they should not be allowed to profit from them.

All of this is critical to American security but none of it will prevent the next domestic attack if our domestic defense remains as vulnerable as it is today.

Less than two months ago the bipartisan Hart/Rudman Commission said, and I quote, "America remains dangerously unprepared to prevent and respond to a catastrophic terrorist attack on U.S. soil. In all likelihood the next attack will result in even greater casualties and widespread disruption to American lives and the economy. This is intolerable.

We've made some progress in the 15 months since September 11th. We've had no major terrorist attacks at home for over a year. We've remade our airport security systems. And we should get some modest improvement from the massive reorganization that begins with the passage of the Homeland Security Bill.

President Bush deserves credit for the successes. At the same time he's also accountable for too many failures to make progress with the wrong priorities and for wrong-minded steps that undermine our values without advancing our security.

First and foremost, there simply is no comprehensive strategy for domestic security. Yes, we've addressed a few vulnerabilities but not the full range of challenges we face. Yes, we've created a massive new federal agency and it's a positive step that I supported. But at this point the new Department of Homeland Security is more of a political achievement for the Administration than a substantive achievement for American security.

A new agency and new office space won't help us infiltrate terrorist organizations operating around the country. It won't stop terrorists or their weapons from getting through the holes in our borders or our ports. It won't provide equipment and training for police to protect bridges and tunnels or cause companies to protect vulnerable chemical plants. It won't help police officers, firemen and EMTs on the front line to coordinate their response if there is an attack. In short, the Homeland Security Bill is a perfect example of how long it takes Washington to come up with an answer that doesn't even solve the problem.

Second, this Administration continues to have its priorities out of whack. Against all reason the Administration continues to cling stubbornly to tax cuts that benefit only the top one percent of Americans while arguing we can't afford vital measures to protect the very lives of the American people.

Congress has passed legislation to strengthen border security, port security, cyber security and to guard against bioterrorism. I myself wrote provisions in those bills. But for the most part they're not being funded the way they should. President Bush has actually vetoed billions of dollars for domestic defense and he's refusing to release \$1.5 billion that should go to police, firefighters and first responders who face layoffs literally as I speak. The President made a big show of vetoing a \$5 million emergency bill, half of which was for domestic defense while the rest included money to buy forest fires and essential aid for Israel. The \$5 billion is about what it will cost for one month, one month, if we fully eliminate the estate tax under the President's plan, mostly benefiting about 3,000 or so multi-millionaire families. How this Administration can prefer tax cuts for the most fortunate one percent of Americans over domestic defense for 100 percent of Americans is beyond me, but they do.

Finally, I'm troubled that this Administration often seems most animated when it's curtailing basic freedoms for no reason. They've claimed arbitrary power to arrest any American, label him or her an

enemy combatant, and then lock them up as long as they want without a lawyer, without a chance to show that they're innocent. They've allowed government agents to observe political meetings and prayer groups without any kind of real oversight. And they have another plan that's literally straight out of 1984, a total information awareness program that can collect and maintain detailed personnel files on every single American. These steps undercut our liberty without advancing our security and they're wrong.

In short, when it comes to homeland security the Administration has been expert at politics and errative [ph] in practice. Instead, homeland security should be our unequivocal priority. Our strategy has to be comprehensive and our approach must honor the way of life that we're defending. Faith and family, duty and service, individual freedom, and a common purpose to build one nation under God.

A comprehensive approach requires new initiative, major initiatives, in four basic areas. Finding and tracking terrorists, border security, target protection, and domestic readiness.

First and foremost we need to dramatically improve our ability to identify the terrorists in America, track them down, infiltrate their cells, learn their plans, and stop them.

The first thing we need to do on the information front is create a new Homeland Intelligence Agency as I called for last October. The agency at the center of domestic intelligence now is the FBI. The FBI's mistakes before September 11th are well known, yet only recently the FBI's number two official said he was amazed and astounded by the agency's continued sluggishness in fighting terrorism.

The FBI's intelligence failures are directly related to its nature and its mission. At its heart, the FBI's a law enforcement agency focused on arresting, prosecuting and convicting people who break the law. FBI agents are very good at law enforcement but law enforcement is not intelligence. Intelligence is about collecting information, fitting it into a bigger picture and sharing that information with people who can act on it.

Asking a law enforcement agency to manage intelligence is like trying to jam a square peg in a round hole. The FBI hires and promotes based on law enforcement criteria. It builds cases rather than connecting dots. And it keeps information secret rather than getting it to those who can use it to stop terrorists.

The FBI has tried to reform for years but the bureaucratic resistance is extraordinary. Today we don't have the luxury of trying to turn the FBI into something it's not meant to be. We need to create what we actually need.

The central goal of a new Homeland Intelligence Agency should be uncovering terrorist threats before they cause harm. That effort will have three basic components.

First, to gather information about terrorists, their activities and their plans. Second, to analyze data, search for patterns, and assess threats. And third, to get that information and that analysis to the right people so they can stop these terrorists before they do us harm. Because the focus will be intelligence, the new agency's officers don't even need arrest powers. Those responsibilities should

remain with law enforcement. Trying to combine incompatible missions is the reason we have this problem in the first place.

This agency's activities must be reconciled with legitimate concerns about liberty and privacy. This new agency does not need any more power than the FBI has today, and creating the new agency will give us a fresh chance to actually strengthen our freedoms and our liberties.

A recent study by a bipartisan commission at the Markel Foundation points the way. Strong guidelines should indicate what, when and where investigations can occur. Particularly intrusive investigations should be held to special standards. Rigorous internal auditing together with enhanced public reporting should provide accountability. And a special office for civil rights headed by an independent director should ensure the agency actually obeys the law. The task is stopping terrorists, not monitoring political dissent.

I first proposed a new intelligence agency two months ago. After initial signs of support the Administration has backed off under bureaucratic pressure. That's a huge mistake. Congress and the Administration should get to work on the new agency in January. There's no time to waste.

But a Homeland Intelligence Agency is only the first step in tracking down terrorists. When it comes to combating terrorism the Hart/Rudman Commission notes the police officers on the beat are effectively operating deaf, dumb and blind. There are only 11,500 FBI agents in America, but there are over 650,000 police and sheriffs on the front line of domestic defense. They don't get the respect, the access or the tools they need to do their jobs. The FBI doesn't respect their street knowledge. It doesn't push urgent information to them, as police chiefs across the country have complained about. And with computers that are literally decades old, the FBI doesn't provide a simple way for a police officer in North Carolina who stops someone for speeding, to know if they've just stopped a terrorist and somebody on a terrorist watch list.

Within the next year we ought to be able to do two things. First, guarantee that relevant details and specific information about immediate threats get to the local level. To make that easier, we should give high-level security clearances to at least one top officer in the police departments across the country so they can get the classified information that they need.

Second, we need to link all the federal watch lists as well as appropriate state and local databases in a national terrorism information network that key local officials and entities like airlines can get access to at appropriate levels. If we'd had a system like that in place in August of 2001 we could have been alert when two of the September 11th hijackers bought tickets to fly on American Airlines Flight 77 which they flew into the Pentagon. They both used their real names and those names were on a State Department list of suspected terrorists. That's only the beginning.

If the government had been alerted that these two suspected terrorists were in fact buying plane tickets it could have conducted a few more routine checks. When they checked for common addresses they would have discovered three more terrorists, including Mohammed Attah. His phone number would have led to the discovery of five other hijackers.

We can't count on terrorists to use legitimate IDs. Seven of the 19 September 11th hijackers had fake drivers licenses, six had fake social security cards. We need to make it harder to get fraudulent identification by setting national standards for official IDs and helping states meet those standards.

The standards should do two things. First, require states to obtain real proof of identity before the issue an official ID, and require biometric identifiers like fingerprints so nobody can use somebody else's ID.

The second major area of weakness in domestic defense is our border. We need to significantly tighten our borders against dangerous people and dangerous things. First, we need to do a far better job keeping out terrorists. Every single September 11th hijacker entered America legally. In fact this system is so bad that notices for renewing student visas for two of the terrorists were sent out six months after September 11th. This is just unacceptable.

The basic principle that should govern immigration is simple. A warm welcome for immigrants and visitors, exhaustive barriers against terrorists. Law-abiding immigrants build a richer, more vibrant America for all of us. We want a lot more legal immigration of people who are ready to work hard, follow the law, learn our language, and become Americans. But the only way we'll ever be able to let more good people into our country legally will be if we do a vastly better job of keeping criminals and terrorists out.

That means we need to take our border controls to a different level. Today the system is badly broken. At American consular officers junior Foreign Service officers are swamped. They have too many visa requests to thoroughly interview and investigate every applicant. The look-out databases don't work. People on State Department watch lists cross INS checkpoints. People in FBI criminal databases get visas from states. We have no idea if people who enter the country legally leave the country legally because we don't process basic forms. The entry/exit systems along our 6,000 miles of border are overwhelmed. The list of problems goes on and on and on.

Let me say this to the Administration. You've had ample time and ample warning. Fix this bureaucracy because the security of the American people is at stake.

Here are some things we can do. When you ask anybody with knowledge of this situation what's the most important thing we can do to improve security at our borders, you inevitably get the same answer -- manpower. As experts here have suggested, we should increase the number of INS inspectors, border patrol agents, and State Department consular officers by at least 10,000. We should also trip the Administration's budget for border control information technology -- computers. So new agents get the right information. And we should say that all legal aliens will have a standard legal document, not one of an array of documents that baffle so many employers today.

Securing our borders against the human threat is critical but if we don't also secure them against the material threat we won't really have secured them at all. There are 361 ports in America where millions of 40-ton containers are unloaded every single year. One of those ports is in Wilmington, North

Carolina. I've been there and I've seen these containers myself. A dirty bomb in just one could contaminate an entire city. Even a credible threat of such a bomb could sink the shipping industry and cripple the global economy for weeks.

The Commissioner of Customs said only a few months ago, and I'm quoting him now, "There is virtually no security for transporting sea containers while they're loaded, where they're sealed, and not when they're shipped to our shores." Again, we have to do better.

In the short run, as I proposed in port security legislation last September, we need to install and maintain sophisticated screening equipment. In the long run we need more inspections overseas as well so we can discover dangerous material before it ever gets to America. We should offer a simple deal to shipping companies. If you take responsibility for improving your security we'll make it easier for you to move through our ports.

There's a new Customs partnership that's taking this approach, but if it's going to work it needs more resources and higher priority. Within the next 18 months we ought to have a majority of the shipments to America in this secure shipping program.

The third critical domestic defense task is hardening potential terrorist targets to make them significantly less vulnerable to attack. September 11th awakened us to the massive damage terrorists could cause with airplanes and we've actually taken good measures to harden airline security. Unfortunately we have a dangerous pattern of closing the barn door after the terrorists have attacked. It's time to get ahead of them. We know they want to cause the most death, destruction, economic disruption and fear that they possibly can. So while we can never predict what terrorists will do we have a pretty good sense about what their other likely targets are. We need to harden and protect those targets.

Start with nuclear safety. Today nuclear waste shipments are extraordinarily vulnerable. We need better security for the route and stronger casks for the shipments.

The situation in nuclear plants is actually more troubling. Before 9/11 plants were failing half their security evaluations. Even now guards have repeatedly reported that they don't have essential training and equipment and that they're undermanned and underpaid. These are exactly the same issues we saw in airport security before 9/11 and we know how we met that problem, even if the Administration didn't like it. We did it by putting well-trained, well-paid federal guards into airports. Airport security isn't perfect, but it's a lot better.

Given the terrible cost and risk of an attack on a nuclear plant or a theft from one, we need a federal security force for nuclear facilities carefully trained and regularly tested to emergency simulations.

America's 12,000 chemical facilities also pose a dangerous threat. There are roughly 25,000 fires, spills or explosions involving hazardous materials every single year. The Union Carbide chemical disaster in India killed at least 3,000 people and that was an accident. An attack could achieve horrifying results. 123 plants store toxic chemicals that can endanger a million people or more if they



were released.

The Bush Administration was actually moving in the right direction. They were moving toward a common-sense solution that would set minimum standards for safety at chemical plants. Internal EPA documents clearly indicate that Administration officials consider this a grave threat. But dangerously true to form, after lobbying by the chemical industry the Administration abandoned their approach.

Once again, corporate special interests have trumped the interests of ordinary American in this case with potentially devastating consequences.

The Administration and Congress should support three simple steps that Senator Corzine has been fighting for.

First, require much better physical security for plants, including more security guards and better background checks.

Second, require companies to use less explosive chemicals whenever that's possible.

Third, require improved security procedures for handling and storing chemicals. We also need a comprehensive effort to bring the decades-old law of controlling toxic substances into the 21st Century. This isn't rocket science, it's basic science and common sense.

There are 500 skyscrapers that usually have at least 5,000 people in them and 250 major arenas and stadiums around the country that hold many times more. Unsecured and unfiltered ventilation systems provide a ready-for-use distribution system for airborne poison. Old buildings lack fire retardant and glass-resistant materials that could literally save hundreds of lives in the event of a disaster. And entrance security in major stadiums is often mediocre which every turnstile jumper could tell you.



We need to see a study that will show us how to make these skyscrapers safely, and the national labs to devote new R&D into improving glass and fire-resistant designs. The Administration should establish voluntary national standards for security and construction of the tallest buildings and largest arenas including fire safety guidelines based on the advanced practices being used in Europe, New Zealand and Australia. We should provide funds for states to put those standards in their building codes and we should encourage terrorism insurers, especially after the Reinsurance Bill, to give owners breaks on premiums only when they make the right improvements.

We also have to address other types of transportation. Trains, subways and automobile traffic using bridges and tunnels. There are 25 million passengers per year on innercity trains and every one of them knows how lax security is on trains today. All of us know who have ridden on a train.

Amtrak tunnels beneath New York, Baltimore and Washington were built between 1872 and 1910. Their emergency exits and ventilation systems are just about that old. Subway tunnels can

distribute deadly agents in just a matter of minutes. One sarin gas attack in Tokyo left a dozen people dead. Another plot recently foiled in the London underground could have killed thousands more. We cannot wait to act.

So far the Administration's primary approach has been to urge people to keep traveling. Ride the trains, take the subways, drive to work. Of course we ought to remain calm, but we have to address these threats, these serious threats. We need to expand security at rail stations as suggested by Senators Biden and Carper including more security offices, better sensing and bomb detection equipment, and improved ventilation and evacuation systems.

Washington, D.C. is now installing chemical sensors for poisonous attacks in the subway. We need to help install that kind of protection in every subway in America, and we need to support efforts to harden the resistance of bridges and tunnels to fire and explosion.

We also need new measures to protect our food and water supplies and improve our early warning systems so we can minimize harm in case of an attack on either one. The FDA and the USDA should move quickly to strengthen their current quality control efforts that guard against deliberate contamination of the food supply. The EPA should step up their research on protecting drinking water, including the use of harmless disinfectants. Our reservoirs need more biological and chemical detectors as well.

We also need to improve computer network security. A determined cyber terrorist could take down our phones and power grids, they could poison our water, or paralyze our energy systems. Both government and business need to make cyber security our highest priority.

Today government is busy issuing recommendations that business is busy ignoring. Part of the problem is that business adamantly and absolutely opposes regulation and they won't listen to a government that doesn't have its own house in order. Well that's fair for now. The only agency that's eliminated its obvious vulnerabilities is NASA. Every other agency should follow NASA's lead and shore up its virtual defenses the next few months.

The fourth major area we need to improve is domestic readiness, so people on the front lines have the training and equipment to respond to an attack and to respond with speed, skill and strength. That work begins with first responders like police, firefighters, and EMTs. We wouldn't send our soldiers into battle without having the best equipment yet on the front lines of domestic defense this Administration is cutting aid to cops, states are laying them off, and they're not getting training and equipment that they need. If, God forbid, there is another attack the 170,000 employees of the new department won't be the ones who come to the rescue. It will be the firefighters and police officers like the heroes of New York.

Senator Clinton has a good bill to make sure state and local governments get the best communications equipment, the best protective gear and the best training, but even those won't help if there's no one to use them because cities are out of money and have had to put cops out of work. We should give states an additional \$1.5 billion in one-time aid that they can use to hire and retain 75,000

cops, firefighters and EMTs.

The Administration may think domestic defense is about changing the color codes from yellow to orange. Let me tell you something, the colors that will make America safer are firefighter red, EMT white, and police officer blue.

We need to continue efforts to step up the public health system's ability to recognize and respond to a biological attack. We need a national system to ensure production and rapid distribution of existing treatments and preventive measures. The Administration has a good plan in this area and the smallpox vaccination plan makes some sense though we need to be very careful about its implementation. But we have to do more, especially to develop vaccines and drugs to counter emerging biological threats. The commercial market for those kind of drugs is limited. HHS and FDA should encourage the development of new drugs, new vaccines, and devices to address these threats.

We also need to modernize an emergency warning system that is terribly out of date. The system depends on television and radio that most people won't hear if the attack comes in the middle of the night. The new color-coded systems from the Attorney General has actually made things more confusing than helpful to most people. The press, which of course is a critical first responder, hasn't been properly engaged, and private industry, which has led the Internet and cell phone revolution plays virtually no role.

Public warnings save lives so we have to make sure that every single American gets those warnings. I plan to introduce legislation requiring the Administration to work with the private sector and the media to get warnings to everybody in times of trouble. With a \$10 million investment we can get that job done in two years.

Finally, we need to encourage all Americans to play a part in making America safer. So many Americans want to contribute but they feel like they haven't been asked. Nobody's asked them. We should ask, and I've got four ideas about how.

First, there are many homeland security professions where we're seriously short on expertise like public health and cyber defense. We should draw bright young people into those professions by offering a simple deal. If you'll serve for five years, we'll pay for your college.

Second, we should give private companies every opportunity to contribute to domestic defense. Today government leaders haven't reached out to the private sector like they should. Businesses should be fully engaged in every state's Homeland Security Commission, and they should have strong incentives to turn their ingenuity towards strengthening America's defenses.

Third, we ought to expand the portion of the National Guard focused on domestic defense without undercutting the essential mission of military readiness. I propose inviting skilled men and women who fall beyond the regular age 35 cutoff for the Guard to join a civilian division dedicated to domestic security.

Finally, we should make sure all Americans can play a role in making America safer. Most of us

are no more ready to respond to an attack than we were before September 11th. We ought to change that. Not by creating requirements from the top down, but by empowering people from communities up. Communities should provide training for everybody so they'll be ready if an attack comes. Some can encourage all adults to contribute a weekend each year to coordinating disaster relief. Every adult of every age can make a contribution. If a community is willing to ask readiness responsibility from every citizen, Washington should pay for it.

I believe we should do whatever it takes for domestic defense. At the same time, as I've said many times before, our economic security does require a deliberate return to fiscal discipline. In short, we ought to strengthen our domestic defense and we should pay for the steps to do it. We can and must do both.

In the short run many of the investments I propose will not only improve our security, they'll also help jump-start our economy and keep states from raising taxes. That's why I've talked about domestic defense in the past as part of an immediate economic growth package.

In the long term I've outlined a number of measures that will get us back on the path to fiscal discipline. These include eliminating ten percent of government employees outside national security; cutting wasteful spending; closing tax loopholes that undercut our economic security; and putting off tax cuts for the most unfortunate Americans. Together these measures would save well over \$1.6 trillion over 20 years. With only a tiny fraction of that amount we can dramatically improve our homeland security hand lead to huge savings that will tremendously strengthen our economic security as well.

Strengthening our domestic defense is a challenge but Americans have always risen to great challenges. There is no cause greater or nobler than protecting the country we love from the challenges we face. I believe we can do it and we will do it if we're determined and if we work together.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

I'll be happy to take questions. I think Ron will help me by calling on people.

The only thing I ask is if we can stick to the general topic of the speech that would be great. If you have questions about other things like Vice President Gore's decision or Senator Lott, I'll be happy to talk to you about those on the way out.

**QUESTION:** Peter Orszag here from Brookings.

One of the most troubling things you mentioned involves chemical facilities. I wanted to have you elaborate a little bit more on why in your opinion the Administration has, as far as we can tell, done nothing to improve security at chemical facilities despite apparently internal documents suggesting that there is a substantial danger there as I think any outsider could recognize. And also what the prospects are for passing some legislation in this area in the next year or so.

**SENATOR EDWARDS:** I think first and foremost we need to bring to the attention of the American people what a serious threat this is. The Administration itself in their internal documents at EPA have recognized that it's a serious threat so it's obvious they know it's a serious threat. I think they were actually moving forward toward doing something sensible about it and they got a huge push-back from the chemical industry and have stopped as a result.

I think there are a number of things we can do and we ought to do. We ought to have better security at these chemical plants. We ought to do more serious background checks on the people who work there. We ought to do everything in our power to encourage these chemical facilities to use less dangerous, less toxic chemicals to the extent we can. And some of the laws which haven't been updated literally for decades dealing with issues of toxic substances ought to be updated, particularly to address some of these new toxic substances that have come into existence since the law was passed.

I think there are a number of things we can do. I think actually if we address this issue in the Congress, bring this issue to the attention of the American people and they see what a serious threat it is for them, they remember very well what's happened in the past in other places with chemical plants, and I think this is something they'll want us to do something about.



**QUESTION:** Tom Mann.

Senator Edwards, I'm wondering whether you were surprised by the news reports of al Qaeda reopening training camps in Eastern Afghanistan and recruits flocking into them, and what you think can be done about that.

Secondly, relating to the thousands of alums of previous al Qaeda training camps that Senator Graham has pointed to, what more can be done to try to figure out where they are now?

**SENATOR EDWARDS:** Let me talk first about the reports about what's happening in Afghanistan. It's just very troubling. We haven't gotten bin Laden. There are other leaders of al Qaeda who we've not been able to capture. We know from reports as members of the Intelligence Committee, we know that they're coming back into bloom and they're recruiting and looking for people.

I would say a combination of things in response. First, I think we've made a mistake, I mentioned this in the speech. I think we've made a mistake in Afghanistan. We went in with our military operation, took down the Taliban, but if you talk to Karzai and other leaders in Afghanistan they think it's almost impossible for them to maintain security in the country. They don't have a national army. The international peacekeeping force is essentially limited to the area right around Kabul. And because of both size and geographical scope, is not able to provide security for the rest of the country so it's not surprising, some of us have been saying from the get-go that there's a danger of winning the battle and losing the long-term war.

Taking out the Taliban is great, but we can't allow Afghanistan to go back to the place that it was under the Taliban where terrorist organizations like al Qaeda provide a breeding ground for those

kind of organizations. I think these reports that we're hearing about what's happening with al Qaeda are just evidence of what a lot of us have been worried about since we first entered Afghanistan militarily.

It is important not just to win that military fight, but to stabilize the country in a way that they don't continue to be a breeding ground for terrorist organizations. And what we're hearing about what's happening there is not shocking because there's a lot of the country that is either under nobody's control or under the control of drug lords or warlords. So that's not surprising.

To the larger question which you asked about with respect to al Qaeda. These things are, at least in my judgment, they're inextricably intertwined -- what's happening here domestically and what's happening overseas. One of the reasons that I think it is so important here within our borders to do something different than we're doing now is that we know that there are terrorists and terrorist cells around this country as we speak. And we also know that we largely don't know what they're doing. We don't know what they're planning, we haven't infiltrated them. I'm talking about on our soil regardless of what's happening overseas, which I'll come to in just a minute.

So it seems to me that it's great to talk about homeland security. There are a number of ideas that I've talked about. The legislation that passed the Congress was a good piece of legislation and moves us in the right direction. But at the end of the day we as Americans live and we should continue to live a very open, free life which makes us extraordinarily vulnerable to attack, no matter what the defense and what the response is. So the most effective defense for the American people is to go find these people and stop them where they are as opposed to waiting for them to attack. At least in my judgment, based on history, the FBI's done a very poor job of that. That's what this Domestic Intelligence Agency is about. It's about giving somebody the responsibility, the sole responsibility -- not being responsible for arresting people and prosecuting cases, bringing indictments, et cetera, but being solely responsible for making sure that we know where these terrorist cells are, that we infiltrate them, and that we stop them before they do any damage to us.

That also, in my judgment, is directly connected to what's happening overseas because to the extent we have separated our intelligence operations geographically, instead of conceptually, which makes no sense. I mean the world has changed dramatically. We have to be willing to step back and say to ourselves in the world we live today does it make sense for us to have the FBI here domestically responsible for intelligence and fighting terrorism, to have the CIA responsible outside our borders, when the reality is that these terrorist organizations are completely linked.

So at least in my judgment we need to have a more conceptual approach to the threat that we're facing. And we need to not treat this as something that, I said this earlier in my speech, we do not treat this as something that another attack is inevitable, we can't do anything about that. It's not true. It is absolutely not true. There are things we can do right now to change the risk that exists.

So I think all of those things would have a positive effect on it. And Senator Graham's concern - He's about to go off, but I've been on the committee with him and his concerns are very legitimate.

**QUESTION:** Steve Peacock, Communications Daily.

Senator, regarding the legislation you intend to introduce to improve the emergency warning system, I understand that you're going to leave, as you mentioned, leave the Administration to work with the private sector and the media to develop this. But do you have a vision as to exactly where this could go? Or even generally where this could go? What will you propose in the bill and what direction will this take the system to?



**SENATOR EDWARDS:** Let me start with where we are now which is we essentially have no effective warning system. It's dependent on radio and television and that would, depending on when it happens, reach a lot of people. But the reality is there are a lot of people who would not be reached by that warning system.

I'm no expert on this. I know that what we have now doesn't work. My idea is, the kinds of things I would be thinking about would be some technology-driven system that allows us to use existing cell phone technology, existing telephone technology. An example would be if we could develop a system where it's 3:00 o'clock in the morning, a terrorist attack occurs in your community. You need to be alerted to it. There's a special ring on your telephone system and everybody in the community would receive that ring. Then have a backup system for people who may not have telephones. It could also be done with cell phone technology.

I don't know what the most effective way is to do it. Those are some ideas about how to do it. What I do know is there is a lot of technology available to us that's not being taken advantage of. How quickly we respond is enormously important to how much damage is done and how many lives are lost as a result of a terrorist attack.

**QUESTION:** My name is John Jewick, I'm a graduate student in international affairs.

I was very pleased to hear your attention in the speech given to two matters that deeply concern me. The first is our failure to rebuild Afghanistan. The second being the complete failure of the Administration to call on Americans to make sacrifices, especially privileged Americans to make sacrifices requisite to win this current war.

But I also have deep concerns that in order to do the things that I think that you pointed out that we need to do, that the upcoming attention and resources devoted to war in Iraq is going to distract our national attention from the jobs that we committed to rebuilding Afghanistan and also the sacrifices that I think we need to make in terms of energy independence and a number of other key issues.

I wonder if you think that the current Administration has the will and the desire to fight all these three battles at the same time.

**SENATOR EDWARDS:** I can't speak for them. My belief is that we as a nation can clearly address all these problems simultaneously. I think we have the will as a country and we certainly have the ability to address all these threats. Whether it's terrorist threat, homeland defense, whether it's

weapons of mass destruction and the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. I do think we have to get our priorities straight. I promise everyone else here, I didn't pay you to give that speech. But it was very well done.

I think that the priorities are out of whack when we're faced with making the American people safe, trying to fight a war on terrorism, an economic downturn which we've been in for some time, and we have an Administration that says some of these things that I've talked about in the speech we can't afford. But at the same time they're about to implement tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

It's hard to see how at some point this is not just completely ideological because it's impractical. It doesn't make any sense at this point.

Even if you were for that kind of tax cut policy in a presidential campaign in 2000 when the President made these promises, even if you were for it when it passed the Congress -- I was not, but even if you were for it, the world has changed dramatically since then. The economy has changed, the surpluses have disappeared, we've been attacked on our own soil, we're trying to fund a war on terrorism, we're trying to protect the American people. Who in their -- I mean who -- What thoughtful person -- [Laughter] -- would say that under those circumstances that's a responsible priority because it's not. It's not what we ought to be doing and it's not where we should be focused. We should be focused on running this government in a fiscally responsible way and doing what need to be done to protect the American people.

**VOICE:** Senator, thank you for discussing [inaudible].

**SENATOR EDWARDS:** Thank you all very much.

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