

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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Statement by the President on the White House Organization for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism

As President, my highest priority is the safety and security of the American people. That is why, in February, I issued a Presidential Study Directive to look at how the White House should be organized to deal with the critical issues of homeland security and counterterrorism. I have carefully reviewed the findings and recommendations of that study, and am announcing a new approach which will strengthen our security and the safety of our citizens. These decisions reflect the fundamental truth that the challenges of the 21st Century are increasingly unconventional and transnational, and therefore demand a response that effectively integrates all aspects of American power.

Key decisions that I have made include:

- The full integration of White House staff supporting national security and homeland security. The new "National Security Staff" will support all White House policymaking activities related to international, transnational, and homeland security matters. The establishment of the new National Security Staff, under the direction of the National Security Advisor, will end the artificial divide between White House staff who have been dealing with national security and homeland security issues.
- Maintaining the Homeland Security Council as the principle venue for interagency deliberations on issues that affect the security of the homeland such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, natural disasters, and pandemic influenza. The Homeland Security Council, like its National Security Council counterpart, will be supported by the National Security Staff.
- The establishment of new directorates and positions within the National Security Staff to deal with new and emerging 21st Century challenges associated with cybersecurity, WMD terrorism, transborder security, information sharing, and resilience policy, including preparedness and response.
- Retaining the position of Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (AP/HSCT) as my principal White House advisor on these issues, with direct and immediate access to me. The security of our homeland is of paramount importance to me, and I will not allow organizational impediments to stand in the way of timely action that ensures the safety of our citizens.
- Creating a new Global Engagement Directorate to drive comprehensive engagement policies that leverage diplomacy, communications, international development and assistance, and domestic engagement and outreach in pursuit of a host of national security objectives, including those related to homeland security.

The United States faces a wide array of challenges to its security, and the White House must be organized to effectively and efficiently leverage the tremendous talent and expertise of the dedicated Americans who work within it. The creation of the National Security Staff and the other recommendations from the study that I have approved will help to keep our country safe and our Homeland secure.