

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, EMERGING THREATS,
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Christopher Shays, Connecticut
Chairman
Room B-372 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Tel: 202 225-2548
Fax: 202 225-2382
E-mail: hr.groc@mail.house.gov

Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays March 3, 2003

Almost two years before the attacks of September 11, 2001, the *Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction* – far more widely and succinctly known as the Gilmore Commission – concluded the United States lacked a coherent, functional national strategy to guide disparate counterterrorism efforts. In testimony before this Subcommittee on March 26, 2001, the Commission’s Vice Chairman said, “a truly comprehensive national strategy will contain a high-level statement of national objectives coupled logically to a statement of the means used to achieve these objectives.”

The Bush Administration inherited a loose collection of presidential directives and law enforcement planning documents used as a strategic framework. But that fragile construct collapsed with the World Trade Center on September 11th. The brutal nature of the terrorist threat shattered naïve assumptions terrorists would be deterred by geographic, political or moral borders.

A new strategic paradigm was needed. Containment, deterrence reaction and mutually assured destruction no longer served to protect the fundamental security interests of the American people. The threat demands detection, prevention and a more proactive, preemptive approach to self-defense.

To meet the demands of a new, more dangerous world, the executive branch has promulgated strategy statements articulating national goals for various aspects of the war on terrorism. Subordinate to the overarching national security and military strategies, other plans guide efforts to secure the homeland, combat terrorism abroad, integrate military response capabilities, combat weapons of mass destruction, staunch terrorist funding, secure cyberspace and protect critical national infrastructure.

A strategy famine has given way to a veritable feast of high-level statements of national objectives and tactics to defeat the multifaceted foe that is global terrorism. Today we ask how these strategies link to form the comprehensive national policy recommended by the Gilmore Commission. Are they dynamic enough to meet changing, adaptable threats? Do they guide the application of finite resources to achieve critical objectives? And, how will we know if they are working?

Just as reorganizing the federal government to counter terrorism will take time, reorienting the U.S. long-term strategic mindset will require sustained effort and hard choices. Some fundamental elements of a fully integrated preparedness and response strategy are not yet evident. State officials and local first responders are still waiting to know how much will be expected of them in the event of a major incident. What capabilities – in terms of training and equipment – should be resident at the local level? What and how should federal capabilities be brought to bear?

To help us begin our consideration of these important questions today, we welcome two panels of distinguished witnesses, including former Governor James Gilmore, chairman of the advisory commission that has been, and remains, on the forefront of the national debate on combating terrorism. In future hearings, we will hear from Administration representatives and others to address specific elements of the strategic bulwark against terrorism.

We welcome all our witnesses and look forward to their testimony.