

THE FORGOTTEN HOMELAND

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THE FORGOTTEN
HOMELAND

A Century Foundation
Task Force Report

RICHARD A. CLARKE AND RAND BEERS, CHAIRS

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FOREWORD

We are approaching the fifth anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001. Over that time, the United States has led the effort to overthrow the Taliban from Afghanistan, invaded Iraq, and is still fighting in both nations. Congress enacted and renewed the Patriot Act. It put in place a new Department of Homeland Security and a new National Directorate of Intelligence as major components of an even wider reorganization of government intended to increase our capacities for fighting terrorism and coping with emergencies. We have spent several hundred billion dollars on activities labeled as part of the “war on terrorism,” in effect drastically altering budget priorities. In the process, domestic surveillance has been radically increased, challenging the way we judge basic issues of liberty and privacy. The American base at Guantanamo in Cuba was transformed into an open-ended prison facility from which international monitors have been barred.

The list could be extended almost indefinitely, but the importance of these developments is clear. American policymakers have been reshaping the role of government, foreign policy, and everyday life. In the past, such sweeping changes only took place when we were engaged in a full-scale war, which required mobilization of people and resources. But the current situation is different: there has been no conscription into military service and no explicit and immediate rationing or trade-off of private resources for military and security purposes. Tax cuts have gone forward and deficits continue to build up. The cost and consequences, in other words, still are accumulating. Moreover, the probability that there will be additional terrorist actions means that the changes set in motion on September 11 are probably far from final.

In this context, it is a matter of considerable urgency that we continue to ask basic questions about how effectively we are responding to the threat posed by suicidal terrorists. Have we made the most of our chances to shape a national and international response to terrorism? Have we made the right choices in terms of how we spend money and allocate

resources to defend the homeland? Have we strengthened or created the institutions we need to protect us? Have we struck a sensible balance between security and liberty? These sorts of questions are crucial to attaining a necessary level of transparency and accountability. They may seem obvious, but they have been, in large measure, unanswered. Obtaining and examining the facts with a critical eye has been proven over and over again to be the best method for testing and improving performance. We know from the experience of other government activities, from the routine exposure of problems in the private sector, and even from reports of serious problems in such nongovernmental institutions as the Catholic Church and the United Way, that no institution can be expected to perform well consistently without the discipline provided by outside scrutiny and advice.

For a time after September 11, there was a rare potential for unity. American leadership, perhaps, had an opportunity not only to bridge political divisions within the United States, but also to organize a vast global coalition against terrorism. Normal partisanship and nationalism, in a sense, were suspended as almost everyone felt the desire and need to come together and find ways to contain and eliminate the dangers made apparent by the attacks. Some had warned for years that the violence perpetrated around the world was hard evidence of a growing and unprecedented threat. But it took the shock of the massive casualties and damage on September 11 to awaken most people to the necessity to act.

This is not to say that it was obvious what the right decisions were after the attacks. But the opportunity was unique. Perhaps most important, because it is simply impossible to do every conceivable thing that might add to homeland security, we must examine closely the actual choices that have been made. And we must judge the effectiveness of what has ensued not just in conventional terms but also in light of the “opportunity costs” of following the road chosen by the current administration versus other possible responses.

To help all of us sort through these questions, The Century Foundation was delighted to work again with Richard Clarke, chairman of Good Harbor Consulting and former national coordinator for security and counterterrorism, among other senior White House positions, and to work with Rand Beers, president of the Valley Forge Initiative and former director for counterterrorism and counternarcotics on the National Security Council staff. Messrs. Clarke and Beers assembled an exceptional team of experts to work collaboratively on this volume. Their knowledge

and judgment are reflected in the depth of understanding and scope of this report. Just a sampling of the chapter titles provides a sense of how much ground they covered: “Building Homeland Security in Our Cities and States,” “A Counterterrorism Policy for Our Own Backyard,” “Security for a Nation in Motion,” “A Healthy Medical Response System,” “Emergency Response: Restoring Discarded Strategies that Worked,” “Preventing Nuclear Terrorism,” and “The Perils of Neglecting America’s Waterfront.” The authors of this volume present a powerful case that although much has been done it has not always been either the correct or most effective action. The report, however, is considerably more than a critique, for it offers a way to translate the present underlying public concern into an enhanced agenda.

For The Century Foundation, this report is the latest in a series of projects that began before the September 11 terrorist attacks and includes in-depth studies of ideas for reform of America’s intelligence operations. After September 11, we launched a major Homeland Security Project cochaired by former Governors Thomas Kean and Richard Celeste, and supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. This project is premised on the notion that the United States will be better prepared for the tests ahead if we are a nation armed not just with a powerful military and well-organized intelligence apparatus but also with a deeper public understanding of what we are up against and what we need to do in the face of changing threats.

One of the most important products of our effort was a publication similar to this one in that it was written by a team of experts under the direction of Richard Clarke. Titled *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action*, that book provided comprehensive details about the nature and scope of the terrorist threat as well as a concrete, multifaceted strategy for defeating it. Other Century Foundation publications focusing particularly on strengthening the nation’s capacity to prevent and respond to terrorism within our borders include *Breathing Easier? The Report of the Century Foundation Working Group on Bioterrorism Preparedness*, a report card evaluating the Department of Homeland Security’s performance, a special issue of *Governing* magazine titled *Securing the Homeland*, and a report by Donald F. Kettl on security challenges facing state and local governments. On the civil liberties challenges posed

post-September 11, our publications include a collection of essays titled *The War on Our Freedoms: Civil Liberties in an Age of Terrorism*, Stephen J. Schulhofer's *Rethinking the Patriot Act: Keeping America Safe and Free*, and *The Basics: The USA PATRIOT Act*. More information about these publications, as well as related issue briefs and commentary, are available on our Homeland Security Web site, www.homelandsec.org.

There is little doubt that we shall need a continuing willingness to assess our security efforts in the years ahead. Today, after the frustrations and failures of the governmental response to Hurricane Katrina, and the miscalculations and uncertainties of the Iraq invasion, there is a need for a strong and candid reassessment of our homeland security strategies over the past five years. We clearly have weaknesses that were unexpected. Just to take these two examples: in the aftermath of Katrina, we were incapable of organizing an effective response to help hundreds of thousands of citizens; and in the ongoing conflict in Iraq, we may be sending the wrong message to our enemies. Namely, instead of demonstrating our overwhelming strength, we may well be producing examples that define our limitations.

Future policies, then, must be more rigorously debated or mistakes will be inevitable. And, of course, even if we consider all options, homeland security will never be easy or complete. To the extent we make progress, however, we will be indebted to those like Richard Clarke and Rand Beers and their colleagues in this book who seek the truth and offer wise advice. On behalf of the trustees of The Century Foundation, I thank them for their work on this valuable report.

RICHARD C. LEONE, *PRESIDENT*
The Century Foundation
June 2006

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TASK FORCE MEMBERS

CATHERINE A. ALLEN is CEO of BITS, a nonprofit, CEO-driven financial services industry consortium made up of one hundred of the largest financial institutions in the United States, and chairman and CEO of the Santa Fe Group, a consulting firm serving financial institutions and other critical infrastructure companies and a strategic partner to BITS. She is chair of the Advisory Council for the National Foundation for Credit Counseling and sits on a number of nonprofit and for-profit boards, including those of the Financial Services Technology Consortium, the Financial Services Sector Coordinating Council, the Identity Theft Assistance Center, the Electronification of Authentication Partnership, Giesecke & Devrient, Stewart Title Guaranty Company, NBS Technologies, and Hudson Ventures.

RAND BEERS is president of the Valley Forge Initiative, an organization that develops and disseminates a twenty-first-century-progressive vision of national security. He served as the national security adviser to the Kerry-Edwards 2004 campaign. After serving as a Marine Corps officer and rifle company commander in Vietnam, he entered the Foreign Service in 1971 and the civil service in 1983. From 1988 to 1998, he served on the National Security Council Staff at the White House as director for counterterrorism and counternarcotics, director for peacekeeping, and senior director for intelligence programs. From 1998 to 2003, he was assistant secretary of state for international narcotics and law enforcement affairs. From 2002 to 2003, he was special assistant to the president and senior director for combating terrorism at the National Security Council.

JANE A. BULLOCK is a founding partner of Bullock & Haddow, LLC, a risk mitigation and emergency management consulting firm. She has worked in emergency management for over twenty-five years. Prior to founding Bullock & Haddow, she served as the chief of staff to James Lee Witt, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, from 1992 to 2000. She serves on the adjunct faculty at the Institute for Crisis,

Disaster and Risk Management at George Washington University. She is a coauthor of a disaster management textbook titled *Introduction to Emergency Management* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003) and of *Introduction to Homeland Security* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2004).

RICHARD A. CLARKE is the chairman of Good Harbor Consulting, LLC. Clarke served the past three presidents as special assistant to the president for global affairs, national coordinator for security and counterterrorism, and special adviser to the president for cyber security. Prior to his White House years, he served for nineteen years in the Pentagon, the intelligence community, and the Department of State. During the Reagan administration, he was deputy assistant secretary of state for intelligence. During the George H. W. Bush administration, he was assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs and coordinated diplomatic efforts to support the 1990–91 Gulf War and the subsequent security arrangements. He is the author of *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (Free Press, 2004) and is an on-air consultant for ABC News.

R. P. EDDY is senior fellow for counterterrorism at the Manhattan Institute, where he is executive director of the Center for Policing Terrorism, and managing director of Gerson Lehrman Group, where he leads the Geopolitical Risk Division. He has served as a senior adviser to the New York Police Department, the Los Angeles Police Department, and others. He has served variously as director at the White House National Security Council; senior policy officer to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan; chief of staff to the U.S. ambassador to the UN; and senior adviser for intelligence and counterterrorism to the secretary of energy. He was honored as a World Economic Forum Global Leader for Tomorrow and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

CHARLES D. FERGUSON is a fellow for science and technology at the Council on Foreign Relations, adjunct professor in the security studies program at Georgetown University, and adjunct lecturer in the homeland security certificate program at the Johns Hopkins University. Previously, he was a scientist-in-residence in the Washington, D.C., office of the Monterey Institute's Center for Nonproliferation Studies, where he codirected a project that systemically assessed how to prevent and

respond to nuclear and radiological terrorism. The project's major findings were published in *The Four Faces of Nuclear Terrorism* (Routledge, 2005). He has served as a foreign affairs officer in the Bureau of Nonproliferation, Department of State, where he helped develop U.S. government policies on nuclear safety and security issues. After graduating with distinction from the United States Naval Academy, he served as an officer on a fleet ballistic missile submarine and studied nuclear engineering at the Naval Nuclear Power School. He has done scientific research at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, the University of Maryland's Institute for Physical Science and Technology, the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, and the Space Telescope Science Institute.

STEPHEN E. FLYNN is the inaugural occupant of the Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and a commander in the U.S. Coast Guard (retired). He has served as director and principal author for the task force report *America: Still Unprepared—Still in Danger*, cochaired by former Senators Gary Hart and Warren Rudman. He is the author of the critically acclaimed national bestseller *America the Vulnerable: How Our Government Is Failing to Protect Us from Terrorism* (HarperCollins, 2004).

JOHN GANNON is vice president for global analysis at BAE Systems. Previously, he was staff director of the Homeland Security Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. In 2002–2003, he was a team leader in the White House's Transitional Planning Office for the Department of Homeland Security. He has served as the CIA's director of European analysis, deputy director for intelligence, chairman of the National Intelligence Council, and assistant director of central intelligence for analysis and production. In the private sector, he developed the analytic workforce for Intellibridge Corporation, a Web-based provider of outsourced analysis for government and corporate clients. He is an adjunct professor in the National Security Studies Program at Georgetown University.

JULIETTE N. KAYYEM is a lecturer in public policy at Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a faculty affiliate at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Previously, she was executive

director for Research at the Belfer Center and oversaw the terrorism and homeland security research program at Harvard from 2001 to 2003. From 1999 to July 2001, she served as former House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt's appointment to the National Commission on Terrorism. She served in a variety of capacities at the Department of Justice, including as a legal adviser to Attorney General Janet Reno. Her work focuses on counterterrorism, law enforcement, and homeland security and has appeared in numerous academic and popular publications. She is the coauthor of *Protecting Liberty in an Age of Terror* (MIT Press, 2005) and coeditor of *First to Arrive: State and Local Response to Terrorism* (MIT Press, 2003), and is a national security analyst for NBC News.

ROBERT K. KNAKE is a senior associate at Good Harbor Consulting, LLC, where he advises clients on homeland security and counterterrorism issues. He has served as a research associate in national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he worked with Stephen Flynn and led research for the second part of the report of the Hart-Rudman Commission, and as a research assistant on the Homeland Security Partnerships Initiative at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He authored the Medical Consequence Management Plan for the 2004 Democratic National Conference for Boston Emergency Medical Services.

LAWRENCE J. KORB is a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and a senior adviser to the Center for Defense Information. Previously, he was a senior fellow and director of national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Prior to joining the council, he served as director of the Center for Public Policy Education and senior fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution, dean of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh, and vice president of corporate operations at the Raytheon Company. He served as assistant secretary of defense (manpower, reserve affairs, installations, and logistics) from 1981 through 1985. In that position, he administered about 70 percent of the defense budget. For his service in that position, he was awarded the Department of Defense's medal for Distinguished Public Service. He served on active duty for four years as naval flight officer, and retired from the Naval Reserve with the rank of captain.

PAUL B. KURTZ is executive director of the Cyber Security Industry Alliance (CSIA), an advocacy group dedicated to ensuring the privacy, reliability, and integrity of information systems through public policy, technology, education, and awareness. Prior to joining CSIA, he was most recently special assistant to the president and senior director for critical infrastructure protection on the White House's Homeland Security Council, where he was responsible for both physical and cyber security.

MARTIN O'MALLEY currently serves as the mayor of Baltimore, Maryland, and the cochair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Homeland Security Task Force. He has been called America's Best Young Mayor by *Esquire* magazine and one of the country's "top five big-city" mayors by *Time* magazine. He has received national acclaim for his "CitiStat" government performance system. Before being elected mayor in 1999, he served on the City Council and as an assistant state's attorney for the city of Baltimore.

BRIDGER MCGAW currently is a homeland security policy and strategic communications consultant for public and private organizations. He has held several governmental positions, including for Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley, U.S. Representative Marty Meehan, and as assistant press secretary to Vice President Al Gore. Appointed by President Bill Clinton, he served on the staff of Secretary of Defense William Cohen as a public affairs officer and defense fellow.

JAMIE F. METZL is executive vice president of the Asia Society. He directed the 2003 Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on Emergency Responders and authored the task force report, *Emergency Responders: Drastically Underfunded, Dangerously Unprepared*. His government appointments have included deputy staff director and senior counselor of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, senior coordinator for international public information and senior adviser to the under-secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs at the Department of State, and director for multilateral and humanitarian affairs on the National Security Council. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a cochair of the Board of the Partnership for a Secure America, and a former White House Fellow.

BLAKE W. MOBLEY is a Ph.D. candidate in government at Georgetown University specializing in intelligence and counterterrorism. He has worked as a summer associate at the RAND Corporation and with the Center for Tactical Counter Terrorism on projects for the New York City Police Department. He served as a member of The Century Foundation task force that produced the report, *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action*.

DANIEL B. PRIETO is director and senior fellow of the Homeland Security Center at the Reform Institute. Previously, he was research director of the Homeland Security Partnership Initiative and fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is an associate member of the Markle Foundation Task Force on National Security in the Information Age and led the management working group of the Center for Strategic and International Studies/Heritage Foundation Task Force on the Roles, Mission, and Organization of the Department of Homeland Security. He has served on the professional staff of the Select Committee on Homeland Security in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is a former technology-industry executive and investment banker. He is a past recipient of the International Affairs Fellowship from the Council on Foreign Relations. He is coauthor, with Stephen E. Flynn, of *Neglected Defense: Mobilizing the Private Sector to Support Homeland Security* (Council on Foreign Relations, 2006).

ALISON SILVERSTEIN is a consultant to the electric industry on electric reliability, infrastructure security, energy efficiency, distributed generation, demand response, and technology adoption issues. She worked as senior energy policy adviser to Chairman Pat Wood, III, at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, from July 2001 through July 2004. She advised the chairman on a variety of legal, economic, strategic, and administrative issues and served as the agency's lead on infrastructure security, cyber-security, and energy reliability and worked on most of the agency's major cases and rulemakings. Previously, she worked variously for Pacific Gas & Electric Co., ICF Inc., the Environmental Law Institute, and the U.S. Department of Interior.

STEVEN N. SIMON is the Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Prior to joining the

Council, he specialized in Middle Eastern affairs at the RAND Corporation. Previously, he was the deputy director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and Carol Deane Senior Fellow in U.S. Security Studies. He served at the White House as director for global issues and senior director for transnational threats for five years under President Bill Clinton, during which he was involved in U.S. counterterrorism policy and operations as well as security policy in the Near East and South Asia. Before that, he had a fifteen year career at the U.S. Department of State. Mr. Simon is the coauthor of *The Age of Sacred Terror* (Random House, 2002), which won the Council on Foreign Relations 2004 Arthur Ross Book Award, and coeditor of *Iraq at the Crossroads; State and Society in the Shadow of Regime Change* (Oxford University Press/IISS, 2003). Most recently, he coauthored *The Next Attack* (Henry Holt, 2005), which examines the evolution of the jihad since September 11, 2001, and America's response.

AMY E. SMITHSON is a senior fellow in the international security studies program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. She specializes in in-depth field research on issues related to chemical and biological weapons proliferation, threat reduction mechanisms, defense, and domestic preparedness. Before joining the Center for Strategic and International Studies, she worked at the Henry L. Stimson Center, where in January 1993 she founded the Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Project to serve as an information clearinghouse, watchdog, and problem solver on chemical and biological weapons issues. Previously, she worked at the Pacific-Sierra Research Corporation, where she concentrated on strategies and tactics to monitor nuclear weapons accords, and at the Center for Naval Analyses.

MOIRA WHELAN is the director of communications for the Valley Forge Initiative. She formerly served as director of communications and outreach for the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and as communications director for the Democrats on the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Homeland Security.

