

Statement of Richard V. Allen*
Before the
Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security
House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee.

It is a privilege to participate in your timely inquiry into the role of the National Security Council in the context of the dramatic and catastrophic international terrorist attack on the United States. This inquiry will lead you to at two inescapable conclusions:

First: the nation has derived great benefits from inherent wisdom that created the National Security Council system in 1947, and this has been proven many times in the last 54 years.

Second: the present incarnation of the National Security Council in the Bush Administration demonstrates persuasively that the machinery of the NSC system is in the able hands of truly outstanding, careful and highly experienced people. The NSC is an advisory body to the President, one that offers up to the President refined conclusions and opinions, and it is the President who makes the decisions after weighing the advice of his key advisors. Each President decides whom, beyond the statutory members, will participate in the national security process. On February 13, 2001 President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 1, defining in exquisite detail the structure of the National Security Council System in his Administration.

Having been a close student of the national security apparatus for more than forty years, and having served three times in the White House by appointment of the President, twice in the NSC and once as Deputy Director of the Council on International Economic Policy, an NSC counterpart in the 1970s, I consider the present national security team of the Bush Administration to be the best of my lifetime, and by far the most experienced. With the President in charge, just consider for a moment the combined experience of the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Advisor. Nor is it just the experienced people at the top, but also the deputy secretaries such as Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Armitage, the under secretaries such as Dov Zakheim, Douglas Feith, John Bolton, Paula Dobriansky, the assistant and deputy assistant secretaries and the seasoned staff members of the Vice President and the National Security Council. Together, this constellation of people is extraordinary, and is fully capable of dealing with and responding to the attack upon America.

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The President and his top White House advisors have also made important choices this week: creating the Office Of Homeland Security under Governor Tom Ridge; adding a deputy national security advisor for combating terrorism, General Wayne Downing, and enhancing the role and reach of Richard Clarke as Special Advisor to the president for Cyberspace Security. It is hard to imagine more qualified individuals to fill these vital roles, and the speed with which this has been done pays a high compliment to the President, Vice President and National Security Advisor for their willingness to innovate and respond to pressing national needs.

We are just four weeks removed from the massive attack on our freedom, so aptly described by President Bush in his addresses to the Congress and to the nation. Immediately before this event, in the Dog Days of Summer, we were awash in a steady progression of political attacks and drumbeat media criticism on the President, the Secretary of Defense, The Secretary of State and even the National Security Advisor. The national security team was criticized as an Administration of retreads and "old faces," depicted as uncoordinated, mired in internecine policy warfare and turf battles, somewhat out of touch with present realities, perhaps just not the proper people for this new Millennium.

How quickly this sort of sniping has stopped and its effects been forgotten; the very same team is now receiving unlimited praise from all sides, even as questions are raised about the new lines of authority. Members of Congress, as well as the American public, may consider themselves fortunate indeed to have this array of highly experienced and battle-tested veterans in office at a time of great crisis.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Congress made its contribution to the national security process in a much different way than it does today. One need only recall the enormous contribution Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, and his years-long hearings under the rubric, "Organizing for National Security." As a member of the Governmental Affairs Committee, Senator Jackson conducted pioneering congressional inquiries on the National Security Council and policy-making at the presidential level, and chaired the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

His hearing spanned several years; patiently, he took the testimony of hundreds of academicians, specialists and experts from this country and abroad, and conducted a painstaking inquiry into what the nation needed. These hearings had a lasting influence on the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, and I can recall providing my boss at the time, candidate Richard Nixon, with a series of memos and discussion papers based on the Jackson hearings during the 1968 presidential campaign. Congress will not again achieve continuity in its important contribution to national security until something similar to what Scoop Jackson did back then emerges for this modern era.

Mr. Chairman, you have asked witnesses today to prepare answers to ten questions:

First: the role of the NSC under my tenure if faced with the events of September 11, 2001. We would have been prepared to deal with a similar event at a comparable

period in the Administration, but minus the tools of today – I cite only the rapid response of email technology. While a great crisis, but perhaps not one on the same scale as September 11th, on March 30, 1981, the President was shot outside a Washington hotel. There were important national security considerations, and the machinery went to work immediately. In a strange comparison with today, the human intelligence functions of the intelligence community had been decimated by the predecessor administration, and had there been the dimension of an international conspiracy, we would have been ill equipped to handle it. Only by a patient rebuilding of human intelligence assets did we get through the challenges of the 1980s, and the rewards became the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. I think the challenge to Bush Administration is clear: it must dramatically expand our intelligence capabilities. The Congress appears to be united with the President on this issue.

Second: The role of the NSC under the leadership of President Bush and Condoleezza Rice in dealing with this crisis. I believe I have given a partial response to this question in my initial remarks, and I am happy to complete it by testifying that both have been truly exemplary, demonstrating great qualities of leadership. In fact, I cannot quite imagine our predicament today had not the President and Dr. Rice worked out, in advance and in the anticipation of crisis, such a detailed format for the national security machinery. NSPD-1 gave a framework for our response, and it was managed with admirable skill. Had a comparable event occurred in 1981, our structure and interagency activities would not have been in place – due essentially to a misguided initiative by a Cabinet member to assert early control over the national security machinery, with the result that the equivalent document to President Bush's NSPD-1, the basic organizational structure for the machinery, was not issued for nearly a year. That was an important impediment. The decisive action of Dr. Rice during the Transition assured this could not happen in the Bush Administration.

Third: What questions are being put to the National Security Advisor by the President? As I understand the manner in which this President thinks and operates, I would expect that his questions at the outset were basic and to the point – the essentials, the core questions of who, what, where, when, how? In a manner similar to President Reagan, and different from that of, say President Nixon, President Bush was probably not at first concerned with theoretical constructs or elaborate answers. Nothing about this attack was simple, yet I expect that this President stuck to the basics, calling upon the huge reservoir of talent at his disposal to fill in the details.

Fourth: What should the President reasonable expect from his National Security Advisor in such a crisis situation? He should expect timely and accurate information, crisp definition of the options as recommended by cabinet and other principals of the NSC, and, if he cares to ask (as he certainly does), the opinions of Condoleezza Rice, whom he knows and trusts. The importance of the personal bonds, especially those based on long acquaintance and established personal trust should not be overlooked. Such an advisor will perform as the "honest broker" function that is incumbent upon that person.

Fifth: What is the likely role and what are the jurisdictional parameters of Governor Ridge's Office of Homeland Security? This is an exceptionally important question, and already the print and electronic media are filled with questions. I once had the experience of assuming White House duties, in 1971, without a very clear definition of the role and scope of the organization. On the recommendation of a presidential commission on which I served and in response to a very urgent need, President Nixon created the Council on International Economic Policy in 1971, to serve as the economic equivalent of the NSC. Its first Director was Peter G. Peterson, and I was the Deputy. Its mission was to craft a comprehensive international economic and trade policy, bringing together all the disparate agencies and government organizations dealing with such matters.

With the establishment of the Council, those agencies, whose interests were often given short shrift or had been neglected within the NSC process, had a "friend in court," within the White House confines. The Council quickly reached out to those agencies, and for the six years of its existence before being eliminated by the Carter Administration as an "economy measure," performed its job well. To demonstrate the foresight of the present team, in January Dr. Rice established a high level deputy within the NSC staff to perform these functions, restoring them to a proper place after nearly 15 years.

Sixth: How will or should the Office of Homeland Security function in relation to the NSC structure? The short answer is "smoothly." It will not be easy. This is going to be a complicated and intricate wiring diagram. The NSC will remain the "big brother" to this new office, and much of its embedded experience will be of no immediate value to Governor Ridge and his team. Its reach to many organizations must be effective if it is to respond to its mandate in the Executive Order, and it will require some time to establish its lines of authority. Because the NSC in its present form is totally committed to the President's agenda, I would expect there to be much interaction and perhaps even some natural tensions as the OHS begins to find its footing. The division of responsibilities becomes somewhat clearer now: the NSC can gradually divest itself of some of the broad but interconnected questions of domestic security, as it has on its plate quite enough tasks and challenges. This in no way reduces its stature or importance, but rather can enhance its effectiveness and efficiency in dealing with its present menu. Governor Ridge will deal more regularly with the law enforcement side, lightening part of the NSC burden, and the results will be integrated into the NSC process. The lateral links to General Downing and Richard Clarke will help the process.

Seventh: What of the respective roles of Mr. Clark and General Downing? I believe that the creation of dual lines of reporting makes eminent good sense. These functions may differ somewhat in the domestic and international spheres, yet they require a unity because their basic roles will be to integrate information, intelligence and policy. The NSC is designed to be the consummate coordinator, and you will understand the confidence I have in its capacity to fulfill its mission because of the folks who man it.

Eighth and Ninth: What of the role of Counterterrorism office under General Downing? By making General Downing a deputy national security advisor and deputy

assistant to the President, his place is defined. He can range throughout the system and the government as he deems appropriate, and he is clearly empowered, yet functions within the defined parameters of the NSC system established by the President and Dr. Rice in February. This is an excellent solution to what, in the absence of such a structure, may have become a jurisdictional challenge.

Tenth: How should Richard Clarke function in relation to the Ridge and Downing offices, and the National Security Advisor? Again, the short answer should be "smoothly and effectively." Given the breadth of Mr. Clarke's experience and his time in office, I would doubt he'd have a moment's difficulty in delivering his advice and other input to any of the principals with whom he must work.

In short, I believe this Administration possesses the proper organizational framework to address national and domestic security threats, and has all the tools its needs to cope with what will inevitably become one of our greatest and most historic challenges.