



**Attorney General Ashcroft**

**Outlines Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force  
October 31, 2001**

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: Good afternoon.

As a nation of immigrants, America welcomes friends from other countries who wish to visit, to study, to work, become a part of our nation. But as September the 11th vividly illustrates, aliens also come to our country with the intent to do great evil. Just as we welcome America's friends, we will not allow our welcome to be abused by those who are America's enemies.

The Department of Justice will prevent aliens who engage in or support terrorist activity from entering our country. We will detain, prosecute, deport terrorist aliens who are already inside the nation's borders. America will not allow terrorists to use our hospitality as a weapon against us.

Today I'm announcing several steps that we're taking to enhance our ability to protect the United States from the threat of terrorist aliens. These measures form one part of the department's concentrated strategy to prevent terrorist attacks by taking suspected terrorists off the street.

Forty years ago, the Department of Justice, under Attorney General Robert Kennedy, undertook an extraordinary law enforcement campaign to root out and to dismantle organized crime. The Kennedy Justice Department, it is said, would arrest a mobster for spitting on the sidewalk, if it would aid in the war against organized crime.

In the war on terror, it is policy of this Justice Department to be equally aggressive. We will arrest and detain any suspected terrorist who has violated the law. If suspects are found not to have links to terrorism or not to have violated the law, they'll be released. But terrorists who are in violation of the law will be convicted, in some cases be deported, and in all cases be prevented from doing further harm to Americans.

Aggressive detention of lawbreakers and material witnesses is vital to preventing, disrupting, or delaying new attacks.

It is difficult for a person in jail or under detention to murder innocent people or to aid or abet in terrorism.

Three Michigan men suspected of having knowledge of the September 11th attacks, for example, were arrested on charges of possessing false documents. In addition to a day planner containing notations in Arabic and what appeared to be a diagram of an airport flight line, agents found false immigration forms, a fraudulent U.S. visa and a false alien identification card in the apartment of the three men.

On October 29th, the president instructed the Department of Justice to create a Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force. Today I am pleased to introduce the man who will head the task force. Steven C. McGraw is an FBI agent who hails from El Paso, Texas. Currently he serves as the deputy assistant director of the Intelligence Branch of the Investigative Services Division at FBI Headquarters.

In addition to his long career of service at the FBI, Mr. McCraw is a former Texas state trooper. His personal experience attests to the important role that our state and local law enforcement partners play in the war against terror.

The Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force that Mr. McCraw will lead will ensure that federal agencies coordinate their efforts to bar from the United States all aliens who meet any of the following criteria: aliens who are representatives, members or supporters of terrorist organizations; aliens who are suspected of engaging in terrorist activity; or aliens who provide material support to terrorist activity.

In addition, Mr. McCraw will oversee the government's efforts to coordinate information that allows us to track, detain, prosecute and deport any such aliens who have managed to enter our country. The Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force will pursue both these goals -- barring terrorists from entering the United States, and tracking down and deporting those who do enter the United States -- to the maximum extent permitted by law.

The terrorist task force, the tracking task force will serve one of the most important objectives in the war against terrorism, to facilitate communication and coordination among the INS, the Immigration and Naturalization Service; the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the Customs Service; and other agencies responsible for protecting our nation against terrorist aliens.

With the task force, these agencies will function as joint participants in our common

*Cited in Al-Kidd v. Ashcroft,  
No. 05-36059 archived on September 8, 2009*

mission to neutralize the threat of terrorist aliens. The task force will also encourage them to share critical information about potential terrorists so that future attacks can be disrupted before they occur.

In order to prevent terrorists and their supporters from entering the United States, the Department of Justice, the Department of State and the CIA have agreed to impose new security measures on the issuance of non-immigrant visas. First, in light of the heightened security interests and new authorities for exclusion in the anti-terrorism law, we will revise the non-immigrant visa process.

The revision will serve two purposes relevant to our review. First, it will serve to elicit additional biographical and other information that is relevant to our security review; and second, it will serve to provide additional information that the FBI, the INS and CIA can use as starting points to conduct further investigations before visas are issued.

Secondly, we will require security advisory opinions and background investigations of some non-immigrant visa applicants. Based on the information obtained on the application and from any consular interview, the Department of State will determine whether an application will be referred to Washington for the preparation of a security advisory opinion or for background issues in consultation with the FBI and the CIA. No visa will issue to such a person unless and until a favorable security advisory opinion or the additional time allowed for background investigation has been completed or expired.

The Department of State will have the discretion to waive this Security Advisory Opinion requirement for individuals who are known to them or who are otherwise determined not to pose a risk.

The Department of Justice is also moving forcefully to implement new authorities in our antiterrorism law. Today, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has issued guidance to immigration personnel informing them about the new power that the USA Patriot Act provides for them in terms of the detention, arrest, and removal of terrorist aliens.

The act broadens the grounds of inadmissibility, that is grounds for which admission to the United States can be denied, to include representatives of groups that publicly endorse terrorist activity in the United States. It also makes aliens inadmissible if they provide material support to a designated terrorist organization; even if they don't specifically intend to support this terrorist activity, they are giving support to the organization which conducts terrorist activities, they can be denied admission to the United States. In most cases, aliens will be inadmissible under these new provisions for past support they had given to terrorist organizations.

In addition, the USA Patriot Act requires the detention of aliens whom the attorney general certifies to be a threat to national security, or who are determined to have engaged -- to have been engaged -- let me start that over again. One, the attorney general, if he certifies that they are a threat to national security, they must be detained by a requirement of the USA Patriot Act; or two, if they are determined to have been engaged in terrorist activities. Once arrested, aliens must be charged with a criminal or immigration offense within seven days, under the act. If the charges are dismissed, the aliens will be released. Otherwise, charged aliens must be detained until they are removed from the United States, according to the act, or until they are determined no longer to pose a threat to national security. This measure, which is the equivalent of denying bail to violent offenders, will prevent dangerous aliens from being released to mingle among the American citizens that they would harm.

Finally, I am today asking the secretary of State to designate 46 groups as terrorists organizations under the USA Patriot Act. All these groups have committed or planned violent terrorist acts, or serve as fronts for terrorist organizations.

The groups to be designated as terrorist organizations include those linked to the al Qaeda network, whose assets the president has frozen, pursuant to an executive order. The remainder of the groups to be designated have been found by the Department of State, in its "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report, to have engaged -- to have been engaged in terrorist activity. Designating these groups as terrorist organizations will enable us to prevent aliens who are affiliated with them from entering the United States.

In addition, any aliens who are inadmissible because of their affiliation with these groups at the time they manage to enter our country would also be subject to removal.

Now these restrictions apply to the groups' representatives and members. Also inadmissible are aliens who use their positions of prominence to endorse terrorist activity.

As the president has emphasized, America's new war against terrorism has two fronts. Our armed forces will fight abroad against terrorism and the states that support terrorists abroad. It falls to all Americans to fight terrorism at home. Our borders divide these two fronts. The U.S.A. Patriot Act authorized vital new weapons for us to

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fight the war at the borders and here at home, and the Justice Department is committed to ensuring that these weapons are deployed quickly, that they're deployed efficiently, and that they're deployed effectively.

I'm pleased now to introduce Jim Ziglar, the commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service for the United States of America. Commissioner?

MR. ZIGLAR: Thank you, General. Following up on what the general said, the U.S.A. Patriot Act, we believe, is very important to the INS's success in carrying out its part in this war on terrorism.

In addition to the things that the general mentioned, there were three things that were addressed in this act that we consider quite vital to us. One is the additional personnel that we will need at the border; secondly, the additional technology and enhancement of our technology, so that we can disseminate information more readily and on a real-time basis; and thirdly and most importantly, the provisions in the act that allow us to share information among agencies. That has been a critical block, I believe, to a lot of effectiveness that we've had -- is not getting the information in a timely fashion. And this act, we believe, will facilitate that in great measure.

The INS definitely welcomes the Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force -- it's a little difficult to say that all in one fell swoop. We believe that this task force is going to provide us, as well as other agencies that are involved, with real-time access to information that we can share in order to do our job better.

I'd like to note that the INS has been and continues to be a very vital player in this war on terrorism, in this investigation, as well as the ongoing process of protecting the American people from what we see as the forces of evil. I'd like to thank the INS folks who have been involved in this. Since September 11th, they have worked very long hours. Our people are working double time. They are doubling up on the border; they're doubling up in terms of the investigations. They're working very hard, and they deserve great commendation.

At the same time, I'd like to note that the INS continues to carry out the other duties that we have, and one of those is welcoming immigrants to this country. I had an opportunity several times to testify before the Senate and the House, and to make the point that what we're dealing with here is not immigration; we're dealing with evil. Immigrants are not terrorists. We've got lots of immigrants that people that come to this country to build their lives here and to contribute. And so we're not talking about immigration, we're talking about evil.

The guidance that is being released to our field operations and to you is really just the first step in explaining to our field operations what this new law means. It will be an evolving process for us to develop reactions to specific situations. And I can tell you that the headquarters will be very much involved in this as we go along.

I'd like to assure everyone that the INS will exercise this new and very powerful authority in a very careful manner in order to protect our cherished liberties.

I'd also like to personally thank the Congress for working together in a very bipartisan way to develop this bill so that we can move on and more effectively do what we're required to do at the INS, both with respect to our ongoing duties, and with respect to this investigation.

And with that, I'd like to introduce to you the new director of the Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force -- I knew I was going to do it! -- (laughter) -- that's Steve McCraw.

Steve?

MR. MCCRAW: Thank you, Commissioner. Attorney General. I'm truly honored to be selected for this extremely important position and assignment with the Foreign Terrorism Tracking Task Force. I'd like to speak on the behalf, if I may, for the women and men in local, state and local law enforcement, the State Department, Immigration, our military, everyone wants to -- no matter what position you have, to do everything they can to prevent another foreign terrorist act.

I mean, that is absolutely the essence. And to be involved with a task force whose mandate is to first focus on keeping those terrorists and those that support them outside, not let them into the United States is critical. Secondly, if they've made it into the United States, to find them, those would-be terrorists, to find them, their supporters, and get them out of the United States. It's very simple. And the only way you do that, and the attorney general said it, the commissioner reiterated, is we have to share information. And what better way to do it than in a task force? There's always a value-added benefit, and certainly, it's been said, a force multiplier, when you do it in a teamwork-type approach. And that requires information-sharing, and that's what we'll be doing, information-sharing, maybe the most seemingly mundane data which may end up being important, but also the most sensitive data.

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And I want to personally thank the attorney general for the selection for this important assignment. Thank you, sir.

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: Thank you. Questions?

Q General, has any anthrax been found in the building from the tests that have been done? And second question is, has the threat in any way diminished since Monday night?

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: The tests are still being processed regarding anthrax, in terms of testing done regarding the facilities associated with the Justice Department. And we do not have test results back.

Q (Inaudible.)

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: And I have no reason to indicate that there is any reason for people not to be as careful as we have asked them to be.

Yes, ma'am.

Q General, what progress can you report in trying to track down the source of the anthrax? Is any progress being made?

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: Well, this is a matter of great concern to us, and not merely to the Justice Department authorities but to a number of others: state and local authorities, to the postal authorities. And we are working very hard to try and to locate the source and determine ways to prevent additional problems and threats associated with it. But I don't -- I'm not in a position to be able to say to you that we are on the brink of making an announcement here. We don't have progress to report at this time.

Yes, sir.

Q Mr. Attorney General, can you walk us through, or Mr. McCraw, when and how the FBI will be opening the mail that was sort of trapped in the Capitol. And then secondly, if someone can comment on the story out today on the six men detained by the INS supposedly with maps or photos of a nuclear powerplant in their automobiles?

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: I don't -- I cannot comment on any plan by the FBI to open the mail that was destined for the Capitol.

And as to the story, to the best of my knowledge, that's a story and nothing more. I don't have any reason to believe it to be true. It was noted that I had responded emotionally to this situation, when as a matter of fact, I hadn't even known about the situation until I read about my response in the newspaper. (Laughter.) So I would say that if the story were true, I think that they have accurately predicted the kind of response I would have. (Laughter.) And they almost -- well, anyhow, you know -- but a lot of things are said about me that aren't totally true. You take Imus, for instance, this morning said I had the most hideous \$2 haircut in the history of the world. (Laughter.) And I beg to differ. It's a \$7 haircut, not a \$2 haircut. (Laughter.)

Yes?

Q But there have been some instances in which, we have learned in the aftermath of September 11th, that some of the hijackers had some visa problems or inconsistencies. One even had an arrest warrant out. But when they went through checkpoints with the Immigration in Miami and elsewhere, these things were -- they were allowed into the country, essentially. How did that kind of thing happen? And I suppose this task force is meant to stop that kind of thing from happening.

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: Well, the task force is meant to help us do a better job. You'll remember that some people were allowed to come into the country based on saying they would have a permanent residence, and they just wrote things like "Marriott Hotel, New York." There are a lot of Marriotts in New York, and even when you sweep those and ask for their eventual -- whether or not they ever showed up there, you can't find that they did. So the development of a new set of protocols that will provide better information and give us an opportunity to screen will improve our performance, and that improved performance should elevate the security of the American people. That's really the number-one thing.

Yes?

Q Mr. Ashcroft, one of the things that we've heard about over the last few years that was a big problem with immigration situations is that the INS and FBI databases could not talk to each other, they were not married, and a lot of people were slipping through the cracks in that system, and that it was going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars to marry the two systems; and every time any White House took a look at that --

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: Well, a lot of married folks don't talk to themselves either.

(Laughter.)

Q But seriously, sir, are you going to be able to marry those two systems, to combine the two systems so that they can talk to each other?

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: We are working very carefully to develop a capacity to share information more profoundly. And you touch on what is a very strong objective. The federal government has been all too frequently characterized by a variety of databases or informational awarenesses that aren't available. The USA Patriot Act, which the Congress providently legislated, takes down some of the walls, so that -- previously it was against the law for information to flow, but it doesn't automatically provide the mechanisms whereby information will flow.

And one of the things that -- Steve, you've gone -- there you are -- he's going to be doing is to make sure that we get as much exchange and cross-availability of this information. Information is a key element in the war against terrorism, and we are working very aggressively to coordinate our informational capacities so that they become interoperable, so that those in one part of the government that have information can make that information available to and valuable to others.

And I think you had --

Q Yes, I had a question about how you determine whether someone is a supporter of a terrorist group. And this would get to the question of what their political allegiances are, what their political philosophies may be. If a student comes into this country and he comes with no bad intent, but at some later point determines that he is sympathetic to a terrorist organization, how do you track that, how do you determine that?

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: Well, one of the things that I've done today is to announce that there are, I think, 46 known terrorist organizations that will be publicly posted. And those who are involved with them or support them are deemed by the law to be supporters of terrorism. And this law applies to aliens, to those who are not U.S. citizens. And if they support those organizations and give to them financially or work with them, provide work for them and the like, it'll be a basis for their removal from the United States of America. This is a clear authority that strengthens our ability to say to terrorists, "You're not welcome in the United States."

We have the broadest welcome, immigration-wise, of any country on the face of the Earth. About 500 and oh, maybe 50 million people a year cross the borders of the United States, in and out. Over 300 and, say, 30 million of those, almost 30 million a month, are non-citizens of the United States. We are not a nation that does not welcome individuals of goodwill and individuals who respect freedom. But we are equally intent to say to those who are associated with or support -- who are participants in -- pardon me -- involved with supporters of terrorism, "You are not welcome here." And if you develop that characteristic after you get here, as an alien, you will be asked to leave.

MORE

Yes?

Q (Off mike) -- the recent death in New York of the woman from anthrax, how has that elevated the risk to the general mail? And in addition to that, I'm wondering if you feel like you have any sense of containment at all on the general threat that anthrax continues to pose?

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: Our investigation in regard to the death of the woman in New York, whose diagnosis according to the authorities was from inhalation anthrax, is ongoing, and we're not able to announce conclusions in regard to that. We believe that the threat --

You know, I wish I could turn the clock back to before September the 11th. I wish that we didn't have to talk about threats, I wish we didn't have to make announcements about threats. But the facts are different. We simply have an environment in which threats exist, and we have to -- and I believe are warranted in trusting the American people to talk to them about that. And I don't believe we can say that the threats have abated. I believe that we still have to ask people to be alert, but we all have to understand that being American includes a certain amount of activity, and the freedoms we've enjoyed we should continue to enjoy. It's with that in mind that I can't say that people have any right to think that the risks have abated as it relates either to the anthrax or other terrorist risks.

Thank you all very much. Thank you.

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Cited in Al-Kidd v. Ashcroft  
No. 06-36059 Archived on September 8, 2009