

WE MUST CONTROL OUR BORDERS ...

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Body

AMERICA'S WAR ON TERRORISM - IMMIGRATION

The events of Sept. 11 have shaken confidence in U.S. internal security. To achieve internal security, major restructuring of the organization, relationship and coordination of all law enforcement agencies will be required. Federal, state and local agencies **must** cooperate and be linked with compatible information systems. Questions of national identification cards, wiretaps and other techniques that were heretofore rejected as repugnant to our liberties should be revisited.

Looking just at **border control**, I'd like to point out four areas of reform:

One Agency. For decades we have talked about consolidating and reorganizing agencies that are involved with **border control**, yet four separate departments still have various roles in this effort. The Immigration and Naturalization Service is charged with inspections at ports of entry. Before visitors get to the port of entry, they **must** obtain a visa from the consul at the U.S. Embassy in the foreign country. Of course, some countries such as the United Kingdom and Japan have reciprocal visa waiver programs in place with the United States, and for nationals of those countries a visa is not required. INS is part of the Justice Department, while Consular Affairs is under the State Department. Goods shipped to the U.S. are checked by Customs, which is under the Treasury Department. Customs is well funded and equipped, and has a fleet of helicopters that dwarfs the air capability of the INS, which has the primary responsibility for **border control** between the ports of entry. The Coast Guard and FAA are both under the Transportation Department and have very loose arrangements with the other **border** agencies.

To facilitate the immigration responsibilities of the new Homeland Security Agency, sweeping measures are needed that would bring all of the various functions under a single **border control** agency. This new agency should be responsible for visa processing abroad, inspections at ports of entry and prevention of illegal entry between U.S. ports.

Overseas Investigation. State, INS and other investigators at the embassies should be reorganized and made a part of the **border control** agency, with representation from CIA and military operations. In addition, there **must** be an in-depth review of U.S.-Canadian immigration policies. Our friends to the north should join with us for our common good to tighten and improve **border** security.

Replace Immigration Document. We **must** facilitate travel to and from the United States if we are to participate in a global economy. Nonimmigrant visas (e.g. specialty workers, students, multi-national managers) can be issued and technological advancements incorporated, such as iris identification, hand scans or fingerprint comparisons. The immigration documents we now use can be readily forged or counterfeited. Instead, for example, when the visitor obtains a visa, the process would include obtaining an iris print that would be sent to the U.S. port of entry. A device

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could then be pointed at passengers in cars or those getting off planes and ships to verify identity. As a part of this process, expanded background and record checks should be required and an extensive database maintained to screen potential entrants to the U.S.

Seal the **Border**. While it will take several billion dollars to seal our **borders**, the expenditure is necessary. To secure our northern and southern **borders**, sensors and lights **must** be installed and aircraft and watergoing vessels acquired to monitor entry. The gulches in the 12-mile stretch between San Diego and Tijuana, for example, provide cover for thousands of illegal entries. Earth moving equipment is needed to even out the terrain and eliminate the hiding places and risks to our **border** patrol.

The threat of terrorism and our determination to defeat it compel us to take actions that as a peace-loving nation we have hesitated to take in the past. This new kind of warfare will make us vulnerable if we fail to take bold measures that will prepare us to avoid or confront the next terrorist attack. This important effort may tread on our civil liberties, but through reorganization of agencies, implementation of technology in **controlling** entry to and exit from the U.S., the deployment of trained personnel and installation of **border** improvements between the ports of entry, the restraints on our personal freedom can be kept to a minimum. Our nation **must** act quickly and with resolve.

Notes

AMERICA'S WAR ON TERRORISM; Gene McNary, Ladue, is a lawyer who headed the Immigration and Nationalization Service from 1989-1993.

Graphic

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