



## **TOM RIDGE DELIVERS REMARKS TO THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS SUMMIT**

*October 25, 2001, Thursday*

**RIDGE:** Well, thank you, Mark (ph), for that very kind introduction and to your colleagues for that very warm reception.

This is the place and this is the group with whom the Homeland Security chief should be. You will be our partners in this battle against terrorism...

(APPLAUSE)

You know, I've had to deal with some great **mayors** in my home state of Pennsylvania, Republicans and Democrats alike, might even throw in an independent or two. But the bottom line is, in the war on terrorism, there are no partisans, there are just patriots. And we'll beat these guys. We'll beat these guys. (APPLAUSE)

I want to thank you for asking me here and want to thank you for holding this summit. This kind of fact-finding and information-sharing conference is so critically important to the new environment that we find ourselves confronted with since September 11.

Much has changed since that day, but one thing that hasn't changed is our resolve as a nation. Those who attacked us thought it would crush our spirit, bring us to our knees, make us cower with fear. But they misjudged us, and not just a little. They so thoroughly miscalculated that it gives a whole new meaning to that classic come back, you'd have to be living in a cave not to know.

(APPLAUSE)

They know now. Thanks to Operation Enduring Freedom, Al Qaeda and its global associates are feeling an international net tightening around them. At the same time, the Afghan people, who have suffered incredible atrocities at the hands of the Taliban, are finding out that Americans are compassionate, are generous, that we not only count our blessings, but we also make our blessings count for others in need.

So far, our military has dropped more than 750,000 daily rations of food to help starving Afghan men, women and children. And once conditions are safe on the ground, we can deliver more food and more help. We have committed nearly \$500 million in additional humanitarian aid in Afghanistan as part of a \$1 billion commitment to the Afghan region.

In just a week -- this is rather remarkable -- in just a week since the president put out his call, the children of America, your sons and daughters, your grandchildren, have flooded the White House with more than 225,000 letters with money to help the children of Afghanistan.

(APPLAUSE)

Thanks to our intelligence and law enforcement communities, we're on Al Qaeda's trail of terror, rooting out their colleagues, thwarting their plans, freezing their assets. Whether or not they are behind the recent anthrax incidents, the rapid identification and treatment of those exposed has saved lives and proved that America is up to the task. Intelligence and law enforcement agencies are working around the clock to identify and to bring to justice those who are responsible. We have begun to implement tough new aviation safety measures and mobilize to protect our waterways, pipelines, energy infrastructure, harbors and borders.

**RIDGE:** Through the use of technology, the Centers for Disease Control briefed 50,000 physicians and other medical personnel by teleconference call last week. Government agencies and organizations such as yours have redesigned their web sites to keep the public informed.

Every day we are looking for more ways to improve our deterrence and rapid response efforts.

The president is building a broad and strong coalition of countries who are united with us. Countries who believe, they believe as we do that in this struggle against evil, good will ultimately prevail. Abroad and at home, we are sending the message to global terrorists that there is nowhere to hide, that we will defend our citizens and we will defend our freedom.

(APPLAUSE)

All that has happened has reinforced what we already knew, but I think we have to admit, perhaps, we too often took for granted: that we as Americans are truly fortunate. We live in a country of enormous opportunity, enormous privilege, beautiful natural bounty and some extraordinary advantages that we have in our daily lives that most people on planet Earth do not share.

We also live in a country where our federal government understands that its most fundamental responsibility is to protect its innocent citizens from foreign and domestic threats.

I don't know the last time you reviewed the preamble to the Constitution of the United States. "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquilly, to provide for the common defense" -- provide for the general welfare and to preserve the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our prosperity -- "to provide for the common defense."

Heretofore, providing for the common defense was defeating foreign powers, sovereigns external to us, but the 21st century need in response to the constitutional charge to provide for the common defense is to defend our home front, to provide for domestic security.

That's what the president has commissioned me to do, and with your help and other local officials and first responders, we will get that job done.

(APPLAUSE)

**RIDGE:** Years before the president took office, national security experts had warned that rogue nations posed an increasingly dangerous threat to America and the ideals of freedom. They also sounded the alarm about non-state terrorists as well.

The federal government began to assess its capacities and responsibilities in the event of a terrorist attack. Steps were initiated to correct deficiencies, including better coordination of interagency preparedness and training of first responders.

Evidence of this foresight and planning were seen after the attacks of September 11. Response at all levels of government was immediate and comprehensive. Thousands and thousands of first responders at the local level, led by their **mayors**, led by their local officials, responded initially. Many more thousands of crisis- response experts and medical professionals descended on the scenes of the attacks. Federal agencies deployed ten tons of supplies, medicine and equipment.

President Bush immediately met with his foreign policy experts on the National Security Council and he also took the unprecedented step of creating a Homeland Security Council that includes the president, his Cabinet and other senior officials.

I am truly honored to be part of that extraordinary team. I'm very honored to be working with Attorney General John Ashcroft, FBI Director Bob Mueller, FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh, Health and Human Services Secretary, a former colleague and a great friend of mine, Tommy Thompson, Surgeon General David Satcher and the list goes on and on; talented, dedicated men and women who I assure you were working hard prior to September 10, but as of September 11 working night and day, working with you to provide for the common defense, to provide for our domestic security.

The president and I have talked daily since I came aboard. There are a lot of lessons associated with this incident, and if you don't mind, I might recommend that you get caller ID on your phones, because I didn't know the president was interested in having me. Had I known that, had I have had caller ID, I'd have known he was on the other end of the line.

(LAUGHTER)

And I'm glad he called, because I'm glad, like all America, he's leading us. He's been a great leader during this difficult time and he knows that America's resolve is certain, it's constant, it will last.

**RIDGE:** He also knows that the resources of the federal government and the agencies and the need to collaborate all that effort needs someone in the Office of Homeland Security, so I was honored to receive his call as well.

We talk daily, I might add, sometimes two or three or four times a day. There's some concern about my office and whether I need statutory authorization. Certainly have access. I believe I have the authority. I know I've got the authority. The president has made it clear to his Cabinet.

(APPLAUSE)

He's made it clear to everybody that we're going to win this war on two fronts. We're going to win it off shore. We're going to win it in the United States. And the president is very much as engaged with the war in Afghanistan, and equally engaged with the war here on our home front.

The mission he laid out was very clear, unmistakable: Create a comprehensive, coordinated national strategy for homeland defense. Notice I said, "national strategy." It's pretty clear from my commission, my direction from the president that he understands and, I think, America understands that the response is not just a federal response. National strategy means a federal response, a state response, a local response. It has to be a seamless government response. That it can't just be the public sector, it has to be the private sector as well.

We've got a lot of work to do. And I'm confident we can get it done.

The national strategy the president envisions will build upon existing infrastructure. Think about it. The **mayor** was kind enough to refer to comments I made the day I was sworn in. But literally, hundreds of thousands, if not millions of your fellow Americans, some of whom you employ in your police department, your fire department, your emergency responders, we never used to think of them in terms of homeland security, domestic security, but they are the frontline defense.

And literally of Americans go to work every day trying to think of ways to make their community, their county, their city, their commonwealth or state, their country more secure. We just never looked at them that way before September 10, and now we do.

The first one on the scene in New York City was the **mayor**.

**RIDGE: Mayor** Anthony Williams, Washington, D.C., first one on the scene for the public health challenge. **Mayor** Rudy Giuliani, first one on the scene. **Mayors**, first responders, you're very much a part of what we have done and need to do in the future. Because America now understands you are on the front lines. And it's clear that the only way we can combat threats to our nation's security is to engage every citizen at every level of government.

The federal government must work hand-in-hand with state and local officials, both within the public and the private sector, seeking input and providing the resources and the flexibility to do what needs to be done to keep our nation's communities safe.

We made a substantial down payment on the measure that's on Capitol Hill, the supplemental bill. Let me just briefly outline for you a couple of the provisions in there that I think are critically important.

I'm a strong proponent of expanding the function and the role of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA is a good agency, it's a good infrastructure. It's tied in with your counties, it's tied in with your cities. And one of the items in the supplemental is the \$550 million, over \$1 billion down payment for the federal government to start working with the states and the states to start working with the counties and the cities to more fully integrate your communications, your public health system. And what FEMA has already done is send out, they're going to send out teams to all 50 states. And we've talked to the **mayors** of the 50 states and said, you need to integrate your communities, you need to integrate the cities and the counties as well.

Tommy Thompson asked for, I think, in excess of a quarter of a billion dollars to start working again with the states and local communities and the cities to deal with health and human service concerns, your public health systems.

So right away, we begin to meet, we begin to work together. We begin to collaborate and coordinate. As I said before, from my view, the money in the supplemental is a significant down payment, but it's just a down payment.

On the front lines with you and your communities will be our new homeland security support team at FEMA. It will complement the current and very successful public health network. As I said to you, they have begun to fan out to the 50 states and to the territories to evaluate in a constructive way the current level of local preparedness.

I might add that we're going to be sending out representatives from the Department of Justice, Defense, and Health and Human Services to visit as well. The mission will be to assess local capabilities, county and citywide, statewide, and determine how we can support you in your role as first responders.

**RIDGE:** On September 10, when you went into your office and you dealt with your city councils and you were dealing with your federal or state representatives, there were certain challenges that you saw to the security of your communities and the prosperity of your families. As of September 11, in addition to those challenges to our security and prosperity, we discovered that there's a new set of challenges.

And I think one of the things we need to do, working with the states and the cities, is to take the infrastructure, particularly dealing with the challenges to security, that we're working on the 20th century challenges, and primarily FEMA was a natural disaster relief organization. Well, we still have to be prepared for natural disaster, but now we have to be prepared for terrorism. So we've got to deal with not only the traditional challenge to our security, but a 21st century challenge, and we will.

Good models of federal, state and local efforts already exist. I'm fairly familiar with one. It's a very high priority in Pennsylvania. Our system works because it recognizes that all things begin at the local level; it begins in the cities and the counties and works its way up. By design, the Pennsylvania system capitalizes on state-of-the-art technology, interagency expertise,

interagency collaboration, interagency exercises. We do drills in Pennsylvania from time to time. We don't do them on the table top. We do them out in the communities.

We also have very detailed emergency plans at every level. And I'm not here to tell you today that the plans we had in effect on September 10 were as complete as they need to be to respond to the September 11 challenges and beyond. But the fact of the matter is, we can do it and we have to do it with the state and local governments. We have a very effective system, and I suspect we'll be making modification and changes to it.

When flight 93 came up missing, **Mayor** Murphy of Pittsburgh mobilized our Group 13 (ph) in Pittsburgh in the 12 surrounding counties. We didn't know what was transpiring, but there was an incident in southwestern Pennsylvania and the system was designed and set up that a group, including **Mayor** Murphy and the surrounding counties, immediately began to take preparatory steps. The first units on the scene were fire and EMS personnel. Then the state police arrived. Then we began to see help arriving from other counties and other communities. It just happened. People were prepared and responded as quickly as humanly possible. It was an extraordinary effort on their part.

In the midst of a disaster is not when you want your first responders to meet each other for the first time. You want to drill them beforehand; you want to work with them beforehand.

**RIDGE:** Obviously, if it's the first time you met them, it's the worse time to meet them. And one of the things we're going to emphasize in the months and years ahead is the collaboration, but the practice, the exercises, the need to develop strategies together.

That's one reason the Pennsylvania system works. The people involved from top to bottom, they know the plan, they know each other, and they've worked together before.

When you're dealing with people as calculating and as determined as these terrorists, no emergency response system in the world is going to be perfect. But thanks to our federal agencies and the great work of our state and local leaders, our nation's emergency response system is sophisticated, it's extensive and it's capable.

My job is to enhance the sophistication, broaden its reach and strengthen its capabilities. We have systems in place, but they have to be stronger; many places they're going to have to be better connected.

I know Director Mueller was here yesterday and he shares my view that part of our first response team are local enforcement officials. I mean, one of the most important things we can do in homeland security is to deal with the potential perpetrators before the act occurs. So that means the intelligence-gathering capacity of this country and the information-sharing capacity of this country not only at the federal and the state level, but at the local level is very, very important.

We've got men and women walking the beat, in the cruisers in communities all across America, 24-7. And so, if there are patterns that we see developing in certain places of country, if there's -- and trends of some specific information, we need to make sure that it gets to you in a timely

basis. You are our first line of defense.

Where we find cracks in the system, we will work to repair them. Where we find strengths in the system, we will work to make them even stronger. The best defense against terror is a global offensive against terror wherever it is found.

And as we've watched the anthrax stories unfold, one area of particular interest is the scope and strength of our country's bio- defense network. Not too many people appreciated it before the anthrax incidents, but it stretches far and wide and includes 40 federal agencies, 80 labs in our 50 states and U.S. territories, more than 13,000 specially trained health professionals on standby for rapid emergency response nationwide, large inventories of medicines, vaccines and emergency equipment, and many experts nationwide in law enforcement, science, agriculture, health care, high tech and intelligence to monitor, mobilize and mitigate.

**RIDGE:** Now, the challenges before us will not be resolved overnight. The president has said that this is a new kind of war; that it will require time and patience and innovative thinking.

The people we are combating are shadow soldiers, and I think we have to look at them that way. They were among us; they turned a commercial airliner into a weapon. And this is just not the kinds of threats that this country has been accustomed to dealing with. But we're working together, we are dealing with them and we will deal with them. It's going to take all of us -- private and public, federal and local -- working together to find solutions to problems that did not exist before September 11.

Before I close, let me tell you something about our president. He is an incurable optimist. He has no doubt in his mind that America and Americans are up to the monumental task before us. In the struggle against terror, he knows that America will never waver. And I'd say these global terrorists picked the wrong fight in the wrong place against the wrong leader.

I look forward to working with each and every one of you. Tom Cochran was saying that the group -- you call it the group of seven -- the big seven (inaudible) put together, and I think it's a wonderful idea, a representative task force from the seven organizations so we can...

(UNKNOWN): (OFF-MIKE)

**RIDGE:** Is that right? Am I announcing something that they don't know yet?

(LAUGHTER)

**RIDGE:** Well, for folks in the back who are looking for a news item, you heard me say all these other things before, but that's news. So you might want to pick that up.

Well, you can explain the details later. All right, Tom. All right. Good. I feel better now.

I think it's a great idea, because you all will be integral in not only the planning and the development of a homeland security strategy, but also its implementation. And so, it's nice to

have those who are going to be work the plan involved in developing the plan at the front end.

Ladies and gentlemen, these challenges are difficult. They were unanticipated. We thought a lot about them beforehand. We read about them. People testified on the Hill about them. But perhaps, in our own heart of hearts, we hoped it would never challenge the best in each and every one of us. But they are no longer theoretical, they are real.

In America, historically, every turn in the history of this country when difficult challenges confronted each and every one of us, generations before and probably generations to come, America was up to the challenge. It's an extremely difficult task. It is not an impossible task. We will get this done.

And I assure you, in the Office of Homeland Security, we appreciate and understand the importance of our **mayors** and our local responders in that effort, both in planning the strategy and then delivering a more secure homeland for the citizens and the families that I know each and every one of you so proudly represents.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to spend some time with everybody.

(APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Director **Ridge**.

The governor can take a handful of questions. We're going to try to take one or two, and then his schedule will require him to leave. Raise your hands if you want to be recognized.

QUESTION: To all the **mayors** that are here, I am a **mayor** from Pennsylvania and went through a natural disaster. The president couldn't have picked a greater leader for the country. And my hat's off to you, sir.

**RIDGE**: Thank you, **Mayor**.

(APPLAUSE)

O'MALLEY: Governor **Ridge**, **Mayor** Martin O'Malley from the city of Baltimore. I want to thank you for doing this incredibly tough job. One of the questions that all of us have asked is whether America's cities will have an advocate in the White House? We've had to step up to the plate. We've done it before (inaudible) received any federal help by way of funding or direction. But we've done it because we're lucky to serve with courageous men and women in our emergency departments. And this is what America needs.

But sir, we need you to be our advocate in the White House. And I'd like to ask you if you're going to be able to be that person for us?

**RIDGE**: That's why I'm here and that's what I want to be. I don't want to come in...

(APPLAUSE)

I must say, **Mayor**, I think I saw you on television last week dealing with a threat or a challenge that your community faced. And you projected a very calm, reassuring approach toward a challenge that your community and you never thought that you were ever going to have to deal with as well. And I think that's one of the challenges for all of us in public service. We don't know when the next challenge will confront us. But if we work together, we stay on guard, as you reminded your citizens, we've got to be alert. It's a different time right now. We're going after them in Afghanistan. We've got things to do in this country. But I want to compliment you on how you responded to the challenge as well. It was a challenge of leadership, and we've got a room full of leaders here.

GRIFFIN: Governor, I'm **Mayor** Jeff Griffin of Reno, Nevada. We were running a little late this morning in giving our task force reports, which are really the work of the summit. And I thought it would be helpful perhaps to share some of the conclusions that **Mayor** Scott King and **Mayor** O'Malley as co-chairs of this summit and our particular task force called for.

One of the elements was, and perhaps the most interesting to you personally is, we are going to be calling on the administration to elevate Homeland Security to a Cabinet level. And particularly, we're going to ask for budget authority, not just oversight, by your office over all of the budget appropriations that have anything to do with domestic security and law enforcement.

And secondly, as I think **Mayor** O'Malley just asked, we're also going to be asking for the creation of a commission to assist the Office of Homeland Security. That commission will be populated with governors, police chiefs, fire chiefs and **mayors** to assist in the implementation. It's a local issue we feel first and foremost. And I think you've got America's **mayors** behind you 100 percent. We stand ready to serve and assist you in any way we can.

**RIDGE:** Thank you very, very much.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Any other questions? Oh, right here, **Mayor** Savage.

QUESTION: Governor, thank you very much. Susan Savage from Tulsa. Many of us have spent many, many years working with FEMA to expand our emergency preparedness.

QUESTION: Some of us are Project Impact cities. I was pleased to hear you say that you hoped to expand the role of FEMA.

**RIDGE:** I will.

QUESTION: Could you speak a little bit...

**RIDGE:** Not hope, I will expand FEMA.

(APPLAUSE)

QUESTION: Could you speak perhaps in just a little bit more detail about what the role -- many of us have had a direct working relationship at the federal level, and it sounds as if that relationship may be changed with more emphasis on the state -- the federal-state and the state and local. Is there going to be an opportunity for local and federal as well?

**RIDGE:** Well, I think it's a very good question. First of all, I'm going to take your observation and your question and try to answer both more completely.

As has been widely reported, there are at least 46 agencies and 13 or 14 departments of government that have something to do with homeland security, and I am very open-minded to the notion that once I get done doing my work and present a national strategy to the president, that the realignment of some of those agencies may be an outcome. I can't tell you which one, but my challenge is to give the president a national strategy based on what I learned from you and everybody else. And so, I may just do that.

But I think my office is really constructed along the lines of the National Security Council, where Dr. Rice -- and that's not exactly the same -- but where Dr. Rice from time to time deals with Secretary Rumsfeld and General Powell and other departments and agencies. She doesn't oversee them. She doesn't have budget authority, but she helps coordinate that work.

There may very well be a time that some of these agencies that are out there operating independently or under different departments, we end up merging. But right now, I don't believe I need statutory authority to do what the president has asked me to do. He's made it pretty clear to the Cabinet and others that this is part of America's war on terrorism. And it's not just external, it's internal.

But we've had some conversations with the folks on the Hill, and my sense is they may give me a little time to see what I come up with. But I know that you have some people who really have taken that position on the Hill, as well.

FEMA, in my judgment, is the agency that is best equipped now and is best positioned now to create the seam between the federal government, the state government, the local government, the county government and the city government. And I think that for the time being, that's, again, it's a concept that I have, but I'd like to see the training, regardless of where it initiates in other agencies, go through FEMA down to the local level with you.

**RIDGE:** One of the things that obviously we're going to need are more personnel, more training, more equipment to assist the cities and the counties. And I believe we're going to learn a great deal after FEMA goes out and talks to the governors and the counties and the cities, and that's something that we just have to make sure, and I've emphasized this over and over again with my former colleagues, your colleagues in public service, your governors, the need to make this a seamless system with the cities and the counties and the state and the federal government.

But there's still a lot to be learned and a lot to be done, and I don't want you to think that you're going to have to communicate to me up that chain of command. We'll be dealing with you as an organization independently as well. All right?

Yes?

MCCRORY: Governor **Ridge**, thank you for your leadership.

I'm Pat McCrory, **mayor** of the city of Charlotte. I'm asking the same question that I asked of the FBI director. One of the greatest challenges we have at your level and in the **mayor's** office is communications with the public; with the anthrax scares, with the airline issues and so forth.

And one area we're looking for input on is feedback on how to communicate to the public when there is a nationwide threat. And we had one several weeks ago; an alert come out from the FBI and, frankly, at the local level, everything stops and, of course, the media reacts a certain way, we react a certain way -- with calmness, as the Baltimore **mayor** did -- and so far.

But one area that we would like to work with you on is a process of communications, a degree of communication so we're communicating accurately and with a level of temperament that's needed in each situation. And it's extremely important in Charlotte and other cities that we provide reassurance and accuracy and as much specific information as possible regarding the timing for the specifics of the threat and so forth. So that's where we really need your leadership, in the communications area in addition to the policy area.

**RIDGE:** I accept the challenge. I think it's critical to a national strategy. I also tell you that I believe that General Ashcroft and Bob Mueller, we're like-minded on that.

The challenge is oftentimes the information suggests a need for heightened national awareness. There are other occasions where there appears -- and, again, you have to make decisions about the reliability and the credibility of the information. But from time to time there will undoubtedly be occasions where there is sufficient credibility to whatever the report may be to a specific event.

We need to make sure that we're all on the same page, so that when you get these alerts it is done in a timely way so that we all know what then the federal government can expect of you and your citizens know what they can receive from you under those circumstances.

**RIDGE:** So we accept the challenge.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Let's thank Governor **Ridge**, ladies and gentlemen. Let's thank Governor **Ridge**.

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**NOTES:**

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**PERSON:** TOM RIDGE (82%);

**LOAD-DATE:** October 25, 2001