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# Pentagon to restart anthrax vaccination program

SGT. 1ST CLASS KATHLEEN T. RHEM | JULY 1, 2002



**D**efense Department officials announced Monday they are restarting a modified anthrax vaccine immunization program now that the vaccine provider has passed Food and Drug Administration scrutiny.

Only service members, essential civilians and contractor personnel going to or serving in high-threat areas will receive the vaccine, said Dr. Bill Winkenwerder, assistant defense secretary for health affairs. This is because half the contractor's vaccine production will be stockpiled for civilian use.

"We recognize there is a domestic need for access to the vaccine," Winkenwerder said during a news conference at the Pentagon. "In collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Homeland Security, we are reserving a portion of the anthrax vaccine for stockpiling ... to use in the event of a domestic emergency."

In 1998, Defense began a plan to vaccinate all military members against the deadly, potential biological weapon. The program was pared down several times in the intervening years as the sole provider of the vaccine shut down its factory for renovations and then had problems gaining FDA approval of its production process.

Vaccine shortages eventually caused Defense to vaccinate only limited numbers of service members serving in "designated special mission units."

The contractor, Bioport of Lansing, Mich., gained FDA approval of its renovated facility in January and is now ready to begin providing additional stocks of the vaccine to Defense.

Winkenwerder said the new policy is "more targeted" than the previous plan to vaccinate the total force. He said the numbers of service members and essential civilians vaccinated will jump, but he would not say how high. Nor would he say what areas of the world are considered "higher threat."

"We will identify those areas to the service members before they are deployed to those areas, but we don't intend to talk publicly about that as we describe the policy to the rest of the country, to the media," Winkenwerder said during an earlier interview with American Forces Press Service. "And the reason is, we don't intend to give our adversaries an indication of exactly who and when and where we've immunized people. We would like that to be a further deterrent to anybody who might think about using anthrax as a weapon."

The doctor said Defense medical officials hope to start vaccinating targeted service members 45 days before they deploy. The anthrax vaccine requires six shots over an 18-month period for maximum immunity, but a relatively high level of immunity is reached after the first three shots, he explained.

Winkenwerder and Vice Adm. Gordon Holder, director of logistics on the Joint Staff, said the vaccination program may return to total-force coverage if vaccine availability improves and if the biological threat changes.

Individuals who started the six-shot series under the previous guidelines will resume the series where they left off.

Others who started the shots previously but are not currently covered under the new program will receive the rest of their shots "later into 2002, possibly as late as 2003, and that's because the supply of the vaccine is limited," Winkenwerder said.

He insisted there is no danger in stopping and restarting the series of shots. "Protection lasts months to years at some level," he said.

Under the previous program, 525,000 service members have received a total of 2.1 million doses of the vaccine. Contrary to widespread media reports of service members refusing to be vaccinated, even at the cost of their careers, Winkenwerder said the true number is relatively small compared to the number of doses administered. Defense has no formal method of counting refusals, but service chiefs report 441 service members have refused to be vaccinated. He said there have been no deaths linked to the vaccine.

In the earlier interview, Winkenwerder dismissed widespread claims that the vaccine isn't safe or effective. He cited a study released March 6 by the Institute of Medicine that found the vaccine to be "effective protection against anthrax, including inhalation anthrax."

"The Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences-a very august, prominent body-has said in a very large, in a very important, comprehensive report that the vaccine is safe and effective," Winkenwerder said earlier. Several other studies by reputable independent agencies have released similar conclusions.

Even though it is scaled back, the vaccination program will remain mandatory for troops in areas covered by the policy. Winkenwerder said this is no different from any number of other vaccines and "medical interventions" that are mandatory for military people based on where they are serving.

method, said William F. Raub, deputy director of public health preparedness at HHS. The two departments are also examining the current vaccine to see if its protocol can be changed.

"We fight and win as teams," he said. "If a team of people are in an environment deployed in a military situation, I think the commander as well as all the individuals want to know are we all protected."

The anthrax attacks on the U.S. East Coast last fall may have silenced some critics. "I think the attacks last fall brought home the point that this is a real threat and that it's possible to manufacture this kind of bioweapon, and it's not altogether difficult to disseminate it," Winkenwerder said. "This is something that's not just in people's imagination. It is real."

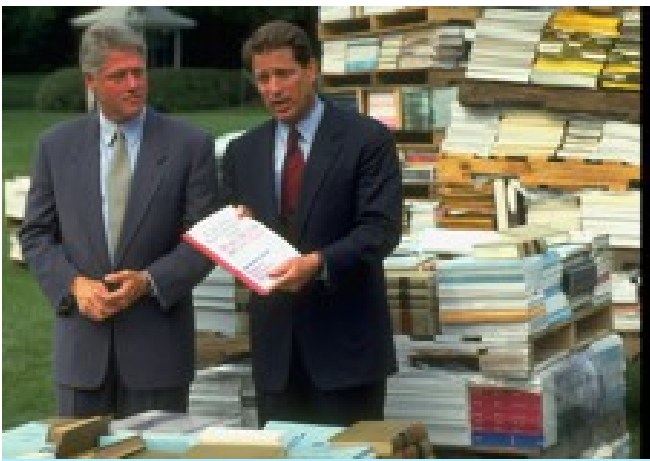
American Forces Press Service reporter Jim Garamone contributed to this report. G

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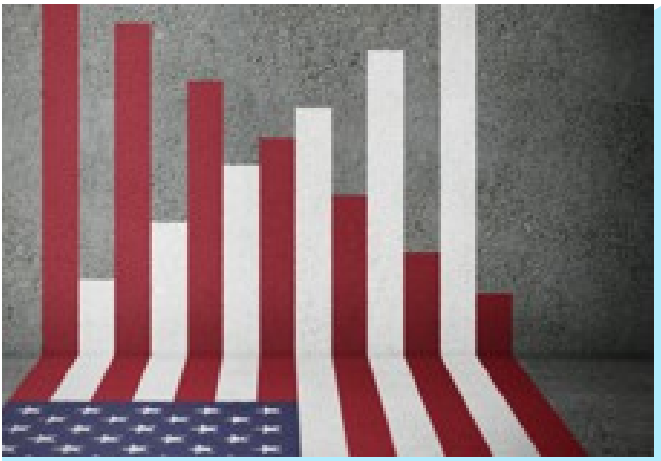
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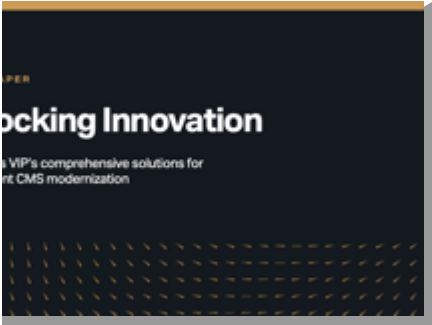


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# Pressure to create new agency by Sept. 11 pits politics vs. policy

By agreeing to move swiftly on legislation to create a Department of Homeland Security, members of Congress have left themselves little time to alter the Bush administration's proposal.

[SIOBHAN GORMAN](#) | JUNE 28, 2002



When it comes to homeland security, President Bush's most valuable congressional ally may be House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt. By urging Congress to pass legislation to create Bush's Homeland Security Department by this September 11, the Missouri Democrat demanded a pace so rapid that it would leave lawmakers little time to put their own imprint on the administration's complicated proposal to reorganize the government.

Politically, Democrats can't afford to look as if they're standing in the way of homeland security. "We Democrats can't worry about the details," says one House member. "We're in the minority. We can't fall on our sword." And calling for speedy consideration of Bush's plan puts Democrats-especially the ambitious Gephardt-in a position to take some credit for creation of a department with responsibility for making the nation safer from terrorism.

If Congress heeds Gephardt's deadline, "the White House is going to get more or less what they want," predicts Ivo Daalder, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a former aide to the National Security Council. "There isn't a willingness on the part of the Hill to take on the president on this issue. It's like taking on the president on the war-it may be politically risky." Some members of Congress worry that the rush to respond favorably to the president's request will have negative side effects. "I worry about this pace," says Rep. Henry A. Waxman, D-Calif. "It leads me to believe that [lawmakers] care less about what's in the bill than that there is a bill within that time frame."

At a hearing before the House Government Reform Committee, Waxman asked White House Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge how Congress can be expected to create a Homeland Security Department before the administration unveils its homeland security strategy. Ridge's response: The strategy will contain "no surprises."

Waxman later told *National Journal*, "I was not satisfied with his answer. Setting up a department for homeland security is too important an issue to be dealt with because the president's political advisers were worried about poll numbers" in the wake of revelations that intelligence agencies bungled some pre-9/11 clues.

On June 6, Bush announced his proposal to create a Department of Homeland Security by merging 22 federal agencies into four departmental divisions: border and transportation security; emergency preparedness and response; intelligence analysis; and countermeasures for bioterrorism and its chemical and nuclear cousins. Just five days after that announcement-and a week before the White House actually sent its proposal to Congress-Gephardt began pressing for a Sept. 11 completion date.

Although Gephardt usually has little influence over the calendar of the Republican-controlled House, the idea of creating a Homeland Security Department by the first anniversary of last year's terrorist attacks struck a chord with lawmakers of both parties. That goal spawned a demanding set of deadlines as the House established an ad hoc committee of Republican and Democratic leaders to usher the bill through the chamber.

The nine permanent House committees whose jurisdiction overlaps with some of those of the proposed department are under orders to funnel bills to the ad hoc committee by July 12. The ad hoc panel, chaired by House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, is scheduled to stitch together comprehensive legislation by July 21, so that a House floor vote can follow soon afterward. One House Democratic aide grumbles, "The select committee has no other role than to protect the White House."

Senate Majority Leader Thomas A. Daschle, D-S.D., has set a similarly ambitious deadline: floor votes before the long recess is to begin on August 2. The Governmental Affairs Committee plans to pass its version of Bush's bill as an amendment to a bill sponsored by Chairman Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., which the panel approved last month on a party-line vote. Lieberman's bill would consolidate the Border Patrol, Customs Service, Coast Guard, and Federal Emergency Management Agency. Bush's plan takes Lieberman's approach several steps further by adding an intelligence-analysis wing and a division to counter biological, chemical, or nuclear terrorism.

Privately, members of both parties say that Congress has no choice but to climb aboard the bullet train heading toward creation of a Homeland Security Department. Republicans grimace at creating another Cabinet-level department but aren't willing to buck their president.

require more time than the symbolic September 11 deadline allows.

"If it's not done well, it's not much of a tribute," says Paul C. Light, director of governmental studies at Brookings. "The history has been that once you put a unit into a department, it's very difficult to unglue." A recent Gallup Poll found that while 73 percent of the public favors creation of the department, only 44 percent thinks that needs to happen by 9/11.

Warns one Senate Democratic aide: "There are some big problems and big questions that likely won't get addressed."

Many of those questions involve the proposed intelligence division. How could Homeland Security know to ask for outside intelligence it doesn't know exists? Would or should the president sign off on every request that the secretary of Homeland Security makes for raw intelligence? Would or should the new secretary be able to direct the FBI-which remains in the Justice Department under Bush's plan-to investigate a particular lead?

Alternatives to a new intelligence division include bolstering the CIA's counter-terrorism division, annexing the FBI's counter-terrorism unit so that it reports to the secretary of Homeland Security, and clearly defining how intelligence from existing agencies should flow to the department.

Some Senate aides worry that members of the Governmental Affairs Committee don't have enough expertise in intelligence to draft a thoughtful counterproposal. And one Senate Democratic aide fears that Governmental Affairs would be working "at cross-purposes" with intelligence committees if it focused on whether Homeland Security needs its own intelligence division.

As homeland security legislation moves through Congress, a major political flash point will likely involve how much management flexibility to give the secretary. The White House wants to make it easier to fire employees. Yet many Democrats balk at paring workers' rights back. Meanwhile, at least one longtime government watchdog, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, will be pushing to ensure whistle-blower protection, to create a strong departmental inspector general, and to establish a clear line of congressional oversight.

Congress will certainly be debating which pieces of the current bureaucracy to insert into the new department. Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, who co-sponsored Lieberman's homeland security bill, says that major "structural" changes in Bush's plan are unlikely. But, he argues, "Congress already made a big imprint" because the Lieberman-Thornberry bill reads as if it gave the White House a starting point.



One major revision to the Bush plan that some lawmakers are floating would shift the State Department's Consular Affairs Bureau, which issues visas, to the new department. "I don't think diplomatic issues should come in at all when it comes to letting people into the United States. The overriding concern needs to be national security," contends Rep. Dave Weldon, R-Fla. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell vehemently disagrees, arguing that the power to issue or deny visas is an essential diplomatic tool.

Some lawmakers are also mulling efforts to revamp the beleaguered Immigration and Naturalization Service. The House passed a bill to break the INS into two semiautonomous bureaus. And House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., sees the homeland security legislation as a vehicle to quickly pass his bill to split the INS. But Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., feels the same way about his own bill to remake the INS in a somewhat different manner.

Lawmakers will also raise questions about why the Bush administration thinks the Coast Guard, which spends 75 percent of its time on activities unrelated to homeland security, needs to be incorporated into the new department. And similar questions will be asked about shifting the Agriculture Department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, which Bush would put in the border division. There'll be, no doubt, questions about the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which spent the last 10 years getting out of the civil defense business. And lawmakers will be looking for ways to ensure that the transferred agencies' nonsecurity duties are not lost in the shuffle.

As the House's first homeland security deadline nears, an increasingly common refrain is: Next year, we'll come back to this question of how to configure the new department.

Congress could consider a "phased-in" approach to the new department, says Frank Hoffman, who helped draft the Hart-Rudman commission's proposal for a border-control agency.

Still, while Congress can always come back and tweak a department after creating it, Waxman worries, "It could be years before we catch up to where we should be, if we don't make some wise decisions up front."

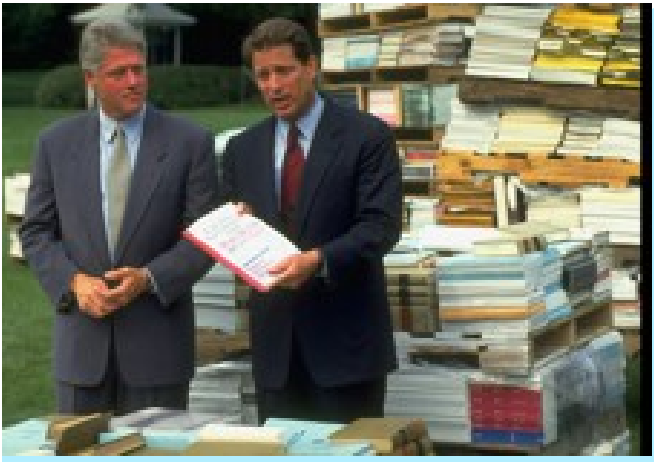
Staff Correspondent Richard E. Cohen and Reporter Sydney J. Freedberg Jr. contributed to this article. 

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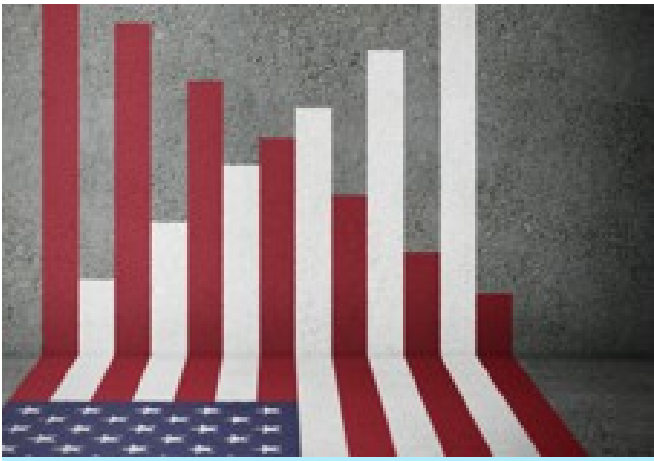
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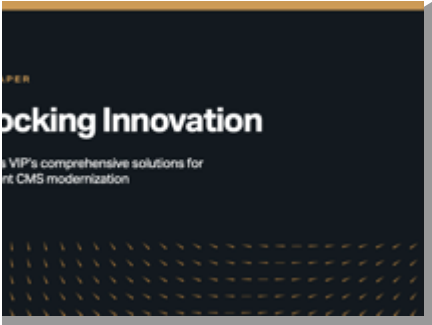


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