

FRANK R. WOLF

10TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

RANKING MEMBER—COMMERCE-JUSTICE-
SCIENCE

TRANSPORTATION-HUD

CO-CHAIR—TOM LANTOS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 12, 2010

241 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610
(202) 225-6136

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD
SUITE 130
HERNDON, VA 20171
(703) 709-5800
(800) 945-9853 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET
WINCHESTER, VA 22601
(540) 667-0990
(800) 860-3463 (IN STATE)

wolf.house.gov

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

“National Security is too important to become a partisan issue.” This sentence was the opening line in a January 11 *USA Today* op-ed jointly authored by Lee Hamilton and Thomas Kean, co-chairs of the 9/11 Commission. Last week, you, too, said, “Now is not a time for partisanship, it’s a time for citizenship -- a time to come together and work together with the seriousness of purpose that our national security demands.” I could not agree more with this sentiment.

No nation, including America, can hope to win this long battle against al Qaeda and like foes if the war effort is marked by partisanship. Sadly, not only has partisanship infused the rhetoric surrounding national security discussions, it has actually obstructed the critical role of congressional oversight. Too often in recent months partisanship has resulted in withholding of information, unanswered letters and briefings denied by this administration.

The stakes are too high and the cost of failure is too great for petty politics to rule the day. The White House has a moral obligation to actively and consistently reach out to the minority party in Congress, to be forthcoming with information and to provide access to all levels of government.

Hamilton and Kean go on to write, “We intend to monitor the implementation of the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations and report on new national security threats.” I urge you to encourage this effort by bringing back these two co-chairs for a six-month period to conduct a formal review and 9/11 Commission follow-up. They would be charged with evaluating which of the Commission’s original recommendations have been implemented and to what end, and which have failed to be implemented and at what cost.

This past weekend, *The Washington Post* featured an op-ed by Bruce Hoffman, respected professor of security studies at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at the U.S. Military Academy’s Combating Terrorism Center. Hoffman wrote, “(W)hile al-Qaeda is finding new ways to exploit our weaknesses, we are stuck in a pattern of belated responses, rather than anticipating its moves and developing preemptive strategies. The ‘systemic failure’ of intelligence analysis and airport security that Obama recently described was not just the product

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
January 12, 2010
Page 2

of a compartmentalized bureaucracy or analytical inattention, but a failure to recognize al-Qaeda's new strategy. The national security architecture built in the aftermath of Sept. 11 addresses yesterday's threats -- but not today's and certainly not tomorrow's. It is superb at reacting and responding, but not at outsmarting...a new approach to counterterrorism is essential.”

Distinct from temporarily bringing back the two 9/11 Commission co-chairs, I also urge the creation of a “Team B.” As you may know, historically the phrase “Team B” refers to a group of outside experts, commissioned by the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1970’s and headed by Richard Pipes, to analyze the threats posed by the Soviet Union to the United States and counter the positions of intelligence officials within the CIA, known as “Team A.” In your remarks last week following the review of the attempted Christmas Day terrorist attack, you rightly referred to our enemy as “nimble.” Too often our response to the evolving threat posed by al Qaeda, and others sympathetic to their murderous aims, is anything but.

The Team B concept has been successful in previous administrations when fresh eyes were needed to provide the commander-in-chief with objective information to make informed policy decisions. I believe it can work now, too, and suggest that among the individuals, but not exclusively, whose expertise and forward-thinking would be well-suited to a Team B are: Bruce Hoffman; Andrew McCarthy and Patrick Fitzgerald, both of whom were involved in the prosecution of Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman in the first World Trade Center bombings; Fouad Ajami, professor at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University; Jean Bethke Elshtain, professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago; economist Judy Shelton, National Endowment for Democracy board member; foreign policy columnist and author Anne Applebaum; Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., author of *Seven Deadly Scenarios: A Military Futurist Explores War in the 21st Century*; Elliot Cohen, professor of Strategic Studies at SAIS; Philip D. Zelikow, diplomat and author who worked as executive director of the 9/11 Commission, and Joshua Muravchik, formerly a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and presently a Foreign Policy Institute fellow at SAIS.

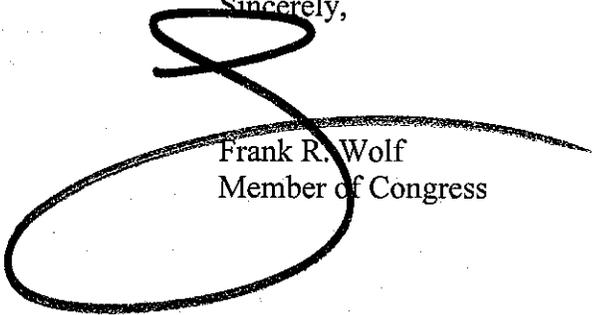
The 9/11 Commission report was issued nearly six years ago. Even if every recommendation had been implemented, which it has not, our enemy has evolved since that time. Our current intelligence infrastructure is at times overwhelmed by data, information and the urgency of daily events, and as such is unable to dedicate the time and resources necessary to think outside the box and better comprehend this multidimensional threat. “Team B” would possess the necessary expertise but would be free from these daily pressures. The team would represent a “new approach to counterterrorism” which focuses not just on connecting the dots of intelligence, but which seeks to stay a step ahead in understanding how to break the radicalization and recruitment cycle that sustains our enemy, how to disrupt their network globally and how to strategically isolate them.

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
January 12, 2010
Page 3

I also believe there is an urgent need to make the Transportation Security Agency (TSA) administrator a long-term position. Since TSA's inception following the 9/11 attacks, there have been six Transportation Security Agency administrators and acting administrators. For a position of this import to turn over with such frequency and to automatically change hands with each new administration simply does not make sense. I am introducing legislation that mirrors the language used to establish a 10-year term and Senate confirmation for FBI directors. I am hopeful that members of both parties will see the merits of this proposal and I urge your support for this change.

America is a great nation facing an enemy unlike any other we have ever known. We must steel ourselves for the struggle ahead, frankly assessing the nature and scope of the threat we face and guarding against partisanship at all costs. The people of this country deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

FRW:ea

Thank You

