

Homeland Security ^[1]

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by Jay Mazzocchi, 2006

See also: [Crime Control and Public Safety, Department of](#) ^[2]

The tragic events of 11 Sept. 2001-during which approximately 3,000 people died when Islamic terrorists hijacked commercial airplanes and used them to strike the [World Trade Center](#) ^[3] in New York City and the [Pentagon](#) in Arlington, Va.-led to a variety of changes at the federal level and in North Carolina government. In the days following the attacks, at the request of [President George W. Bush](#) ^[4], Congress established the [Office of Homeland Security](#) ^[5], with Pennsylvania governor [Tom Ridge](#) ^[6] as its director. After activating the [North Carolina National Guard](#) ^[7] and placing the [State Highway Patrol](#) ^[8] at vulnerable sites (such as nuclear reactors and airports), [Governor Michael Easley](#) ^[9] initiated several additional measures to increase public safety across the state.

Among other actions, Easley asked the [General Assembly](#) ^[10] for authority to use special state funds for security purposes, established antibioterrorism teams, and signed stricter laws involving possible weapons of mass destruction. He also assembled an [Anti-Terrorism Task Force](#) ^[11] that involved the most critical state agencies, including the [Department of Crime Control and Public Safety](#) ^[12] (Divisions of Highway Patrol, Emergency Management, Alcohol Law Enforcement, and the National Guard), the Department of Health and Human Services (Division of Public Health), the Department of Justice and the State Bureau of Investigation, and the Office of Information Technology Services. Four committees were established: the Threat Assessment and Reduction Committee, to determine the vulnerability of North Carolina facilities and businesses to attack; the Emergency Response Committee, to improve the state and local response to attack; the Training Committee, to increase counterterrorism training statewide; and the Public Information Committee, to keep the public informed of threats and appropriate government resources. Based on the recommendations of these committees, funds, resources, and agencies were realigned to increase governmental effectiveness in case of attacks against North Carolina citizens and facilities.

In November 2002 Congress authorized expanding the Office of Homeland Security and making it a new executive department. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which became operational in January 2003, merged 22 federal agencies (excluding the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) ^[13] and the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) ^[14]) with shared responsibility for immigration, border and coastal control, customs, transportation security, emergency response, safeguarding the publicly and privately owned infrastructure (including power plants, pipelines, shipyards, chemical plants, water supplies, and storage sites for hazardous materials), stockpiling vaccines and antibiotics, and vaccinating military and emergency personnel against smallpox. The department coordinates responsibility for domestic safety by working with federal, state, and local authorities in the design and implementation of national strategies.

The North Carolina government cooperates with Homeland Security on a variety of security concerns and receives from the department an annual allocation of funds to be used for antiterrorism and other programs. In 2005 the state's allotment of about \$46 million supported the [State Homeland Security Program](#) ^[15] (training and equipment for security forces), the [Urban Areas Security Initiative](#) ^[16] (for Mecklenburg and surrounding counties), the [Emergency Management Performance Grant Program](#) ^[17], and the [Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program](#) ^[18].

North Carolinians, like citizens of other states, are informed of terrorist threats through Homeland Security's color-coded advisory system. Other statewide programs have been instituted. For example, on 2 Feb. 2004 North Carolina began enforcing stricter requirements for obtaining driver's licenses. George Tatum, commissioner of the [Division of Motor Vehicles](#) ^[19], claimed that these new procedures, called "[Operation Stop Fraud](#)," ^[20] were among the strongest in the nation and reflected security recommendations from the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security.

Additional Resources:

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: <http://www.dhs.gov/> ^[5]

North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Homeland Security: <https://www.nccrimecontrol.org/index2.cfm?a=000003.000010.000021> ^[15]

[Citizen's guide to North Carolina homeland security and disaster preparedness : are you ready?](#) ^[21] North Carolina. Dept. of Crime Control and Public Safety. From the North Carolina Digital Collections.

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