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Gene Healy: Abolish the DHS

[Radley Balko](#) | August 25, 2009, 12:40pm

In his column for the *D.C. Examiner* this week, *Reason* contributor Gene Healy says the Ridge terror alert revelations shouldn't be surprising, because the entire agency is driven by politics:

Since its creation in 2003, the department has done little to provide genuine security and much to encourage a pernicious politics of fear. We'd be better off without it...

The Homeland Security Advisory System is a case in point. Even before Ridge's revelation, two separate studies showed that Bush received a boost to his approval ratings with each escalation of the terror threat level. The warning has been raised above yellow ("elevated") 16 times, but it's never been lowered to blue or green, the bottom rungs on DHS's Ladder of Fear. Yet, with Spinal Tap logic ("this goes to 11!") the department insists on keeping all five levels.

And no politician wants to be the one who has to explain why there was a terror attack after he lowered the threat level to green (signal to terrorists: guard's down, attack now!).

The department itself is a dog's breakfast of 22 federal agencies brought together in the hope of providing better coordination on a common mission. But turf battles left key antiterror agencies like the FBI out of the reorganization, and DHS finished last or next to last on every measure of employee morale in a 2006 Office of Personnel Management study.

The truth, as analyst Jeffrey Rosen points out, is that DHS is 'an institutional money pit that has more to do with symbols than substance.' Indeed, a congressional investigation in 2008 documented some \$15 billion in failed contracts that have run wildly over budget or been cancelled before completion.

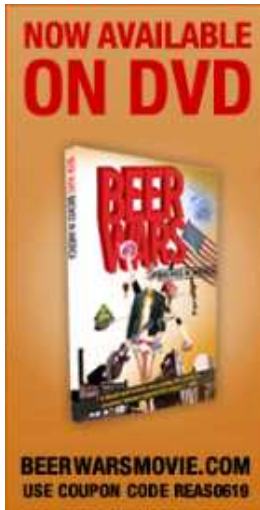
This will never happen, of course. Proposing new cabinet-level agencies is bold and visionary. Suggesting we do away with useless and wasteful agencies is typically dismissed as fringe craziness

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Comments to "Gene Healy: Abolish the DHS":

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Tacos mmm... | August 25, 2009, 12:45pm | #

And that's not even getting into the the *Blut und Boden* sound of the name.

Hugh Akston | August 25, 2009, 12:48pm | #

_____ is 'an institutional money pit that has more to do with symbols than substance.'

Whoops, looks like someone misplaced the original copy of this article. Can someone kindly name that government agency?

the other alan | August 25, 2009, 12:49pm | #

Exhibit A: "are you suggesting we not secure our homeland?"

End of argument

Nick | August 25, 2009, 12:56pm | #

"are you suggesting we not secure our homeland?"

Please advise what Department of Defense means to you and then we'll talk.

. | August 25, 2009, 12:56pm | #

Exhibit A: "are you suggesting we not secure our homeland?"

Isn't that what the Department of Defense is for?

Xeones | August 25, 2009, 1:00pm | #

_____ is 'an institutional money pit that has more to do with symbols than substance.'

Whoops, looks like someone misplaced the original copy of this article. Can someone kindly name that government agency?

I got this one:

The Federal government is 'an institutional money pit that

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What do i win?

Rich | August 25, 2009, 1:01pm | #

Isn't that what the Department of Defense is for?

So there really *is* a "Department of Redundancy Department"?

Johnny Longtorso | August 25, 2009, 1:03pm | #

What do i win?

Forcibed psychiatric institutionalization until you're cured of your racism and nihilism.

Rich | August 25, 2009, 1:05pm | #

What do i win?

X, how about [this](#)?

FrBunny | August 25, 2009, 1:07pm | #

Forcibed®: For all your non-consensual therapy needs

Not a Paid Actor | August 25, 2009, 1:17pm | #

I used to be skeptical about the idea of the same people who brought us the USPS and the war in Iraq administering the healthcare of 300 million people. But now I'm totally on board. Yes We Can!

Thanks Forcibed!

EJM | August 25, 2009, 1:20pm | #

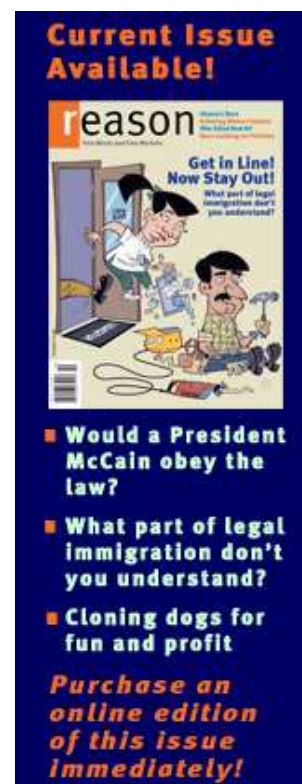
The warning has been raised above yellow ("elevated") 16 times, but it's never been lowered to blue or green, the bottom rungs on DHS's Ladder of Fear.

Maybe the colors should be rejiggered so that they match [Kryten's system-status indicator](#).

yeah, but | August 25, 2009, 1:26pm | #

Combining a bunch of related agencies into one does make some sense, even if it wasn't complete.

Jennifer | August 25, 2009, 1:35pm | #



I check the advisory system every morning before work, so I know whether or not I should carry an umbrella.

[Johnny Longtorso](#) | August 25, 2009, 1:39pm | <#>

The warning has been raised above yellow ("elevated") 16 times, but it's never been lowered to blue or green, the bottom rungs on DHS's Ladder of Fear.

But has it ever reached Blackwatch Plaid?

[TrickyVic](#) | August 25, 2009, 1:39pm | <#>

""Isn't that what the Department of Defense is for?""

No, they are for waging wars on foreign soil.

[J sub D](#) | August 25, 2009, 1:50pm | <#>

Why think so small? [Abolishing DHS should be just a start.](#)

[Tomcat1066](#) | August 25, 2009, 1:52pm | <#>

""Isn't that what the Department of Defense is for?""

No, they are for waging wars on foreign soil.

Right. DHS is for waging war on our own soil.

HUGE difference.

And John Longtorso? It reached blackwatch plaid for 18 minutes on January 23, 2003. However, it was too confusing for Bush since he still has trouble with primary and secondary colors and was quickly dropped.

[J sub D](#) | August 25, 2009, 1:55pm | <#>

""Isn't that what the Department of Defense is for?""

No, they are for waging wars on foreign soil.

[Really?](#)

[You sure about that?](#)

[kinnath](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:09pm | <#>

Rights are only rights if you can freely exercise them even when it makes lots of people nervous.

So context means jack shit.

occasional poster | August 25, 2009, 2:11pm | #

When will Obama change the threat level color?

We've been at threat level "orange" for a while, let's try threat level "hot pink" and see what happens!

Hugh Akston | August 25, 2009, 2:14pm | #

When will Obama change the threat level color?

RACIST!!!

[Enjoy Every Sandwich](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:17pm | #

the other alan | August 25, 2009, 12:49pm | #

Exhibit A: "are you suggesting we not secure our homeland?"

End of argument

Not end of argument. My answer to your question is Yes, I am suggesting we not secure our homeland.

[T](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:35pm | #

Is now the time to bring Security Kabuki? Or that the Israelis, who actually know a thing or two about airline security, think our airport security is a sad pathetic joke?

[24AheadDotCom](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:36pm | #

Actual LP talking points:

1. What do we need the DHS or even the DoD for? We're the strongest country in the world!
2. Let's all, like, abolwhatever, you know, like, get rid of, you know, like, the DHS, and all like live in like you know peace and harmony with like you know nature.

[Warren](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:48pm | #

Shut the fuck up Lone Whackoff

[Pro Libertate](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:51pm | #

This rock keeps terrorists away.

[Enjoy Every Sandwich](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:54pm | #

Okay, just **what** do we need DHS and DOD for? Answer your own question. Let's see if you can give an answer that's even vaguely coherent.

[Jennifer](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:56pm | <#>

The TSA, a subsidiary of DHS, is a very important program that provides well-paying job opportunities for high-school dropouts.

[Pro Libertate](#) | August 25, 2009, 2:59pm | <#>

Well, we could get rid of DHS and replace it with FedEx.

[Pro Libertate](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:00pm | <#>

Or we could get rid of DHL and replace it with DHS.

[Jennifer](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:01pm | <#>

Actual LoneWhackoff talking points:

1. Reason is staffed by assholes, because the posts I make on Hit and Run don't boost by blog's Technorati score. That's not fair.
 2. I bet MexicanImmigrants who post here get Technorati points, though. At American taxpayer expense.
 3. Immigrants are destroying America, and if you don't believe me just remember that if my ancestors hadn't emigrated here, I wouldn't be stinking up the body politic today.
 4. My mother's legs were in America when I first emerged from between them. That proves my superiority over those people whose mothers' legs were in less desirable countries.
 5. Like for example the country where Barack Hussein Socialist Muslim Obama was born.
-

[Meta4](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:08pm | <#>

To be fair, Reason is staffed by assholes. And Suderman appears to have demonstrated a racist streak.

[Meta4](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:10pm | <#>

Granted, it's more of a "soft" racism.

[T](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:11pm | <#>

To be fair, Reason is staffed by assholes.

Well, it's staffed by libertarians. I realize the venn diagram of the two groups doesn't overlap 100%, but it's pretty damned close.

[Jake Boone](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:14pm | <#>

Oh, Jennifer, how I appreciate you. You are a red-haired *artiste*; words are your paint, and deeply deluded morons are your canvas. Bravo!

[Pro Libertate](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:25pm | <#>

Jake, you're still alive? I thought you were destroyed in the Great Purge of Twenty-Aught-Two.

[Episiarch](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:29pm | <#>

I have decided that my purpose in life is to work for DHS.

[P Brooks](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:30pm | <#>

This rock keeps terrorists away.

If only it were that simple.

Apparently, only an eternal flame (a really, really BIG one), fueled by federal reserve notes, will keep terrorists away.

[Pro Libertate](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:31pm | <#>

Episiarch,

You know what would be fun? To see how outrageously you could act without getting fired. Start small, then ratchet it up. Encourage your co-workers to out-outrageous you through gambling pools. Secretly blog your achievements.

[SugarFree](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:32pm | <#>

♪Close your eyes, give me your hand, darling
Do you feel my heart beating, do you understand?
Do you feel the same, am I only dreaming?
Is this burning an eternal flame?♪

[Elemenope](#) | August 25, 2009, 3:32pm | <#>

I have decided that my purpose in life is to work for DHS.

I just found out that a friend of mine is just starting with the DHS a few weeks from now. It was a surprise, to say the least.

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