

Since he took office, President Clinton has made the fight against terrorism a top national security objective. The President has worked to deepen our cooperation with our friends and allies abroad, strengthened law enforcement's counterterrorism tools and improved security on airplanes and at airports. These efforts have paid off as major terrorist attacks have been foiled and more terrorists have been apprehended, tried and given severe prison terms.

Yet America's unrivaled military superiority means that potential enemies -- whether nations or terrorist groups -- that choose to attack us will be more likely to resort to terror instead of conventional military assault. Moreover, easier access to sophisticated technology means that the destructive power available to terrorists is greater than ever. Adversaries may thus be tempted to use unconventional tools, such as weapons of mass destruction, to target our cities and disrupt the operations of our government. They may try to attack our economy and critical infrastructure using advanced computer technology.

President Clinton is determined that in the coming century, we will be capable of deterring and preventing such terrorist attacks. The President is convinced that we must also have the ability to limit the damage and manage the consequences should such an attack occur.

To meet these challenges, President Clinton signed Presidential Decision Directive 62. This Directive creates a new and more systematic approach to fighting the terrorist threat of the next century. It reinforces the mission of the many U.S. agencies charged with roles in defeating terrorism; it also codifies and clarifies their activities in the wide range of U.S. counter-terrorism programs, from apprehension and prosecution of terrorists to increasing transportation security, enhancing response capabilities and protecting the computer-based systems that lie at the heart of America's economy. The Directive will help achieve the President's goal of ensuring that we meet the threat of terrorism in the 21st century with the same rigor that we have met military threats in this century.

The National Coordinator

To achieve this new level of integration in the fight against terror, PDD-62 establishes the Office of the National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counter-Terrorism. The National Coordinator will oversee the broad variety of relevant policies and programs including such areas as counter-terrorism, protection of critical infrastructure, preparedness and consequence management for weapons of mass destruction. The National Coordinator will work within the National Security Council, report to the President through the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and produce for him an annual Security Preparedness Report. The National Coordinator will also provide advice regarding budgets for counter-terror programs and lead in the development of guidelines that might be needed for crisis management.

