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THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF DHS 1

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¹ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was initiated by President George Bush as the primary agency in the U.S. government whose mission is to safeguard the nation against terrorism and respond to any attacks on American soil. Congress approved the Department of Homeland Security and allowed it to combine 22 agencies that are responsible for a vast array of security activities to improve efficiency as well as cut out redundant and duplicative activities that drain critical homeland security resources. The DHS was certainly created to achieve five main missions; these include preventing terrorism and improving security; safeguarding our borders; implementing and administering our immigration laws; protecting and securing cyberspace; and reinforcing national preparedness and resilience. However, scrutiny of several Government Accountability reports, it can be presumed that the DHS has been ineffective in its responsibilities.

First and foremost, according to the Government Accountability report by Coburn (2014), it has been noted that the DHS's crucial counterterrorism programs are not realizing the expected value for the country's counterterrorism efforts. Reviews and audits have identified that DHS's intelligence initiatives and security grants are ineffective in meeting counterterrorism measures. Furthermore, Coburn (2014) identify that DHS is struggling to meet its protective security duties. The constituent of the Federal Protective Service's has been the one-hit hard with problems. Likewise, the department has been ineffective in executing its responsibilities of improving the nation's physical security, including its collaboration with non-governmental entities, when it comes to sharing information with substantial security infrastructure vendors and operators.

In light to the DHS's second mission, reports indicate that the nation's borders remain unsecured. Pieces of evidence have identified that the Northern and Southern borders are unmanned and susceptible to illegal entry. There has been an increase in the number of illegal immigrants crossing the southern borders. The DHS through its constituent; Customs and Border Protection (CBP), have been blamed for the alarming number of illegal immigrants exclusively due to insufficient assets deployed to control these areas (Coburn, 2014). Additionally, the failure of the department to secure the border has been attributed to its incapability to efficiently utilize its assets, especially its aerial surveillance gadgets and tools to man the borders and aid the ground workforces. Also, reports identify that DHS has weakness in its system in securing border security due to corruption activities. Its reluctance in addressing the adversaries committed have continued to invite illegal immigrants who ultimately pose a potential threat to national security.

Consequently, reports indicate that the DHS has failed to effectively administer and enforce the nation's immigration laws largely because some of the immigration initiatives have major weaknesses. Some of these administering shortcomings in the nation's immigration system include but not limited to screening, processing, and tracking immigration welfares for

immigrants. Furthermore, the DHS has constantly failed to enforce the country's immigration laws. As such, this has stalled the Department from ensuring that illegal immigrants are incarcerated or deported from the country, thereby gambling with the safety of the public. The DHS's lax immigration enforcement creates a prospect that aliens or illegal immigrants will be allowed to stay, with lenient consequences.

Subsequently, the DHS has been ineffective in executing its responsibilities for cybersecurity, and its current strategies are improbable to addressing the greatest of cybersecurity threats. The department's sluggish approach in its responsibility to protect the nation from cyber-attacks particularly regarding Russian interference in the 2016 election is a clear indication that the agency has failed to live up to its mandate. According to (Levine, 2017), many states could not notice that their electoral systems had been targeted by Russia until the DHS notified them almost a year following the election. The department officials reported that hackers allied to the Russian government attempted to hack voter registration files in 21 states. This approach by Homeland Security has been criticized by state elections officials and some federal lawmakers who have expressed frustration that the agency has not yet unveiled the extent to which voter registration systems were infiltrated.

Finally, the Department of Homeland Security has struggled in responding to manmade and natural disasters. The event of 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck in New Orleans shows how the department is inept of disaster relief. The federal agency's slow response to the crisis spurred widespread public criticism that leading to the resignation of the then FEMA Director Michael Brown. According to the Office of Inspections and Special Reviews Report by Skinner & Hodges, (2006) it was identified that much of the criticism the DHS was receiving was warranted. In this undertaking, the efforts of FEMA aimed at supporting state emergency management and resilience to natural disasters were inadequate for an incident of Hurricane Katrina's scale. Some of the challenges FEMA encountered included; lack of transparency in the resource ordering process, unreliable communication systems, difficulty in arraying adequate numbers of skilled staffs, and deficiency in management controls for some supporting programs.

Recommendations

Firstly, for DHS to achieve its counterterrorism and protective security mission there is a need for the Department to focus on areas where it is the unique assets and capabilities. Such areas include refining the programs aligned to securing the country's borders, waterways, and skies, monitoring and tracking and improving the vetting of immigrants to identify potential threats, including enforcement immigration laws.

Secondly, the DHS should ensure it improves transparency in its border security initiatives, in such a way that it closes gaps in border security vulnerabilities. Additionally, DHS should be given jurisdiction to address the apparent corruption issue and flaws in its personnel. Thirdly, Congress should grant authority to DHS's to implement immigration laws, to ensure hasty and precise dispensation of immigration welfares. Such initiatives include comprehensive vetting, effective tracking and monitoring of immigrants, including implementation of visa time limits for immigrants.

Fourthly, there is a need for Congress to oversee DHS's cybersecurity initiatives to ensure it practices good cybersecurity. Also, DHS should provide value to non-governmental entities by involving them through sharing of information on matters of critical infrastructure systems. Fifthly, there is a need for Congress to reform DHS's programs to strengthen national preparedness and resilience to restore a suitable balance of responsibility between the federal, state and local governments.

References

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