



Government Reviews Security at Potential Terror Targets

Friday, October 11, 2002

FOX NEWS

This is a partial transcript of *The Big Story With John Gibson*, Oct. 10, 2002, that has been edited for clarity. Click [here](#) to order the complete transcript.

Watch The Big Story with John Gibson weeknights at 5 p.m. ET

JOHN GIBSON, HOST: Sept. 11 put a spotlight on the nation's vulnerability to terror attacks. Ever since, the government has been working on a list of potential targets in critical sectors, including agriculture, public health, emergency services, information and telecommunications, energy, transportation, banking, finance, postal, and shipping.

The final report will not be made public, except in the broadest terms, because of its sensitive nature.

Joining us now Washington, Danielle Brian, executive director of the nonprofit Project on Government Oversight.

So this list is going to be made up, and if it were revealed, it would be a sort of checklist for terrorists, right?

DANIELLE BRIAN, PROJECT ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT: Well, I don't see it that way. I mean, the reality is, we know the terrorists have already picked out their targets in a number of cases. We've had evidence that they, for example, were planning to and maybe are still planning to hit a nuclear power plant.

But even though it's been a year since the terrorist attacks, we've really done nearly nothing to increase security there.

GIBSON: Well, but that one is well known. But if Tom Ridge and his people have spent a year looking at all kinds of areas of American society — and I mean, only today we got this tape from al-Zawahiri saying the attacks on the American economy will continue, why would anybody have an interest in revealing, for instance, gas lines are vulnerable or power grids are vulnerable or agriculture is vulnerable?

BRIAN: I'll tell you why, John. Because they're not improving security. We've been through a year of talking about how we need to be more secure, looking at all this critical infrastructure, but without the

Other guests and topics for Oct. 11, 2002 included:

- The Beltway sniper claims victim number nine. We talked with Jim Timoney, former Philadelphia police commissioner, about the crimes
- The war on terror does not appear to be discouraging Al Qaeda's number two man Ayman al-Zawahiri. Dennis Ross, former special Middle East coordinator, explained
- The House gives President Bush's Iraq resolution the thumbs-up. We talked with Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind.
- The reliability of polygraph testing is under fire, following a new report to the government. Judge Andrew Napolitano, FNC senior judicial analyst, weighed in
- Katherine Harris was thrown under a bright and sometimes harsh spotlight as Florida's secretary of state during the 2000 election mess. Now, she's now running for Congress and enjoying a healthy lead in the polls. Katherine Harris, author of *Center of the Storm*, joined us to discuss

[Order the complete transcript](#)

pressure from Congress or the public to do it, most of these sectors, as you've talked about, are actually private sectors where you have private company that owns them. About 20 percent of them are actually owned by the government, and nothing is actually being done to increase security.

When Tom Ridge was actually appointed...

GIBSON: You say "nothing". Do you mean nothing or just

BRIAN: I mean nearly nothing. I really do mean nearly nothing

GIBSON: or just not enough in your estimation?

BRIAN: No, I mean, really nearly nothing. I mean, for example, we have been doing our investigations over the last 16 months on nuclear facilities, both the government's nuclear weapons labs as well as commercial nuclear power plants, and I can give you some examples where it's all for show.

GIBSON: But let's set nuclear aside. Because that one is hotly debated, and you could get experts on both sides saying that the security is fine [or that] the security is awful. But what about this list of all these other parts of the American society...

BRIAN: Right.

GIBSON: ... where there are vulnerabilities and perhaps if you looked at it, anybody could see it. Is really nothing being done about that? Is there nothing being done to guard gas pipelines? Is there nothing being done to guard places where food is concentrated before it goes out to processing plants?

BRIAN: For the most part, what we're finding is, from our experience, is that the industries are waiting for the government to do something, and the government is waiting for the industries to do something. And actually, I think the best thing is to quote Tom Ridge. When he first took this position, he said, "We as a country need not to be afraid of discussing these vulnerabilities. It is the only way we will be able to fix them."

And the fact that we've waited a year and we're still really not there yet shows me that we really do need to have some public pressure. I don't want any kind of road map, of course. I don't want anyone to know this door at this facility, this particular crop is vulnerable.

But if there's enough pressure that says that these are the sectors that need more attention, that's going to cause the Congress to take a look at them. It is going to cause the agencies that oversee these sectors to take them more seriously.

We actually met with Homeland Security. At this point it was probably about nine months ago. And they were telling us the real problem they face is that the agencies in the government that are responsible for these various sectors don't want to admit that they've been making mistakes for years. And by keeping this secret and having no one in Congress or the public really being able to put pressure on them, we're relying on those people who have really been failing on the job all along.

GIBSON: All right. Danielle Brian, good point to end on. Thanks very much.

BRIAN: Thanks very much, John.