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Front-Line Defenders Of Homeland Security Say Washington Isn't Listening

BORDER PATROL AND IMMIGRATION OFFICERS NEED TOOLS AND TRAINING

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Most front-line border protection personnel do not believe they have the tools to fight terrorism, according to a survey of Border Patrol agents and Customs and Border Protection inspectors released today by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). Although 91 percent of those surveyed said protecting the country from terrorist threats, and stopping potential terrorists from entering the country are "very important" aspects of their jobs, 64 percent say they have not been given the "tools, training and support" they need to get the job done.

While 77 percent say they have seen a significant shift in their responsibilities since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, only a slim majority say the nation is safer today from such attacks than it was three years ago. A stunning 44 percent say the nation is no safer today than it was on that tragic day.

"In this time of heightened alerts and daily reports of new terrorist threats, you'd think that the Department of Homeland Security would be pouring resources into the work of those who protect our borders and enforce our immigration law," said John Gage, national president of the American Federation of Government Employees. "Instead, our survey finds that most border protection employees feel there's no way to even provide input on improving the effectiveness of their work, with 67 percent expressing concern over limited, if any, opportunities to provide input.

"Another major concern of these front-line workers is the hiring freeze now in effect in DHS," Gage continued, "a circumstance we find simply incredible in these tense times." Sixty-three percent said the hiring freeze has had a negative impact on their ability to prevent a terrorist attack.

More than three in five of those interviewed said that the Department of Homeland Security could be doing more to stop potential terrorists and protect the country.

"As the third anniversary of the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks fast approaches," Gage concluded, "we ask those who lead the Department of

approaches," Gage concluded, "we ask those who lead the Department of Homeland Security to reconsider the priorities set for the agency's use of its resources, and to open their ears to the concerns expressed by those charged with keeping the homeland safe from harm."

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MEMORANDUM

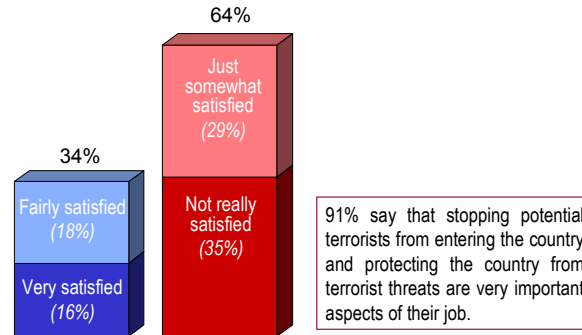
TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: PETER D. HART RESEARCH
DATE: AUGUST 20, 2004
RE: ATTITUDES AMONG FRONT-LINE BORDER PROTECTION PERSONNEL

On behalf of the National Border Patrol Council and National Homeland Security Council of AFGC, Hart Research conducted a telephone survey from membership lists of Border Patrol agents and CBP (Customs and Border Protection) inspectors from July 30 to August 7, 2004. The survey was conducted among 500 front-line border protection personnel, with 250 interviews each among Border Patrol agents and CBP inspectors. The survey was designed to explore attitudes among this critical group of homeland security personnel on issues relating to their job, how it has changed since September 11th, and their views about strategies that have been employed to make our borders safer. The margin of error for the survey overall is +/- 4.5% and +/- 6.3 for the Border Patrol agents and CBP inspector interviews separately. This memorandum presents the survey's key findings.

1 Most front-line border protection personnel do not believe they have been given the tools to fight terrorism. A clear majority (64%) of border protection personnel say they are just somewhat or not really satisfied with the tools, training, and support they need to be effective at stopping potential terrorists from entering the country and at protecting the country from terrorist threats. Of particular concern to front-line border protection personnel are strategies for deployment (65% just somewhat or not really satisfied) and opportunities for personnel to provide input (67%), as well as the availability of equipment (59%), and the availability of modern and appropriate technology (60%). The results also show a real disconnect between immediate supervisors and the Department of Homeland Security: a majority of respondents say they are satisfied with the support and backup they receive from their immediate supervisors (59% very or fairly satisfied), but a slightly greater proportion (63%) are just somewhat or not really satisfied with the support and backup they receive from the Department of Homeland Security. One respondent comments on this disconnect: “[We] don’t really have input, [just] more directives from Washington on how to do our job instead of letting us use our discretion.”

Most Don't Believe They Have Been Given The Tools To Fight Terrorism

How satisfied are you that you have been given the tools, training, and support you need to be effective in stopping potential terrorists and protecting the country from terrorist threats?

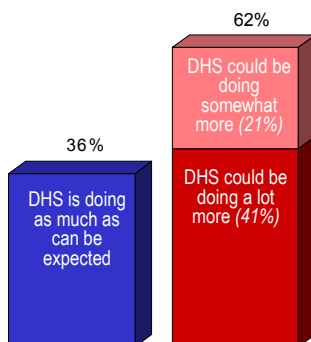


2 Most believe that the Department of Homeland Security could be doing more to stop potential terrorists from entering the country and to protect the country from terrorist threats. Three in five (62%) front-line border protection personnel say the Department of Homeland Security could be doing more to protect the country from terrorist threats with the right leadership and approaches, with two in five (41%) believing that the Department could be doing a lot more in this critical area. At the same time, respondents recognize that stopping potential terrorists is a very important aspect of their job; 91% say this is the case. And a full 77% say they have seen a significant shift in their responsibilities since September 11th. In an open-ended question, one respondent notes: “[Our] primary responsibility is to stop terrorists from coming across the border; we are no longer able to do interior enforcement.”

Clearly, front-line border protection personnel believe we can and must do more to protect our borders. A slim majority feel that the country has made some progress in securing the homeland since the September 11th attacks of three years ago, but a surprisingly large 44% of these front-line personnel say we are no safer today.

More Than Three In Five Say DHS Could Be More Effective

Could the Department of Homeland Security be doing more to stop potential terrorists/protect the country?

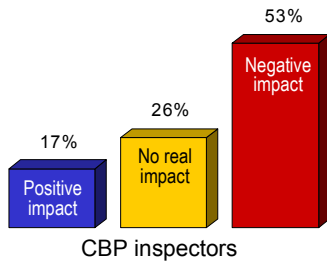


3 Strategies employed by the Department of Homeland Security to fight terrorism lack the support of those on the front line. Both CBP inspectors and Border Patrol agents have serious concerns about Department of Homeland Security strategies related specifically to their job. When asked to evaluate the “One Face at the Border” initiative, a majority (53%) of CBP inspectors say it has had a negative impact, while just 17% say the strategy has been a positive development. One CBP inspector talks of the difficulties that the strategy has created: “They want us to be meters and greeters instead of enforcement officers. After 9-11 they are trying to mesh three jobs into one, whereas [before] each person would specialize in their respective areas...”

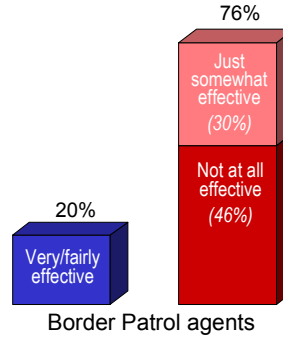
Border Patrol agents also do not view the “strategy of deterrence,” which requires agents to remain in fixed positions, favorably. Three in four (76%) say this strategy is just somewhat or not at all effective in protecting our borders, with a near majority (46%) stating it is not effective at all. Just 20% of Border Patrol agents say the “strategy of deterrence” is very or fairly effective.

DHS Strategies Lack Support Of Front-Line Personnel

Impact of DHS' combining inspectors from different fields into one larger classification of inspectors as part of its "One Face at the Border" initiative



Effectiveness of Border Patrol's "strategy of deterrence" requiring some agents to remain in fixed positions

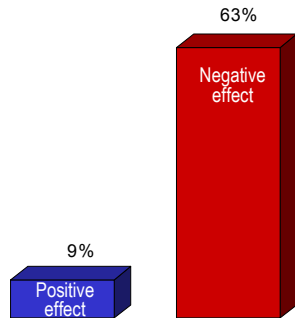


4 Front-line border protection personnel believe that reforming pay and personnel rules will make it harder for them to accomplish their mission.

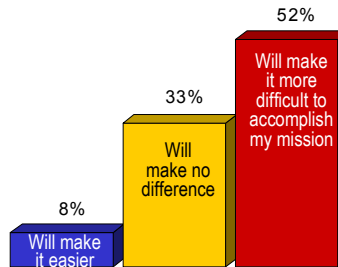
Three in five (63%) respondents say the hiring freeze placed on all personnel in the Department of Homeland Security until at least October will have a negative effect on their mission of protecting the country from terrorist threats, while just 9% say it will have a positive effect. Moreover, a majority (52%) also believe that efforts to consolidate unions and change personnel regulations will make it more difficult to accomplish their mission of protecting the country; just 8% say it will make their mission easier.

Hiring Freeze/Personnel Regs Seen As Obstacles To Mission

Impact of hiring freeze on your/your co-workers' ability to stop potential terrorists and protect the country



Effect of consolidation of unions and changes in personnel regulations on your ability to accomplish your mission



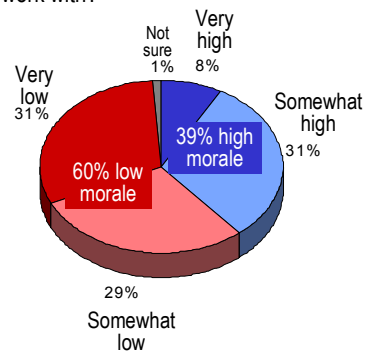
5 A majority of border protection personnel surveyed say morale is low among the people they work with. Indeed, three in five (60%) respondents say this is the case, and equally concerning is that almost half (45%) say that they themselves have considered leaving their job over the past two years. Reasons for leaving suggest a real dissatisfaction with working conditions rather than a desire to change careers or locations. In fact, one in three (33%) of those who say they have considered leaving cite poor management, two in five (21%) mention lack of opportunities for promotion or relocation, and two in five (19%) say an overall lack of job satisfaction is their main reason for considering leaving the job. Below are some open-ended responses from respondents that highlight the morale problem that the Department of Homeland Security is facing among these critical public servants who protect our borders:

“We don't have a voice in anything. It's really disheartening.”

“Just no support from the higher-ups from DHS...people talking about us doing our jobs, but [not supplying] us with what we need to do them.”

Low Satisfaction → Low Morale

How would you rate the overall morale today of the people you work with?



During the past two years, have you considered leaving your job?

