I can really only speak on attitudes about security in the United States, and the others can speak for Canada and Mexico, but it helps, I think, sometimes to realize where we’ve been in our views of both intelligence and security. Many of you will remember Vernon Walters, affectionately known as Dick Walters, who served as our representative to the United Nations, ambassador to Germany, and before that, deputy director of Central Intelligence. Dick Walters liked to say, and wrote in his book, that when the American people feel threatened, they want a lot of intelligence, and when they don’t feel threatened, they think it may be just a little bit immoral.

My corollary of that in dealing with security issues is that Americans really don’t like the burdens of security. It’s very difficult for them to put up with what they wonder is necessary or maybe overdone and the best way of putting that is, in the United States, usually security is always too much until the day it’s not enough. That is a challenge that came through to us in stark terms on September 11, 2001.

We’ve done a number of things since that time in addressing what we understood our threats to be. Again, if I could try to draw some parameters of what we’re talking about here, what has changed and what has affected the American attitude about security, but has certainly not changed its basic attitude about “less is better,” are the introduction of two factors that were not present when I first started in this area way back in 1978 at the FBI, globalization and technology, both great weapons for and great weapons against society.

We’re dealing with a kind of a threat that involves knowing what’s going on in large parts of the world and imagining the rest associated with the kind of destructive capability that modern technology is capable of. I don’t need to worry your time by recounting these things, but this is the framework in which we approach the question of what do we need to do. What can we afford to do? What can we not afford not to do, in dealing with threats that we know are real because they have happened and may largely happen again? All our intelligence tells us that it is more than likely that we’ll be confronting at one step or another in our country these kinds of horrendous activities.

We can’t do it alone, and we can do it better, by far, if we understand the risks and relations to our two most important neighbors and make sure that the three of us, insofar as we can, are working in step, not in lockstep, because our relationship with Mexico and the problems there I think differ from those that we encounter in working with our neighbor to the north here in Canada.

I think our government has already established, and there doesn’t seem to be much disagreement, the priorities of the threats are weapons of mass effect. Now for some reason, we’re not calling them weapons of mass destruction anymore. It’s weapons of mass effect, if you can keep up with the acronyms in the glossary. Those include, of course, nuclear cases, chemical cases, and biological cases. Those are of greatest concern, although they may be the most remote in terms of on the threshold of doing, but we know and try to keep track of what people are capable of doing with their resources and the kinds of resources available to the kinds of people who have been engaging in globalized terror.
Beyond that, our major threats fall within an area which fits in this discussion this afternoon having to do with the protection of our borders from terrorist equipment and terrorists themselves coming in, infiltrating into this country. There was a time when we used to think terrorists preferred to do their terrorism closer to home and, historically, that’s what they did to the United States. They attacked our buildings, our embassies, and our individuals in their part of the world and where they were least likely to be detected or apprehended. After 9/11, we can no longer assume that that is the case. By globalized exercise and training, many of their people are willing to come over here if they can get in, take their time, set up their structure, and do damage.

But our borders are important and that leads us to look at the whole issue of immigration and the people coming into our system by various means, fair and foul. The third aspect of that, which is terribly important, of course, is the movement of cargo, particularly in sealed cargo containers, into this country. How do we control that in a way that we can do it without stopping the course of trade and, at the same time, be reasonably confident that what’s in the cargo containers is what’s supposed to be in the cargo containers.

It’s a difficult and challenging undertaking. To do that part, we have pushed our borders out, not talking about perimeters, because I understand that’s a kind of buzz word now, but maybe it isn’t, but to make sure that in major ports in other parts of the world, we’re checking those cargos as they’re sealed. Then we are doing our best to determine that, by using tamper-proof seals and inspection of those seals, we are reasonably confident that the cargo still contains what it’s supposed to contain when it gets into this country.

We have other devices I’ll mention that are working very well. SAIC has a bus, a $3 million dollar package that you can roll a freight car by, or you could take the truck and go by the freight car, and identify individuals or even the presence or some forms of drugs and other contraband. That is just one of the various devices that have been put in place to make inspection easier to do quickly and not throttle traffic coming into the country.

But we know that if a cargo loaded with ordinary contemporary high explosives were set and detonated on the docks of Long Beach, it would cost us several billion dollars a day for an indefinite period of time while everything stopped and we had to go through the burden of figuring out what it was all about, was that the only one, and is it safe to load cargo again, a terribly costly and risky event.

I’ve mentioned weapons of mass effect, protection of the borders, and control of the passage of people coming in by way of immigration. Our historic relationship with our two neighbors has been one that we were always proud that we had fairly open borders, and we can no longer accommodate that sense of freedom and that sense of relationships.

Both sides must do their best to cooperate on each of the borders, and at sea, if possible. I’m not talking about immigrants from Mexico, I’m talking about people coming in from other parts of the world and coming in through Mexico. They have a very poor border on the south border, not our border, but on Guatemala as another example.

It’s a vast undertaking and one that everyone has to weigh in on and pay their respective share if we’re going to have any meaningful control over it. It reached a point where other kinds of smuggling actually had buses going up to particular places, and tunnels, and that sort of thing. I’m sure you’ve read about it. I only mention it to say this is a problem. It’s one that we have to work out constructively and collectively, if we’re going to be successful. At the same time, we want to do it in a way that does not throttle trade.
Now I’ve had the pleasure, since 2001, of being vice chairman of the Advisory Council on Homeland Security, which President Bush set up originally before there was a department, and then had transferred us and our responsibilities when Secretary Ridge took over the new department. We have inspected a number of these spots and drawn conclusions and made suggestions about how better to manage them.

One of them, for instance, is Detroit. One doesn’t think of Detroit as particularly being a point of entry, but more trucks and people pass through on a daily basis, the tunnel and the highway over there, coming in from Canada, than in any other place in the United States on a daily basis. If we stopped and gave each truck and cargo the kind of inspection that would leave you feeling you had certainly exhausted the risk of explosives or other contraband coming in, we’d throttle traffic.

They’ve resolved that in a number of ways including some pretty skilled psychological approaches to suspicious people. They’re checking the watch list, making sure everything is clean, and then if there is any kind of a truck about which there’s a question or the answers don’t ring right to the trained questioners on stage one, it goes to another line without stopping and obstructing the legitimate traffic coming in from Canada. I mention that only as an example of ways that they’re working to improve their ability at a reasonable cost and with a reasonable certainty and at the same time not do damage commercially to the United States or to Canada. It’s working, I think, pretty well, and we are certainly looking for new ways to improve those risks.

Intelligence sharing represents still another challenge to us. We’re just getting used to the idea of sharing intelligence within our own agencies in the United States. It used to be need-to-know. I still think there’s a value and a place for need-to-know if we’re going to protect sources and methods of the intelligence that we gather in the United States, and that’s very important to preserve in the right places.

But we were given our marching orders in the Patriot Act of the importance of sharing that intelligence with others who have a legitimate interest and need to know. We’re doing that among the other agencies in the federal government, and we have been working to develop logical, reasonably secure means of sharing that information with about 100,000 first responder agencies throughout the United States, police departments, fire departments, and so on.

You can readily appreciate that if we take that too far, the classified information is no longer close-held and is in high risk of being released, so we’ve worked on methods of taking that information and producing finished intelligence which does not identify sources or methods. It gives the end information that a particular fire department or a particular mayor or a particular police department might need to know about something going on in their neighborhood or apt to be in their neighborhood. That’s a subject for constant work and improvement.

But while we’re doing that, we have consolidated 22 separate federal agencies into one department, Homeland Security. These agencies were largely step children in their own departments, put there for convenience or to give a little gravitas or height, sometimes moved around, but never being the core mission of the department. It might be in the Treasury, although they’ve done pretty well, but it might be in the Interior or one of the other places where there was neither budgetary support nor real connection with the mission. They were second fiddle. Now they are in one place where they have a common mission. It isn’t perfect, and there’s a lot of absorbing and coordinating ahead. I think it’s remarkable being able to do it with as little grief and trouble as has occurred, but it’s a major challenge.

Now what do we do about getting and sharing information with Mexico and Canada? I think that’s important, too. We have to resolve a number of issues that come up from time to time. Canada still has, I believe, a more liberal policy with respect to legislative access to information about information supplied from the outside. I know in the United States, we’re willing to live with that, but some of our information
comes from third countries who absolutely refuse to allow that information to be shared because it is so broadly based, especially here. That’s a problem that maybe Mr. Manley can talk about, but it’s a major one.

I think you’ll hear some things. I won’t try to take up the time with those who know it best, but I know in talking to Rob Bonner, who is just leaving as head of border protection and customs and has done a wonderful job for the last several years, that he feels these smart cards and access devices will be very useful and do work. They’re always vetted and then you’ve got a fast track at the airport or a fast track in a cargo situation to keep your merchandise moving, and that’s important, and I think we really have to know that.

Who is in charge is a question still out there in the United States that is being digested between Intelligence and Homeland Security. We’re getting there, but we’re not close enough to satisfy me in my mind. We’ve made very significant steps in terms of airport security, especially since we hardened the cockpit doors and changed our policy about passenger cooperation in the event of a hijacking, and the record is good there. We have to take into account that the intelligence community itself went through a major transformation and is still sifting out what the authorities are and who’s in charge. Even John Negroponte, an admirable director of national intelligence, is still trying to understand the 200-page law that was supposed to give him the three most important authorities, the budget, control over the agency heads and performance review, and you can’t find that anywhere in the 200 pages. Because of a lot of pressure on the 9/11 Commission by the 9/11 families and the pressure on Congress to pass a bill before the next terrorist event, Congress passed the bill by smudging over all of the critical issues that were missing in the previous method of doing business and what everyone agreed had to be fixed, so we’d know who was in charge and what the authorities were. We’re hoping something will be done about that, but there seem to be other things occupying Washington right now.

I think I’ve just about covered everything that I intended to raise for purposes of discussion except to say that as we approach security, without meaning to make life tough for the business community and others who have to do business across borders, we have a layered approach to trying to cover everything everywhere in ways that we’re going to find out about it in time to do something about it. I’d love to take a few minutes and tell you how we ran the 100 terrorist events a year, smaller but lethal nonetheless, in 1978 down to six, the year I went to CIA, but it basically involves intelligence.

The layering approach is to improve our detection capability, move from there to our ability to take preventive action and to do it quickly enough, to do it before the bomb goes off, and finally to deal with mitigation—what happens if we don’t make it, how do we minimize the damage that’s done. I’m sad to say that FEMA, in its moment of challenge in New Orleans, failed to measure up to what we hope would be the kind of mitigation that we’re capable of in the future, and I’m glad that it didn’t cost any more lives that it did.

That kind of approach is where I think we are in the United States on dealing with our security problems. They’re here to stay. They will not go away. We may get sleepy and say well, we haven’t had one in a while so why do we bother with this, and we should change things we don’t need. You can now go to the bathroom ten minutes after flights from Washington which you couldn’t do before and certain things about inspections of shoes and others will be modified, and color coding has been played way down to a point where people are less confused by it than they are edified.

Bear with us, because there’s a great deal still to be done. But I think it’s important not to forget that almost everything where there’s a risk involves people and explosives or other forms of weapons of mass effect coming into this country, into the United States, and we need the help of our neighbors just as they want us to do what we can to help them on detecting and preventing terrorist activities. Thank you.
William H. Webster is former director the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and former director central intelligence.